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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, September 26, 2016

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

The House resumed from May 5 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in support of private member's Motion No. 45, which, as amended, definitely deserves our support.

First, I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Halifax, for his work on this important recommendation. Basically, the motion asks the Government of Canada to take the potential impact of greenhouse gas emissions into account for future infrastructure projects that receive federal funding and, where appropriate, to prioritize funding for projects that help mitigate the impact of climate change. This is definitely a step in the right direction.

[*English*]

The science is clear: climate change is the most pressing issue the world faces, and we must act collectively and we must act now. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is one of our government's key priorities, and this motion is very supportive of our goal.

[*Translation*]

Canada has much to gain by aligning its climate change goals with its infrastructure investment goals. The two are very closely related. The government also knows that working jointly with the provinces, territories, municipalities, and first nations is critical to the success of its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support sustainable economic development.

When we tabled our budget in March, we kept our promises to Canadians to invest in our future, support the middle class, and help those who need it most.

[*English*]

Budget 2016 is about Canadians and about our country's future. It is about seniors, children, students, and indigenous people. It is about supporting the most vulnerable and making sure that every Canadian has an opportunity to succeed.

The budget offers immediate help to those who need it most and lays the groundwork for sustained, inclusive economic growth that will create good jobs and prosperity for all Canadians.

I have to say that this is one of the most progressive budgets in a very long time.

[*Translation*]

The infrastructure plan, which is included and outlined in the budget, promotes accelerated economic growth and job creation across the country. The budget provides new investments in infrastructure totalling more than \$120 billion. This includes an additional \$60 billion for public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure.

We know that infrastructure is the cornerstone of our economy and our society, but it is not an end in itself. We believe it is one way of ensuring prosperity and inclusion across the country.

Looking beyond these figures, there is much more to infrastructure than just physical structures. It is about more than just concrete, pipelines, roads, bridges, buses, or trains.

[*English*]

Infrastructure is really about people. It is what connects Canadians to their communities and allows them to be active participants, both socially and economically.

Infrastructure is about parents sleeping in peace, knowing that their children will have clean and safe water to drink.

[*Translation*]

Infrastructure can also mean a refuge, a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence, or clean, safe housing for someone who has absolutely no other option.

In budget 2016, we committed to investing more than \$10 billion over the next few years toward the infrastructure projects that Canadians need most: modern and reliable public transit, water and waste-water systems, as well as affordable housing.

Private Members' Business

This funding is in addition to investments we have already made. The funding I am talking about right now is part of phase one.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Phase one is mostly focused on short-term projects around recapitalization, repair, modernization, and improving the accessibility of existing infrastructure assets. These are projects that could get moving fast and get completed within two or three years, and would rebuild the foundation of transit, water, and housing that people rely on.

I am proud to say that over the summer we reached bilateral agreements with every province and territory for phase one. As a result of that great work by the Minister of Infrastructure, \$5.4 billion is now available for public transit, water, and waste-water projects.

When we signed those agreements, we also approved lists of projects that were already on under way or that could start imminently. We approved over 700 projects worth more than 50% of the total allocation for phase one. More importantly, 466 of those projects are already under way across the country, creating growth and improving the quality of life for all Canadians. Over 400 communities across Canada will benefit from these projects. This is absolutely key.

[*Translation*]

There is also \$3.4 billion in budget 2016 for us to invest in affordable housing, early childhood, cultural and recreational infrastructure, as well as on-reserve health care institutions.

We are also holding consultations across the country over the coming year on developing a national housing strategy to make the most out of the upcoming federal investments. We will continue to hold extensive consultations with Canadians so that we can build programs to meet their needs.

[*English*]

As members know, we have committed to investing in green infrastructure to help build healthier and more sustainable communities. Green infrastructure also means building communities that are resilient to the effects of climate change.

We do not have to look too far back to see the impact of climate change. We saw it in Edmonton during the 2012 floods, which impacted many communities. This is why we are investing in flood mitigation. This is why it is a priority for us.

[*Translation*]

We also committed to working openly and transparently with our partners and all Canadians. Infrastructure and Communities Canada publishes all the details of the funding and allocations for the projects it supported. I can also assure my colleagues that we will continue to do so.

More recently, we published the letters sent to the provinces and territories describing our government's plan for releasing funding for projects that will rehabilitate and modernize infrastructure and encourage economic growth to boot.

These letters outline in detail the public transit infrastructure fund and clean water and waste-water funding allocations for each province and territory.

[*English*]

However, budget 2016 is only the first step of an ambitious plan that we have for Canada and Canadians. We want to do more, and we will do more.

While our phase-one funding for programs is helping communities with their most pressing infrastructure needs, phase two will include funding for projects that will leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

In conclusion, we are committed to getting phase two under way as soon as possible, and we look forward to announcing the details in the coming months.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Again, I want to commend my colleague, the hon. member for Halifax, on his important work on this file.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member gave what could be called a hopeful speech about projects and what will probably happen in the next 10 to 15 years. He mentioned job creation twice. This is something we have not heard about for a long time from members on the other side. He also mentioned investing \$120 billion in upcoming infrastructure projects. Can the member opposite—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Excuse me. I am sorry, but I made a mistake. I realize now that this is private members' business and I forgot that there are no questions and comments.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about all kinds of generalities from the budget, but he did not speak specifically about Motion No. 45, which is what I am going to speak on.

Canada is a country that needs jobs. We've lost hundreds of thousands of jobs on the Liberal government's watch. The government promised Canadians that it would run a deficit to put people back to work by emphasizing infrastructure spending. That is what Liberals said during the campaign, and what they repeated ad nauseam last session. It has been a year, and every month the job numbers show that there are more and more people out of work. The infrastructure money is flowing too slowly to change that, and now the government wants to entertain a motion that would slow the pace of infrastructure spending approval from a bureaucratic nightmare to a snail's pace.

Private Members' Business

I was an engineer overseeing capital projects when the large multinational companies adopted their sustainability goals. They started doing greenhouse gas emission analysis. In fact, I myself have done the calculations for greenhouse gas emissions analysis. The analysis is very complicated. There are a lot of questions to consider. Do we include everything from the carbon and greenhouse gas emission footprint of the raw materials, like the steel and concrete used to construct the project? How do we find out what that footprint was without sometimes knowing confidential information from the company that made the raw material, or by making assumptions about it? What about including the carbon footprint of all the vehicles that all the constructors use on the project? What about counting the footprint of the compressors and diesel generators used to build the project, and how do we estimate that? How do we predict the emissions that are post start-up from the project? Do we include those or not?

These are just a few of a myriad of questions that have to be considered for each project, even when there is a greenhouse gas emissions guideline. Most of the time, what is included for each project has to be decided on a per-project basis because each one is different. We cannot compare GHG emission information for different projects, because different things are included on each one.

Well then, how do we decide what is an acceptable level of emission or footprint? If it is better than something currently built, is that okay? What if it is not quite as good as the best available technology? Is that okay? Do we include the footprint of the existing infrastructure that is being repaired or not?

What happens is that there are endless delays while these questions and issues and the seeking of data are resolved, resulting in huge delays for the project. At the end of the day, there is no good way to compare projects or figure out whether they are good enough on GHG emissions or not.

That said, many municipalities and provinces have already started implementing their GHG emission requirements. Now the federal government will add an additional layer of bureaucracy, and the federal program will be different from the municipal and provincial programs that have been put in place. Therefore, this is adding another layer of red tape that will not get these projects built.

Who will pay for these endless hours of searching for information, calculating and estimating emissions? Will it be the municipalities? They cannot afford it. Will it be the federal government, with more taxpayer money? Hopefully, not.

The motion claims that it is going to help the national climate change strategy. Let us talk about that for a moment. Canada makes up less than 2% of the global carbon footprint. We could eliminate our entire footprint and it would not make any factual evidence-based scientific difference to the temperature of the planet. Let me repeat that. Canada could eliminate its entire footprint and it would make no difference to global warming.

What we should be doing is leveraging our carbon emissions reduction technology to the substantive contributors to climate change, like China, India, and the U.S. They make up nearly half of the global footprint. We could create jobs for Canadians and we could help the planet at the same time. However, this motion will not

help the planet, and it will not help us create the jobs we need to create quickly with infrastructure funding.

The motion certainly goes against the direction that was told to Canadians when the infrastructure minister said that the focus for infrastructure would be road repairs, maintenance, and rehabilitation of existing assets to quickly create jobs for Canadians. Under this motion criteria, road repairs will never make the list, and we have not seen any job creation on the part of the government from infrastructure spending as it is.

● (1120)

There are plenty of opportunities to create jobs with the infrastructure funding. For example, in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, we need \$12 million to build an oversized load corridor to create 3,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs. The manufacturing shops already exist and already produce these large fabricated modules that can be exported to markets within Canada, the U.S., and the Middle East. However, the current government, which I have been presenting this opportunity to since November of last year, has done nothing to follow up and help create Canadian jobs. It has given away \$200 million to Iraq for economic development, but it cannot give my riding \$12 million to create 3,000 well-paying Canadian jobs.

Additionally, Motion No. 45 has been amended to make it even more ambiguous and vague. By removing the criteria that a greenhouse gas analysis would only be done on projects over \$500,000, it has now created a disadvantage for smaller projects. When we do the analysis, smaller projects typically have less greenhouse gas emissions because fewer widgets are used to build them and less time is spent putting them together. This motion is another Liberal action that makes me wonder if the Liberals want to have any private sector jobs at all.

Putting GHG screening into pipeline approvals has all but stalled that process, eliminating the potential for hundreds of thousands of Canadian jobs. Threatening carbon taxes has caused businesses not to invest here and to move their expansions to the United States, along with their carbon footprint. The United States does not have an uncompetitive tax. This has happened with two expansions in my riding, costing another 2,000 Canadian jobs.

Therefore, I am speaking against this motion. It will not create the economic stimulus that the infrastructure money promised by the Liberals was supposed to create when they campaigned. It will not result in projects getting approved in a timely fashion. It will not help the planet or contribute significantly to reducing the global carbon footprint. It will bog down the process of supporting municipalities in their need to upgrade infrastructure. Based on the other evidence that the government presented last session, it will likely result in project awards to friends of Liberals and Liberal municipalities, which is not a fair outcome for all Canadians.

Private Members' Business

Motion No. 45 is a warm, fuzzy, feel-good motion that is not well thought out. The evaluation of the greenhouse gas emissions cannot be well defined or applied equitably to different projects, as I have shown. It will slow down the process and delay the creation of the Canadian jobs we so desperately need. Therefore, members should say no to Motion No. 45.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, we need to act on climate change. We have lost 10 years, arguably 20 years of action around the globe. We have damaged Canada's international reputation, and we have certainly affected our fishing stocks, forests, public safety, and put more stress on firefighters, local farmers, and on future generations. Action is badly needed. Canada cannot stand on the sidelines. We need to transition now to a cleaner and greener economy.

That means setting ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gases and acting on a concrete plan to actually deliver those targets. Unfortunately, the federal government here, and at the other end of the House, has done neither. I am reminded of my first job out of university, in the early nineties, working with environmental groups and industry across the country to use economic instruments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants. The Liberal government of the day did not embrace the recommendations that we made together, and we have a lot of time to make up.

Shifting away from fossil fuels and toward cleaner technology is good for the earth, the atmosphere, the economy, and it creates a lot of good, green, local jobs in the process. Therefore, my picture is much friendlier and more positive than my colleague who just spoke.

The good news is that climate action is a win-win. I have a lot of good stories from my riding, Nanaimo—Ladysmith, that illustrate what we can do if we make our investment and economic decisions with a climate change filter.

The Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre is building the first affordable family housing project in Nanaimo since 1998: 17 units of affordable housing, some of them designated for elders, some for youth transitioning out of care, and some for survivors of domestic violence. This is the first certified passive house in western Canada for affordable housing. Passive homes use 80% less energy than conventional home constructions. Low energy use leads to lower operating costs, which leads to more affordability for the residents and homeowners. We are very proud of Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre for embracing this technology, which has been in place for 30 years in Europe.

Another great affordable housing project that I have had the honour of being involved with is Habitat for Humanity's mid-island chapter on Vancouver Island. It has just opened the first two of six new affordable housing units. It had a fantastic amount of community support for this. Vancouver Island University's carpentry students dedicated 5,000 hours of labour toward this project, on which they learned about energy-efficient technology building techniques and installing low-energy windows, ventilation systems, and lighting. Interior design students were involved. Heavy equipment operators were involved. It is a wonderful community experience. To be part of the key ceremony where two families took ownership of two homes built by volunteers and students in an

environmental and low operating cost way was a very proud moment for all of us.

We have a number of LEED certified buildings in our region: Ladysmith Community Services Centre, the Nanaimo Fire Station No. 4, South Forks water treatment plant, and many others. There are about 20 all together. We have had great economic impact from building homes in a more energy efficient way. The economic impact of LEED buildings across the country for the last 10 years is estimated to have resulted in 128 billion dollars' worth of economic output.

In 2014, Canada's green building industry employed more direct full-time workers than the forestry, mining, and oil sectors combined. This is a great place of pride for us, and a huge economic opportunity, a local employment opportunity as well as a climate change saving opportunity.

We need our government to support local initiatives like this and remove barriers to innovation here at home. We have the know-how in our communities. We want climate leadership that supports, not impedes, cutting greenhouse gas emissions in our riding, on the coast, and across the country.

We also have infrastructure wishes in our riding that would benefit from a climate change task and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

● (1125)

There is a huge need for regional transit in my riding. In communities that are just 20 minutes apart, Ladysmith and Nanaimo, there is no public transit connection. That is a problem for students, for the affordability of post-secondary education, and for band members of the Stz'uminus first nation. It is hard for them to commute to their jobs. If they could use the bus, life would be more affordable. There is great demand, and many business people are pulling for public transit in my region. A climate change filter on infrastructure investment would put this to the top of the list.

There is fantastic volunteer work on bicycle paths and mapping out what our community could look like with lower greenhouse gas emissions and getting vehicles off the road.

There is a huge lobby for food-processing facilities that would support local farmers in value-added processing and niche foodie industry, which is big across the whole country. Distillers, brewers, and wineries as well are all looking for ways to support infrastructure that supports local agriculture.

The indigenous peoples place of culture is a very hopeful initiative in my riding. It would implement some of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on bringing people together, all nations, indigenous and non-indigenous, in a beautiful facility. We are looking for infrastructure funding for this now. It would have a day care, a school, and a community kitchen. Again, it would be built with a passive design, using 80% less energy than conventional buildings do.

We are very thankful to the Mid Island Metis Nation, the Boys & Girls Club of Canada, and Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre for this innovative and positive development that would be climate friendly and good for my community in every way.

Vancouver Island University has a proposal for district ge-exchange energy based on flooded, abandoned coal mines that underlie the university campus. The intent is to replace natural gas, to reduce carbon outputs to near zero, and to use the facility as a teaching and awareness site, a teaching opportunity, to help people get excited about alternative energy and see it working.

New Democrats support this motion. We support initiatives to help lower Canada's greenhouse gas emissions and to promote federally funded projects, like the ones I have described, that would mitigate the impacts of climate change. The motion proposes that infrastructure projects receiving over half a million dollars in federal funding be subject to an analysis of the project's potential greenhouse gas emissions. This is a welcome addition.

It is disappointing, however, that the language in the motion does not appear to compel real action from the government. We are hoping for criteria that would tie decision-making more directly to the results of the greenhouse gas emissions analysis. We would like a mechanism that would compel real action in government decision-making on infrastructure. We want specification of projects that promote climate change prevention, not just action after the fact. We believe that input from stakeholders, particularly environmental organizations and local governments, would add to the study at the committee phase.

At this point, it looks like the motion lacks real teeth, which are needed so badly to compel action from the government, but New Democrats look forward to the conversation at committee and are optimistic that the details can be improved.

It has to be said that the Liberals have had a hand in undermining Canada's environmental assessment regime and assessments for federally funded infrastructure projects in particular. The Liberals supported the Conservatives' Bill C-10, which was the first blow to our environmental assessment system. It removed a trigger for projects receiving funding in the first place. The Prime Minister voted in favour of that, as did 12 of his current cabinet ministers in this Parliament.

New Democrats are happy to see the change in tone but certainly want this to be a more powerful tool that will actually get results: real action.

Investing in renewable energy projects, embracing new building technology, and growing our food closer to home would build more new job opportunities, support small business, and create the win-

wins for climate action that our local economies, our communities, and our country so badly need.

• (1130)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to and offer my support for private member's Motion No. 45.

Private member's Motion No. 45 hearkens back to our government's Speech from the Throne, which said,

...a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. We can no longer have one without the other. Protecting the environment and growing the economy are not incompatible goals; in fact, our future success demands that we do both.

I commend my friend, the hon. member for Halifax, for introducing this important motion. The motion represents a significant opportunity for our government to highlight our climate change priorities through targeted infrastructure investments.

As members know, the relationship between infrastructure and climate change is an important one to our government. Budget 2016 stated that the second phase of our infrastructure plan would go hand in hand with the important transition to a low-carbon economy.

Investments in infrastructure can concretely advance our government's climate change objectives. Extreme weather events can be connected to climate change. We can protect communities across the country and save Canadians money on maintenance and repair by updating the codes and standards that relate to climate change.

Infrastructure investments can also support efforts to reduce emissions. Whether it is constructing residential and commercial buildings according to the highest efficiency standards or investing in public transit infrastructure to help get cars off the road and reduce congestion, infrastructure investments can drive the reduction of greenhouse gases and help advance our government's clean-growth agenda.

We expect our infrastructure to last for decades. That is why it is important that we take the time to do it right. Gone are the days of the simplicity of measure twice, cut once. Our policies and our engineering have to be smart and forward thinking. We must view all of our infrastructure projects through an economic lens in addition to an environmental lens. We need to ensure that we make the right decisions to avoid exposing our investments to future climate risks and that we prevent locking in high emissions for future generations. We have to quickly adapt and change our mindset to include the effects of climate change in our large-scale infrastructure investments. It just makes sense, both environmentally and economically.

Private Members' Business

That is why my colleague's motion is so valuable. Analyzing the greenhouse gas impacts of relevant infrastructure investments and considering this analysis in our decision-making represents a significant opportunity to meaningfully advance our mandate priorities on clean growth and climate change.

I spent over six years as a municipal councillor. I believe that municipalities are on the front line in their efforts to combat climate change through their decisions on infrastructure. That is why our government is partnering with organizations like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and making investments to advance shared climate change priorities. We are in this together.

In February, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, along with the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, announced \$31.5 million for 20 sustainability projects across Canada under the green municipal fund. The green municipal fund supports municipal initiatives to improve local air, water, and soil quality and to promote renewable energy. I am pleased to say that a number of these projects will directly contribute to Canada's climate change objectives through infrastructure investments. This includes funding a new net-zero library in Quebec that will minimize energy consumption while maximizing energy production. This means that it will generate as much energy as it consumes.

Building on this funding, budget 2016 announced a further \$125-million top-up to the green municipal fund in support of local green projects, including those that contribute to Canada's climate change efforts.

Budget 2016 also announced an additional \$75 million for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to help support the reduction of GHG emissions, to assess risks, and to integrate all the potential impacts into asset management plans.

Combined, this funding demonstrates our government's understanding of the critical role municipalities play in reducing emissions and enhancing environmental resilience across Canada.

Budget 2016 also included funding for projects where infrastructure and climate change complement each other.

• (1135)

To enhance Canada's resilience to the impact of climate change and severe weather, budget 2016 included funding to support revised building codes and stronger standards for our infrastructure assets.

Funding of \$248 million was also allocated to the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin outlet channels projects, which will allow the province of Manitoba to regulate lake levels and to provide flood protection for the surrounding communities.

Furthermore, \$212 million was allocated to upgrade the Lions Gate waste-water treatment plant in Vancouver to make it more resilient to the effects of severe weather and climate change.

Budget 2016 also announced infrastructure funding to reduce emissions. A total of \$62.5 million was allocated to support innovative technology projects and to improve emissions through alternative transportation investments across the country. This includes funding for passenger vehicles that run on lower-emitting

alternative fuels and fast-charge stations for non-emitting electric vehicles.

A portion of the \$574 million announced for social housing in Canada will be used to fund energy efficiency retrofits, which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lower heating and cooling costs, and create jobs. That is real change. That is building the green economy. Both measures will directly contribute to the overall reduction of greenhouse gases in Canada.

Passing and implementing this motion will build on these efforts to advance the government's climate change objectives through infrastructure investments. As our government works with provinces, territories, municipalities, and other key partners and stakeholders on the long-term infrastructure plan, we will consider options for implementing the motion in a manner that is consistent with our climate change and infrastructure priorities.

Ensuring that all infrastructure investments are first examined through an environmental and climate change lens must become the normal course of business in Canada.

Implementing Motion No. 45 would set Canada in the right environmental direction and would advance work under the Vancouver declaration as well as Canada's international commitments under the Paris agreement.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Halifax for bringing forward this important motion, which I support as amended. I would urge all members in this House to vote in support of its implementation.

• (1140)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too rise to speak to Motion No. 45 as amended. It is important to keep in mind precisely what the motion proposes. It proposes that the government ensure that an analysis of the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions be undertaken for all federal infrastructure, but it leaves the thresholds unknown and is unclear as to who will be consulted on those thresholds and when they may arrive. Why do I emphasize that condition? Because we are hearing from the big city mayors that they are in a crisis, and that they need funding for social and affordable housing right now. They want to know how long they have to wait for these criteria.

There is huge interest across the country, including in my riding of Edmonton Strathcona, for a shift toward consideration to a more sustainable way of living. Both my municipal government, under the direction of Mayor Iverson and his council, and the youth of my city are very interested in job creation in the new energy field. That includes in greener infrastructure.

Private Members' Business

The motion appears in small part to respond to the recommendations by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development in her recent audit report. It offers only a partial framework for commitments already made by the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities to at least partially redirect federal funds toward greening infrastructure.

The problem is the motion offers no substantive changes to either the regulatory or assessment laws to make consideration of reduction of greenhouse gases mandatory. It also offers no recognition of proposals for a more substantive and all-encompassing reform for a next generation environmental impact assessment process as proposed by a number of leading legal and environmental impact assessment critics, some of those including from Dalhousie University in the riding of the member for Halifax.

What has the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development called for? She has called for more substantive reforms to the ways in which the federal government actually delivers money for municipal infrastructure. This past spring, she reported in her audit on federal infrastructure programs intended to improve community environmental sustainability, including on the gas tax fund, the green municipalities fund, and other infrastructure programs whose objectives were to improve performance and sustainability of Canadian communities. She determined that in all three cases the government had failed to achieve environmental objectives. One of those objectives is action on climate change.

What about the gas tax fund? The commissioner found no demonstration that the gas tax fund spending actually resulted in cleaner air or water, or in reduced greenhouse gas emissions. When Jack Layton was the president of the FCM, he instituted sustainability criteria for the fund. Municipalities were required to produce sustainable development plans in order to receive some of those funds. However, the Conservatives in the last government stripped all reference to sustainability in the gas tax renewable agreements.

Over the past decade, there were no adequate performance measures, no reporting, and no accountability for the spending under that fund. The commissioner recommended that Infrastructure Canada work with the recipients to develop effective performance measures, take corrective action, and report to Parliament and the public. Motion No. 45 partially addresses this, but only for greenhouse gas assessment, with no specific actions required in the reporting.

What about the green municipal fund? That has been a \$500-million endowment to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, or FCM, since the early 2000s. The commissioner determined that the FCM managed the fund well, but needed clear objectives and performance expectations and longer-term federal commitment was needed. The announced green infrastructure fund may partially address it, but there are no details yet on the specific criteria. The threshold, once agreed on, would trigger a greenhouse gas assessment, but again that is unknown. The agreement granting the funds to the FCM already specifies a desire "...to enhance Canadians' quality of life by improving air, water and soil quality and protecting the climate." The criteria include energy. Again, there is a need for greater certainty.

What about the commissioner's concerns with federal infrastructure funds generally? She determined that the government had failed to consider environmental risks including climate change and the fact that there was a failure to identify, manage, or mitigate environmental risks the announced green infrastructure fund may address, and no criteria.

• (1145)

What is the response of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to the motion? I am told it is concerned about the effects of climate change and is already moving toward taking action on the emissions for which it is responsible. It is taking a lead on climate resiliency and on greenhouse gas reduction, not only because it is the right thing to do but because it has no choice. It is bearing the brunt of flooding and fires in my province.

Across the country programs are being implemented to make transit fleets greener, to retrofit buildings, and to manage stormwater more effectively. The federation is modelling some of Canada's best lowest carbon practices such as investing in district heating, active transit, electric car infrastructure, and better waste management. For the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, flexibility is paramount. It also wants a voice in any terms that are set.

The Canadian Urban Transit Association, which has been on the Hill in the last few weeks speaking with all elected officials, has already espoused a vision of sustainability in transit. That is encouraging.

Our partners are already on board.

What are the challenges the government faces in redirecting federal dollars to the greening of infrastructure? As I mentioned earlier, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities has testified at committee, and additionally outside, that he has a focus on three strategic areas: public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure.

It is still unclear how the government defines green infrastructure and whether there will be a requirement to provide upfront analysis of how the project would address or mitigate environmental impacts, including greenhouse gas reductions.

A number of people in this place have suggested that we need is legal criteria. What is the point of assessing if there will not be an obligation to deliver on those undertakings?

Private Members' Business

There appears to be some contradiction in direction by the government. The minister has stated that his mandate letter requires transport to refocus on building Canada funds toward trade-related infrastructure. Yet there is also this interest in moving toward greening. Are the dollars going toward building overpasses, freeways and rail terminals, or toward more of a greening of our infrastructure?

It is important who will be determining the priorities. My understanding is that the Liberal government has said that it is no longer going to dictate to the provinces or municipalities. Yet today's very motion proposes that it will be dictating the criteria. The FCM has said that it wants to be a part of the negotiations on how this moves forward.

As my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley recommended in his speech on the motion, an assessment of greenhouse gas potential of an infrastructure project may not be sufficient. He concurred with the recommendation of the commissioner that there was a need for performance measures, reporting, and accountability. As my colleague queried: will the projects under any of these categories of funding be denied if greenhouse gases are not decreased? Does it mean that those projects proposing to reduce a greater amount of greenhouse gases will get priority? What about infrastructure projects that do not reduce greenhouse gases, but rather help mitigate the impacts of climate change or propose better solutions?

Why just infrastructure? Our greatest challenge to meet our international commitments on greenhouse gases remains our major source industry. Is it fair that our municipalities will face strict scrutiny and conditions on federal funding when few conditions exist yet on larger sources?

The big city mayors are calling for urgent funding for affordable and social housing, and they need that money now. Do they have to wait for this criteria? Do they have to wait and be consulted on this criteria?

What about more comprehensive reforms to environmental impact assessment laws? Many, including legal experts at Dalhousie University and Schulich School of Law, support a more substantive next generation change toward sustainability assessments beyond simply responding to greenhouse gas reductions. They want upfront considerations.

It is well past time that the federal government moved to address rising greenhouse gas emissions. This is the beginning of an answer but only partial. We will support the motion, but we look forward to more detailed conditions being imposed by the government.

• (1150)

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to conclude debate on private member's Motion No. 45. I would like to begin by thanking all my colleagues from various corners of the House who have seconded the motion and all those who have weighed in and spoken on it as well. I also thank every person and organization across Canada who has shared their insight, their encouragement and their wisdom from this motion's earliest date.

In November 2015, very shortly after the federal election that sent all of us to this place, an open letter appeared in a Halifax newspaper

called *The Coast*, addressed to me as the then new member of Parliament for Halifax, and I would like to read a few lines:

Andy...Consider this your chance to distinguish yourself as an MP who understands what climate change will mean for his own community, and who will champion policy change with the urgency the climate crisis necessitates.

As your new constituents, we find ourselves wondering how you will live up to the high expectations this community has. How will you represent us? Where will you stand when it comes to the most important questions of our generation?

In Halifax, we have always demanded environmental leadership from our elected representatives. In many ways, we are a city of environmentalists, and what choice do we have? As one of Canada's leading coastal cities, the impact of climate change and associated sea level change in Halifax is near and frightening. Every day, the threat inches closer and closer to our shores. As the member of Parliament for Halifax, I am called to act on behalf of my constituents.

I introduced Motion No. 45 to the House because I believed at that moment in time, at the edge of what could be catastrophic climate change, and on the threshold of a \$120-billion investment in infrastructure that would transform our nation, we could no longer afford to make decisions without fully understanding and considering their environmental implications.

As I have said before, I am a city planner of 25 years. I know that the way we build our communities, the kind of infrastructure we deploy will in large measure determine whether we win or lose in this battle against climate change.

Infrastructure is a key determinant of greenhouse gas emissions. If we choose poorly, without the proper data and well defined guiding principles, we risk funding infrastructure projects that lock in for years the very emissions that we must reduce and eliminate.

For that reason, we must consider whether the infrastructure investments we make today might have future risks that outweigh their short-term benefits. Therefore, logically, environmental impact must be a key consideration in the rollout of this historic infrastructure investment.

That is why my motion, Motion No. 45, would achieve this. More specific, if passed as amended, Motion No. 45 will require greenhouse gas emissions analyses to be included in applications for federally funded infrastructure projects. Further, it will, where appropriate, require government to give funding priority to projects which help us achieve our emissions reduction goals.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***CANADA LABOUR CODE**

So as not to disadvantage small projects for which a greenhouse gas analysis would be unduly burdensome or where the project's environmental impact would be obviously negligible, Motion No. 45 would allow for responsible discretion by government to set an appropriate threshold, below which GHG analysis would not be required.

To bring action to Motion No. 45, the motion also calls for the development of an implementation plan. I know our government will work closely with provinces and municipalities, including my friends and colleagues at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, with whom I have consulted on this motion and with whom I will continue, to develop a sensible and fair framework which supports the efforts that communities across Canada are already undertaking to combat climate change.

I would like to invite colleagues one final time to support Motion No. 45 when it comes to a vote later this week. I hope I have been able to convey its merits and indeed its necessity, not only to my home city of Halifax but to our beloved communities from coast to coast to coast in Canada, which I have visited. I have seen first-hand the harmful impacts of climate change, sea level rise, and extreme weather events. They are real and they are happening now.

This week, by passing Motion No. 45, our Parliament can take a leadership role in decisive, meaningful action in the fight against climate change. In so doing, we will protect our environment for the next ones in this place: our children and our children's children. I believe we have no other responsible choice.

• (1155)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 28, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

The House resumed from September 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, an Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as many will know, when there is an opportunity to talk about the issue of labour relations in Canada, as much as possible people can count on the fact that I love to be able to share my thoughts on what I believe is a very important issue. It is an important issue not only for me but also for the Prime Minister and the Liberal caucus as a whole. That is very clearly demonstrated in the degree to which labour relations has been made a parliamentary priority by the government.

I can recall having discussions about labour-related legislation prior to our being in government, when we discussed two private members' bills. I will comment on that because at times it was fairly emotional for my colleagues opposite when we indicated the manner in which the past government, the Harper government, had changed the labour laws.

One of the discussions that took place had to do with the sense of unfairness about what the Conservative government was doing at the time in introducing private members' legislation. Therefore, no one should be surprised that the new government, led by our current Prime Minister, has made a fairly bold statement that we want to establish a new attitude and a new relationship between labour and management, given the harm caused by the former government. It did not take long for our new government and the Prime Minister to bring forward legislation that will ultimately assist in setting the stage.

Bill C-4 is a genuine and effective attempt to repeal legislation that was previously introduced in the House by private members. I was there during the debate when those private members' bills were brought forward to fulfill what we believed at the time was the Conservative Harper government's agenda with respect to labour relations.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to walk on picket lines and to support workers. I have had opportunity to meet with management groups to talk about labour relations. I understand the importance of balance. At one point, I was even the labour critic in the Province of Manitoba. I understand how important it is that there be balance, because balance is what provides for an effective bargaining process.

Although we have only held the reins of power here at the national level for a relatively few months, I believe we have made significant strides forward. I was really encouraged by our ministries here today that were so effective in sending the message to Canada Post and the union not to expect the current government to jump in with back-to-work legislation.

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The government's expectation is that the stakeholders in this case, the management and the union, will be able to negotiate in good faith. I believe that in good part they have understood that the government wants to see that different attitude toward negotiations and that it believes it is in their best interest, both management and the labour side of Canada Post, to reach a negotiated agreement. In essence, that is what we have witnessed. When there is an opportunity for a negotiated agreement between the stakeholders, I believe this is what we should be striving for at all times. I do not believe the previous government really appreciated that fact.

• (1200)

Hansard will clearly demonstrate that I would comment back then that everyone knew at the time that the government of the day would institute back-to-work legislation virtually immediately if a strike took place. How did that influence negotiations? It was not just in respect of Canada Post. Indeed, the government needs, as much as possible, to respect and allow for negotiations in good faith. It does not necessarily mean that we are limited. We act in the best interests of Canadians at all times.

The former government did not recognize the importance of labour harmony. That is one of the reasons why we, as a government, had to deal with labour legislation right from the get-go. That is exactly what our Prime Minister and our government did with the introduction of Bill C-4. First reading was back in January and the bill was brought forward for second reading in February.

What was the Conservative Party's official response? The Government of Canada said that Bill C-4 was a priority piece of legislation and that we should debate it. Back then, the Conservatives did not think twice. They brought forward an amendment to the legislation. The amendment read:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor: "this House decline to give second reading to Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, because the bill violates a fundamental principle of democracy by abolishing the provision whereby the certification and decertification of a bargaining agent must be achieved by a secret ballot vote-based majority".

Right away, the Conservative Party attempted to reject Bill C-4. It did that because it prefers those private members' bills, no matter who was offended by them. I am very proud that the government continued to push forward boldly with the legislation, understandably so, and we saw it go to committee.

When we deal with bills like C-525, C-377, and C-4, they go to committee and we get all sorts of different types of presentations on them. However, in this case, both labour and management argued that the approach established by Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 set a dangerous precedent for labour relations and law reform, wherein the tripartite consultation process—referring to employer, union, and government—had traditionally been considered as essential by the stakeholder to maintaining a workable labour-management balance.

• (1205)

We saw both sides make that claim. Many members in the Liberal caucus have raised that issue. I listened to my colleague from Atlantic Canada, when he was the critic for labour, stand up many times and articulate how important that balance was and how we had to respect the importance of the stakeholders. That was one of the

fundamental flaws with the private members' bills that were being advanced at the time, which we are repealing through this legislation.

We have an hour of private members' business every day, almost without exception. There was substantive labour legislation. When changes are made to labour legislation, there is an obligation to take those stakeholders, the labour and management sides, and bring them to the table and sit down with them to get a good understanding of where consensus could actually be built. That allows the government to be involved in this well-established process that has proven to be fairly effective in Canada. Other jurisdictions look to Canada to see how we are able to provide balance between labour and management, and the different stakeholders.

That is something that is so critical, yet both of those private members' bills did not go through that process. In fact, if we had applied the same rules of procedure to Bill C-4 as we did to the two private members' bills, then we would not be debating the bill right now. The bill would have been limited in terms of the amount of time allowed for debate.

Members know full well that a private member's bill is treated quite differently than a government initiative or government legislation. There is more debate time for government bills. There is a different process, whether it is the lead-up, the making of the legislation, ensuring that there is that consultation and that the consensus is built between and labour management, all the way to the second reading, third reading, report stage, and so forth.

There are time limits that are instituted in our rules to deal with private members' bills. That is why many thought it was intentional on the part of the Harper government to have private members bring legislation in through the back door. We have made reference to that in the past. Many on the other side get very upset or are offended when we talk about that backdoor approach, but they need to recognize that there is a difference in the process. That offended both labour and management stakeholders. At the time, the Harper government completely ignored that.

Now we are going through the process. What was Bill C-525? It was the Employees' Voting Rights Act. It was introduced in the House of Commons as a private member's bill on June 5, 2013, by the Conservative member for Red Deer—Lacombe. The bill received royal assent on December 16, 2014, and ultimately came into force on June 16, 2015. It suggested that the card check certification model, which we believe is quicker, more efficient, and more likely to be free of employer interference, was something the Conservative Party adamantly disagreed with. It articulated that it needed to be gotten rid of.

However, it did not go through the process. The private member, heavily supported by the government, brought forward that piece of legislation and it offended a great number of people, not only union personnel.

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•(1210)

Then Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (requirements for labour organizations), was introduced in the House of Commons on December 5, 2011, again by a Conservative member. The bill ultimately did pass on December 12, 2012. On June 26, 2013, amendments were made to the bill in the Senate and it was referred back to the House of Commons for review; however, the bill was restored back to its original version. Keep in mind, that was a majority Conservative Senate. Even the Senate recognized the imbalances being caused by this piece of legislation, but the Harper government used its majority to kick it back. Ultimately it was accepted and then put into force after royal assent in June 2015 and took effect in December 2015.

It is no wonder we have made this a high priority for this government. We heard some criticisms at the time about Bill C-377. That it could upset the existing labour relations balance between unions and employers was a comment we heard continuously, whether it was through debates or at the committee stage. That union financial disclosure was already addressed in the Canada Labour Code and in many provincial labour statutes was also something that was raised on many occasions, as well as why the Conservative government was singling out unions. What was the driving factor behind the Conservatives doing that?

It must be pointed out that the bill is discriminatory against unions and ignores other types of organizations such as professional associations, which also receive favourable treatment under taxation law. The bill would invade the privacy of labour organizations and their members.

It is interesting to note that the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees launched a constitutional challenge to Bill C-377. I understand that challenge is now in abeyance until we see what takes place with Bill C-4. There were a great many concerns dealing with privacy. Even the Canadian Bar Association and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner provided comments to that effect. The CBA suggested that the bill may be subject to legal challenges on those grounds alone.

It is amazing the number of provinces that voiced opposition to Bill C-377. A majority of the provinces also criticized the bill for potentially crossing over and destabilizing the labour relations environment. This is where I started my discussion. When we talk about Bill C-4, it is all about righting a wrong. It is restoring a sense of fairness and balance to our labour laws and that is of the utmost importance.

The Conservative government lost touch with Canadians on labour issues, as it lost touch on many different issues with Canadians. Bill C-4 is a good bill and should be supported by all members because it brings back and restores balance to labour relations.

•(1215)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to correct some of the facts.

Basically, when the previous government passed Bill C-525 and Bill C-377, there were major consultations, a word I believe the current government loves to hear all the time. The House of

Commons Standing Committee on Finance examined the issue, as did the Senate Standing Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce, and the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

Although no one is accusing the government of being logical, here is the question. What is the motivation behind the legislation? I believe an observer would say it is to protect the union bosses. The irony is that those union leaders are themselves elected by secret ballot. Does it make sense that union leaders be elected by secret ballot if secret ballots are not allowed for union certification votes? That is the question, and hopefully we can hear some logical answers.

•(1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me be crystal clear as to why it is we have Bill C-4.

In essence, it is about the fundamental values of how negotiations should be taking place in the collective bargaining process. Those values were violated by the Harper Conservative government. Bill C-4 is an attempt and a first step in restoring that balance of fairness, of openness, to labour relations here in Canada. It would fix a problem that the Conservatives created. That is what Bill C-4 is all about.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was very heartened to hear the member use words that I used in my speech, which were about having a more balanced approach to labour relations and that the legislation before us was a first step toward correcting what I feel was anti-worker legislation from the previous government. The NDP fought hard in the last Parliament to get rid of these anti-union, anti-worker types of legislation. Although there was consultation, if we go back and look, most people who were consulted disagreed with the government's legislation.

Why would we continue to operate under the previous government's Bill C-4 and just go at it bit by bit? Why not really make a stand, if the government really is supportive of workers, and repeal all the previous anti-worker legislation? I would like to hear whether the member would like to join with me in order to move forward. It is almost as big a step going back to start over in order to get back what workers fought long and hard for, which was taken away under the previous government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I did indicate that this is but a first step. There is other legislation.

I recall another priority legislation that we introduced, which dealt with the RCMP being afforded the opportunity for collective bargaining. Even though it was the Supreme Court that ultimately told the former Conservative government that we needed to establish that framework, it did not take our Prime Minister and the government long to recognize that this was something that needed to be done and should be done quickly, and we brought forward legislation to that effect. It was something that other jurisdictions, other law enforcement agencies, already had, this ability to organize. Therefore, why put it off? This is yet another piece of legislation.

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I can assure the member across the way that we are, as a government, very sympathetic to making changes that would improve our labour laws. However, there is an onus of responsibility on behalf of the Minister of Labour, the cabinet, the government, and in fact all members of the House to make sure that it goes through a process that enhances that balanced approach and works with the different stakeholders. We should not just take an idea and turn it into a law. We need to recognize the importance of inclusion and make sure that labour, management, and different stakeholders are brought into the circle.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government recognizes the very important role of unions in protecting labour rights across Canada.

I have personally met with the representatives of a number of labour organizations since I took office. They all agree that Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 weaken the Canadian labour movement and hinder the establishment of productive labour relations between employers and employees. The previous government hindered these relations, and our government is determined to repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

Can my colleague quickly explain to me once more what Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 imposed on unions and workers?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in listening to the question, one thing that came to mind is the fact that throughout this entire debate, outside of the Conservative Party, I have not received one phone call, email, or letter, at least to the best that I can recall, which was critical of Bill C-4.

The same cannot be said about the private members' bills. Bill C-525 dealt with the card check system, about which the Conservatives would ultimately say it should be the freedom of the vote and that the card check system is not needed. Many members of the union movement in particular thought it was a way to minimize the growth of unions, and even destabilize other unions currently in place.

Bill C-377 dealt with financial matters, where unions as a group were targeted. For what reasons? I have commented extensively on this. I believe there was a lot of negative political motivation that ultimately put politics and wedge issues ahead of Canada's best interests in terms of labour relations in our country.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member referred to a private member's bill as a backdoor move. I know his Liberal colleague just tabled a private member's bill that speaks to funding priorities for infrastructure. I am wondering why that should not be brought forward in the context of the overall climate change plan. Would he agree that this private member's bill too is a backdoor move?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I explained private members' business and the importance of labour legislation. I was here at the time that the Conservative government brought forward the private members' bills. It was interesting. If we think about it, the

bill dealt with the whole issue of the certification of unions. However, at the time, the minister of labour actually sat on a labour report from 2013, which in essence showed that that particular private member's bill was fundamentally flawed in terms of what its arguments were for it.

The Conservatives sat on that report. They chose not to share the results of that particular report, which indicated that the card check system was just as effective as the secret ballot.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

I rise in this House today to speak to Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act.

The bill would reverse a number of pieces of legislation that made it easier for union members to have a fair say within their unions via a secret ballot. It also ensured that union leaders were accountable to their membership and taxpayers by having their financial statements disclosed, as they operate tax free. This is no different from political members of Parliament, MLAs, crown corporations, charities, and native reserves, which I now understand has been reversed as well.

I have heard much throughout this debate, from all parties. I heard some of the most disturbing comments last week from members, and again from one of the members today, calling this original legislation “backdoor”, “anti-union”, “an attack on labour unions”, “union busting”, and that we, as Conservatives, hate unions.

I not only find those comments absurd; I find them frankly offensive. Many of our members have worked with unions and many have belonged to unions. There are seven out of 10 provinces that have financial disclosure requirements. Union members, past and present, along with the general public, supported disclosure, by over 80% in polling data when the bills were first introduced in 2013. When did accountability and transparency become so abhorrent to the government?

I have personally worked with numerous union leaders, union executives, and union organizations over many years. We did not always agree on every topic, but we still worked together. We still resolved issues. We still respected each other's opinions. More important, we respected each other's differences. In past elections, I have been publicly endorsed by unions, and even in this past federal election, as a Conservative, I was endorsed by a union.

The reason I say this is to allow some balanced perspective to enter into this debate. Bill C-377, passed by the previous government, added an additional tool of confidence and transparency for workers, requiring unions to disclose the way that they spent their money. It did not regulate how unions could spend their money, nor did it regulate any other activity. It simply helped to give Canadians a more open and transparent picture.

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Bill C-525, also passed by the former government, helped strengthen the rights of union members. It gave them the power to vote by secret ballot.

However, this bill, Bill C-4, would take those rights away from union workers. It begs the question of why a government, which insists that it is all about openness and transparency, is so insistent on taking away workers' rights.

I have witnessed the certification of manufacturing plants. I can assure members that this is not an easy nor a smooth process. I have personally witnessed the intimidation by both union workers and management personnel. A secret ballot lets an individual's true opinion be heard without fear of repercussions. By not allowing a secret ballot, we are putting workers, on both sides of the issue, in a very awkward and intimidating situation.

Let us never forget that all parties must work together to create a healthy and productive working environment. Jobs need to be created; they need to be sustained. Opportunities need to be provided for workers, and industry sectors need to grow. It is a symbiotic relationship, one that cannot survive without the other.

● (1230)

Canadians across this country have the democratic right to vote for their elected representatives by secret ballot. Abolishing the secret ballot is one of the most undemocratic actions that a government can take, and this is exactly what would happen with this legislation. A government cannot and should not pick and choose who gets the right to a democratic process. However, the current government is continuing down this path.

Not only are we seeing the lack of democratic process through Bill C-4, but we are seeing this play out in communities across this country with the so-called consultation on electoral reform. There is an overwhelming desire by the general public to have a referendum. We have seen it over and over again, in dozens of polls, in letters, newspaper articles, and in petitions across this country. People want a say in the way that they elect their political representatives. To have a few people gathered at town halls is not representative of the people's voice. It is one element to gather information. However, we cannot base our decisions solely on a few people showing up at a town hall.

By note, there were about 70 people in my riding who came to a town hall: the EDAs, the last candidate of record for the Liberals, some of their friends, and a very small number of people who were non-partisan. That does not represent the majority. However, I did send out a questionnaire to every household in my riding to ask about electoral reform, as well as having an online questionnaire. Overwhelmingly, the people want a referendum. They want a say in how they elect their representatives. They do not want politicians deciding for them.

Another funny little anecdote is that the issue of electoral reform was at the bottom of their concerns. People are concerned about health care, jobs, rising taxes, and a litany of other things. It certainly is not electoral reform.

This tells us many things, and it gives us an indication of what the current government thinks of openness, transparency, and accountability. People want a referendum on electoral reform and for

workers to have a right to a secret ballot. Whether they use it is up to them, but they should have that right. Conservatives value transparency, accountability, and democracy, which is why we introduced those pieces of legislation in the first place. Bill C-4 is the complete opposite of transparency, accountability, and democracy. Therefore, I cannot support Bill C-4.

● (1235)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, and I heard her speak about a referendum and electoral reform. I have great concern with the manner in which she is assessing the value of town hall meetings that are being held across the country right now with respect to electoral reform. In particular in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, we had a meeting on electoral reform and invited members from throughout the community. I did not see a lot of the people who came as traditionally being supporters of the Liberal Party. In fact, we had people from throughout the riding come to voice their opinion. To discredit the notion that town halls can be effective based on the fact that it is just, as the member put it, members or friends who come to these meetings, is extremely disingenuous.

I am curious as to whether the member could clarify her comments on that and talk a bit about the value she might see in those town hall meetings.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, that is not exactly what I said, and I will clarify it for the member. I was speaking about the town hall in my riding and what that consisted of. I also said that town halls were a way of gathering information, but that they were not the entire way of gathering information.

Let us be clear. There is value in gathering information on many fronts, but when we fundamentally change the way people elect their representatives, we must have a referendum so all people can have a voice.

● (1240)

Ms. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, when NDP members ask questions about the legislation, they talk about how the secret ballot is a bad thing. In my experience and from my information, the secret ballot is both good for the employer and the employee. Decision making for some people on whether they want to join a union is a private decision.

Is the secret ballot something workers should have the right to enjoy when they are making such a difficult decision? Could the member please clarify?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, this comes back to an individual's right. We have secret ballots for electing representatives. We have secret ballots for electing union leaders. We have secret ballots on a number of fronts. They protect and give confidence to people who vote, regardless of whether joining a union or not, or electing a union leader, or casting a ballot for the individuals they want representing them.

All of us have the fundamental right to a secret ballot so we can keep information to ourselves for whatever reason. Democracy is all about that. This is the most undemocratic piece of legislation I can think of.

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Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is no question that this legislation is an attack on two previous bills, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

I find it interesting to hear my colleague, a former mayor of a major city in Canada, say that she respects unions. We all respect unions.

I would like our colleague to talk about her experience in her time in municipal government doing the proper process.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, as the mayor of a large city, we dealt with many unions. We dealt with the firefighters union and CUPE. We also dealt with private sector unions.

The fact is that we all need to work together. We all need to have a healthy work environment that supports and empowers us. To have anything else is unacceptable. We need to work toward that end. When we deal with all types of unions, union leaders and executives, we find that common ground.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock for sharing her time with me. Clearly, it is much easier to say the name of her riding than to say Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

I also want to thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent and the member for Lévis—Lotbinière, who participated in last week's debate. They did an excellent job of pointing out the importance of the bills passed a few years ago by our government, specifically Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. They were very important bills.

The government seems to be saying that these bills are not as important because they are private members' bills. Today, the government is trying to make it seem that these bills are less important, even though the Liberals themselves have some bills of this nature on the table at present.

We should also applaud the contributions of former member Russ Hiebert and the member for Red Deer—Lacombe, who is still with us. They sought to make the labour movement fairer, more transparent, and more democratic.

If Bill C-4 is passed, the government will be denying workers two fundamental rights. The first is union transparency, which is very important. Members pay union dues and must therefore have the opportunity to vote in a transparent process. That is what we believed at the time and what we still believe today. We also believe that unions need to be transparent, particularly with regard to the dues they receive.

Workers must be able to exercise their right to vote by secret ballot without fear of reprisal from their colleagues or superiors. We know that there have been instances of retaliation in the past. Intimidation occurs within the labour movement. That has always been the case and will likely always be the case.

These two rights are common sense and taken for granted. They should have the unanimous support of all members of the House, but they do not. The Liberal Party feels indebted, not to ordinary

workers, but to big union bosses who obviously worked behind the scenes to help the current government get elected.

Whether they are members of a union or not, all Canadians have a vested interest in ensuring that labour groups are transparent with their members and with all Canadian taxpayers, since \$4 billion in union dues are collected every year. As a result, unions are entitled to tax credits for labour-sponsored funds, such as Fondation CSN and the Fonds de solidarité FTQ in Quebec. These funds are paid for by all Canadians.

We therefore believe, and rightly so in my opinion, that full transparency is needed when it comes to these funds and the taxes that are paid. That is why Bill C-377 was so necessary.

As our colleague pointed out last week, \$500 million in taxpayers' money goes into these funds annually. That is a huge amount of money. The government opposite believes that requiring unions to make public any expenditures of \$5,000 or more places a heavy administrative burden on them.

As members of Parliament, to get reimbursed for a taxi ride we are required to submit a receipt if the total is equal to or greater than \$25. We have to substantiate our claims.

I think this government has a lot to learn from what happened in the past few months because, by all accounts, transparency was lacking. This government claims to be extremely transparent. However, we learned that the Minister of Health claimed \$1,700 in expenses for her limousine, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change claimed \$6,000 in expenses for a photo session, not to mention everything we learned last week about the moving expenses for key government employees, including employees of the Prime Minister. Hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars have been spent by a number of departments.

If it were not for the fact that transparency is mandatory in this Parliament, we would be none the wiser. It is therefore essential that the same level of transparency required of governments and elected members be required of unions and of big union bosses.

● (1245)

If I were a factory worker in La Pocatière, Montmagny, Rivière-du-Loup or l'Islet, which are four towns in my riding, I know that union dues would be deducted from my paycheque every week in order for the union to protect my interests. However, that money must be spent wisely.

Any government or organization must be transparent for its taxpayers or its members. We cannot stress this enough. We must ensure that all members of an organization have a full accounting of how their money is spent, because it is their money. As MPs, we manage taxpayers' money. Thus, the government must be transparent. It says it is, however, it is not even exercising its own prerogatives.

Government Orders

If this government believes that \$5,000 is too low a threshold for a detailed accounting of expenditures, what amount does it believe is more appropriate? That is an excellent question because \$4 billion in union dues is paid every year. Five thousand dollars is a minimum. That was our belief back then and that is what we continue to believe today. Does the government have a different minimum threshold?

It is important to remember that, as MPs, we have to report any expense of \$25 or more. I do not see why a union should not have to do the same for expenses of \$5,000 or more so everyone knows how people's union dues are being spent.

The government has to answer for how it spends taxpayer money, and charities also have to account for their spending to comply with Canadian law.

Any charity that supports a particular candidate or party during an election campaign runs the risk of being stripped of its special tax status under the Income Tax Act. Why should unions be exempt from similar neutrality and impartiality obligations?

The Liberals say they are all about evidence-based policy, but they often seem willing to turn a blind eye to union activities whenever it suits them.

We believe that Bill C-4 will destroy all the crucial measures we included in those bills. Transparency being a priority, union leaders must demonstrate the same degree of respect, integrity, and care as government and opposition MPs. As those in charge of managing taxpayer money, we must be transparent about how we spend it.

Bill C-4 gets rid of all that. Those two essential pieces of legislation worked very well together. I think they are necessary and should continue to be necessary. That is why I am going to vote against Bill C-4.

•(1250)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if these bills were so important to the Conservative Party, why did it try to bring them in through the back door as private members' bills instead of introducing them as government bills during the last Parliament?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to answer my colleague's question.

I do not understand why he is trying to differentiate between government bills and backbenchers' bills. I honestly believe that all members here in the House are equally important. There is no difference.

Whether bills come from one side or the other, whether they are supported by one party or another, they are all legitimate bills and approaches. It is as though my colleague were telling us that we did not do things the right way.

Does that mean that all of the bills introduced by Liberal backbenchers are no good? That does not make any sense.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, could my colleague comment on the fact that we require charities and universities to be transparent with regard to the

government tax benefits they receive? Could he also comment on that with regard to union dues?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question.

Any organization, whether it is a university, a foundation, or a charity, must be transparent to all of its members or donors regarding the donations it receives. The same goes for the government and for unions.

To paraphrase someone we all know, it's 2016. Clearly, public funds of any kind must be spent in a way that gives people confidence in all the organizations they give money to, whether as employees or as donors.

As for unions, workers pay dues directly from their paycheques to create a fund intended to protect and defend their interests, and that is entirely as it should be.

Once again, I would like to say to my colleague and all members of the House that I have absolutely nothing against unions. On the contrary, I see them as necessary and important, and I believe the vast majority are very respectful.

If unions have nothing to hide, however, why do they not support these bills? Transparency is crucial.

•(1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague just stated that there is openness and transparency with charitable donations and that charities have to make sure that the rules are followed with their donors.

In a union, they also do that. In fact, every month, when there is a regular union meeting, as I have had in the past, the minutes are passed by the union members. They know where the money is going and what is being paid. Some people may not like that, but the membership actually votes on it democratically. I am not sure where the openness and transparency would be hidden by the union.

Also, the books can be audited at any time by the government, which would tell us if we were doing something wrong, and we would have to make those corrections.

It is open and transparent. I do not understand what the member is saying.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, as I have been saying from the beginning of my speech, we need to put mechanisms in place to ensure that all union organizations are being transparent. Bills C-377 and C-525 accomplished just that, and yet the government, with the support of the second opposition party, is doing away with them.

Government Orders

I hope that was brief enough. Clearly, some sort of coalition is forming against us right now, because those bills were important.

[*English*]

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the member for Laurentides—Labelle.

It is great to be back on Parliament Hill. I hope everyone had a great summer and time well spent with their families and loved ones.

Prior to the election, I was a member of United Steelworkers Local 4610 for over 12 years. Early on, as a teenager working in a unionized manufacturing facility, I was unaware of the role unions played for their members. As I matured and grew older, I quickly realized the great value of unions in protecting workers' rights. Today I am proud to rise in this chamber to talk about the role of the unions in the country and how Bill C-4 will reinstate a fair and balanced federal labour policy.

Unions are a fundamental element of Canada's social and economic fabric and are at the core of our middle class. They help create well-paying jobs, safe communities, and a prosperous economic environment. They set standards for working conditions and quality of life for working people.

Canada has a relatively high rate of unionization, with 30% of workers belonging to unions.

Union-negotiated wages and benefits are usually superior to what non-union workers receive. Higher wages foster a thriving middle class. Higher wages mean more money spent in our consumer-driven economy. Higher wages mean a healthier population.

Unions have been a driving force for economic equality and social rights in Canada, including pay equity for women, safer workplaces, and better pensions for retirement. These advantages are not restricted to union members. Indeed, when unions raise the bar, they raise it for every worker in Canada. The five-day work week, minimum wage, maternity and parental leave, vacation pay, and protection from discrimination: we owe them to the actions of unions.

I have worked in both non-union and union environments. To elaborate, with respect to safety, I remember working in a unionized environment, and the thoroughness of the orientation it provided on safety was superior to any place I had worked before. I had worked in non-unionized places, and although there was a lot of training on safety, the unionized places ensured the safety of their workers to the highest level I had seen.

When Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 were presented under the previous government, they were perceived by many as an ideologically driven and unwarranted attack on unions and collective bargaining.

Bill C-525 was introduced in June 2013. The provisions contained in the bill were designed to make it harder for unions to be certified. It was proposed and enacted without consultation with relevant stakeholders, and because of that, a number of labour organizations and employers expressed their opposition to the bill.

Bill C-377 was also introduced under the previous government—

• (1300)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for you to remind members that it is not okay to take photographs in the chamber with their BlackBerrys. I witnessed a member doing that. Could you bring the members to order who are doing that and ask them to delete any images they have taken in the chamber?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Wayne Long): So noted. Members are reminded that BlackBerrys and cellphones are not to be used in the House.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-377 was also introduced under the previous government. It was called unconstitutional by seven provinces and was opposed by a significant number of unions, police associations, federal privacy commissioners, and the Canadian Bar Association. It put unions at a disadvantage during collective bargaining and made it more difficult for employees to unionize. It added unnecessary and redundant compliance requirements for financial disclosure, which were already addressed in the Canada Labour Code and in many provincial labour statutes.

Jerry Dias, president of Unifor Canada, Canada's largest private sector union, called it an attack on unions. Canada's largest public sector union, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, said the bills were designed to weaken unions.

It is clear that both bills were counterproductive to a fair and balanced relationship between workers and employers. It comes as no surprise that repealing them was a priority of my party during last year's election campaign. Our commitment won the support of many Canadians. Consequently, repealing these two pieces of the previous government's labour legislation was a priority in the mandate letters of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

To honour our commitment, and to avoid excessive red tape while steps were being taken to repeal Bill C-377, the Minister of National Revenue waived reporting requirements for labour organizations in December 2015 for the 2016 fiscal period.

To repeal Bills C-377 and C-525, Bill C-4 was introduced to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, and the Public Service Labour Relations Act to restore the procedures for the certification and the revocation of certification of bargaining agents that existed before the introduction of both bills.

Bill C-4 would also amend the Income Tax Act to remove from all the acts the requirement that labour organizations and labour trusts provide annually to the Minister of National Revenue information returns containing specific figures that would be made available to the public.

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The Government of Canada recognizes the important role unions play in protecting the rights of workers in this country and in helping the middle class prosper. To achieve a fair and balanced federal labour policy, we have to repeal the provisions enacted by Bills C-377 and C-525. I encourage all members to vote in favour of Bill C-4.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask about the issue of the secret ballot. This is characterized by some on his side as supposedly an attack on unionized workers. Of course, we know that unionized workers in various opinion polls have suggested that they support having the right to vote by secret ballot, which is, of course, the same right all Canadians have when they elect their members of Parliament and officials in other areas.

I want to ask the member why he disagrees with the majority of unionized workers in Canada, who think they should have the same right everyone else has, the right to vote via secret ballot in elections that are important to their own affairs.

• (1305)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Madam Speaker, during the campaign, when I went door to door, I spoke to a lot of people who were members of unions. They talked about the particular system they had and said they were absolutely fine with that system. They had a card check system, a certification system, that was more efficient and more likely to be free of employer interference. They mentioned that when they voted, they were required to provide their employee IDs, which tracked who would be voting, prevented fraud, and ensured that all members got a free and fair vote.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler for his speech, because he was able to identify the key aggravations in Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. These two bills stood out to me when they were debated here in the House.

On Bill C-525, the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin said at the time that the legislation was put forward to deal with the mountain of grievances that arose year after year against union organizers. However, when the chairperson of the Canada Industrial Relations Board appeared before committee, we asked her just how high that mountain was. How many grievances had come in against union leaders over the past 10 years? There were two grievances against union organizers. It was not quite a mountain, but a misnomer from the get-go.

There was another thing that came forward, if we are going to change the labour code in this country. Does my colleague believe it has to be done through a tripartite process, through consultation and consensus with government, employers, and employees? We as a country have embraced that tripartite process. Does the member not agree that rather than using private members' legislation, we should do it through a tripartite process?

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct. We need to consult with other unions. We need to consult with the provinces, particularly when seven provinces were against Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. We need to consult with the provinces as they look after a lot of our labour laws. Those are the types of people we need to consult with.

Also, unions are self-regulating. The federal government should not be dictating to them how they should be structured or how they operate. They are self-regulated, and that is the way they should be treated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this third reading debate on Bill C-4. This bill was tabled to kill Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, which were rammed through by the previous government.

I support this bill for many reasons. Today, I would particularly like to point out the lack of transparency and consultation that marked the passage of Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. In both cases, the previous government distorted the legislative process and made it completely unfair. Yet, these two bills made significant changes to Canada's labour laws.

Our government firmly believes in taking a fair and balanced approach to legislating on labour relations issues. It firmly believes in striking a balance between the rights and responsibilities of employers and those of employees.

Many organizations testified before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Many of them criticized the fact that Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 were drafted without proper consultation with unions, employers, the provinces and territories, and the Canadian public. In his testimony before the committee, Hassan Yussuff, president of the Canada Labour Congress, indicated that these private members' bills represented a fundamental and dangerous attack on the rights and freedoms of working people in Canada to organize unions free from outside interference. He went on to say that the bills were developed without consultation with the labour movement. They threatened to polarize federal labour relations and fundamentally tip the balance between employers and unions.

Our government does not support an approach that does not include consultation, and that is why we need to repeal the amendments that these two bills made. They are unfair and also harmful to our economy. The reform of Canada's labour laws is far too complex and important of an undertaking to be taken lightly.

While drafting Bill C-4, we took the concerns of our provincial and territorial partners into account. That kind of constructive approach is the only appropriate way to go about changing the legislative framework that governs labour relations.

Bill C-4 will help restore fair and balanced labour relations and will ensure prosperity for Canadian workers and employers. Bills C-525 and C-377 were clearly very problematic.

For example, Bill C-377 was a direct attack on the collective bargaining process because it required unions to disclose detailed financial information about their activities, including information on strike funds, which gave employers an undue advantage over unions.

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There was a reason why Michael Mazzuca, a representative of the Canadian Bar Association, told the committee that, because of its major concerns, the association fully supported the provisions of Bill C-4 that repealed those of Bill C-377. He also indicated that the latter bill was fundamentally flawed and triggered serious concerns from a privacy, constitutional law, and pension law perspective.

Bill C-525 attacked union certification and decertification. The former government's intentions were crystal clear: to make it harder for Canadian workers to organize. This measure, just like Bill C-377, gave employers an unfair advantage over workers. It is time to restore balance and fairness to a system that has been working for a long time.

Stable labour relations are crucial to moving our economy forward. It was high time to restore that stability because Bills C-525 and C-377 were adversely affecting the climate of labour relations and bargaining in Canada.

In committee, a number of people shared their concerns over the impact of these bills on privacy, their constitutionality, and the fact that they are seriously weakening the labour movement.

• (1310)

Let us not forget the important role that unions historically played in Canada. They have always stood for protecting labour rights and ensuring the development and prosperity of the middle class across the country. We owe many of our rights to labour unions. We are proud of them.

Bill C-4 will make things right again by restoring the balance of power between the parties. We made that commitment during the campaign and now I am proud to say we are honouring it.

If the former government had bothered to hold real consultations, if it had not been driven by ideological beliefs, and if it had done its homework, we would not have to clean up this mess today.

Fortunately, Bill C-4 will fix everything. I urge all members to give it their enthusiastic support. Canadian workers and employers will be glad for it.

• (1315)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned that three parties are interested in this bill: the workers, the employers, and the Canadian public. Most of the quotes the member cited seemed to come from employers' groups or workers' groups or union organizers. Could the member speak to what the general Canadian public's perceptions are of this law and what it saw needing to be rapidly removed by these bills? It would be great if the member could address that.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, I think that the Canadian public believe in the strength of unions. They believe that unions serve an important role in our society and that without unions we would not have many of the rights we have today. We would not have two-day weekends and 40-hour weeks. I think the Canadian public recognizes the value of unions and did not appreciate the tax on unions by the previous Conservative government.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member will recall from his time as a staffer the struggle

that we had in trying to get real facts and real issues discussed when these bills were on the floor. He will recall at the time of Bill C-377 the constitutionality and privacy experts, including our own Privacy Commissioner, the Canadian Bar Association, and all kinds of provincial representatives, who said, "Please don't do this, it's the wrong thing to do". Yet, the Harper government just rammed that through as it did with many other things.

I raise the issue of, and ask the member for his personal view on, the importance of parliamentarians taking into account all of the views that are out there. The previous government was very much majoritarianist, in believing it had a majority government and could do whatever it wanted no matter what anyone said. I'd like to think the current government is taking a different approach.

Perhaps the member could give us some of his thoughts about pluralism in our country and the need to listen to other groups and entities and vested interests in bills and to take their comments seriously. How does the hon. member feel about that sort of pluralism here in Canada?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, that sort of question answers itself. It is very important that we have conversations and discuss with Canadians what is going on and the role of unions. Every change we make should be looked at in a broad perspective. We are not doing things ideologically, but for the benefit of the country as a whole. I think it is very important that we follow that track.

To my colleague and friend across the way, unions are very important to me. As my great-uncles, Bill and Sam Walsh, were very important in the organizing of the union movement through the 1940s and on, it is ingrained in my heart that these things have immense value to our country, and I would not trade unions' rights away.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to commend the member for Hamilton Centre for the use of the word "majoritarianist". That is the first time I have heard that one in the House. It was a good word, and well used I thought.

I very much respected the way my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle wove into his remarks about unions' contribution to this country, the building of the middle class in its fight for fair wages, benefits, and working conditions.

I asked this question earlier. If we are not going to be the party that is the cheerleader for either labour or business, we need to be respectful of the tripartite process. Is that the way to go forward here, with employers, employees, and the government sitting down in a tripartite fashion? Is that the way to keep labour peace in this country?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, I think when we exclude people we do not get good results. Having a tripartite process is a good way forward and helps us get the results we are looking for that would help everywhere and we need to be able to use that.

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• (1320)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to join in the debate. Having listened to some of the different comments that members have been making and given the broad strokes in which this discussion has been discussed, let us get back and talk about the actual provisions in the legislation.

I think it is important to talk about the role of unions in society more broadly, and I will be making comments about that in my speech as well, but let us first be clear about what we are actually substantively debating.

What the government proposes to do in Bill C-4 is to whole hog repeal two pieces of private members' legislation that were passed under the previous government: Bill C-525, with respect to guaranteeing a secret ballot in the context of certification in federally regulated areas, and Bill C-377, which is a bill about financial disclosure for unions.

We are talking about some fairly specific things. We are talking about secret ballots and we are talking about financial disclosure. I would posit that one can be in favour of secret ballots and financial disclosure and still very much believe in the important role that unions have played, and continue to play. I think we can have an honest conversation about the provisions in Bill C-4, agree or disagree, while still recognizing that there are some points of common ground insofar as there are also points of disagreement.

One of the first lines of attack we see from the present government on these two private members' bills, and it is quite striking that it is doing this, is to attack the very legitimacy of private members' legislation, at least as a vehicle for putting forward substantive ideas.

I would argue, as an individual member of Parliament who takes my rights and responsibilities very seriously, that we are sent here to represent our constituents individually and private members' business is the only vehicle we have, and it is based on a draw, depending on where our names line up, for putting forward bills that we personally believe are important and for having the opportunity to have those bills discussed and then voted upon.

It is not only legitimate, but it is valuable for members of Parliament to use those private members' bill opportunities in very substantive ways. With the exception of bills that spend money, private members' bills are allowed to, and should, cover a wide range of different important and substantive topics.

Members opposite know the process that exists for private members' legislation. Of course, there is less time allocated in the day for a private member's bill debate than there is for government bill debates, but there are no such restrictions upon the ability of parliamentary committees to study that legislation once it proceeds to committee. Indeed, when private members' legislation makes it to committee and it is debated at committee, committees can call many different kinds of witnesses. They can take the time they need to consult, to hear from a broad range of stakeholders. Also, if a bill is going to become law, it will have gone through that process in both the House and in the Senate, providing two different opportunities, again, for stakeholders to be engaged. That is in addition to any

consultation that individual members of Parliament do or that the sponsor also does.

There is a process in place, and it is important to underline that other than private members' legislation, there is no channel for anyone other than the government to bring forward bills in this place. Wherever members stand on the bill, I say, let us stop this attack on the legitimacy of private members' business, because it hurts all of us when members across the way make the kinds of comments that we are hearing about private members' bills somehow not being a legitimate place to have important and substantive debates.

I want to talk a bit about the role of unions, from my perspective and I think, probably, from the perspective of my colleagues on this side of the House, as well. I believe, we believe, that unions have a very important role to play in our society, that they have had and continue to have an important role.

First, they have a role in advocacy. We know that many of the basic, accepted notions of workers' rights that we have that are now protected in law for all workers are things that were initially advocated for by unions. Unions have provided that general social advocacy on behalf of certain reforms that have been important and helpful for workers.

• (1325)

Unions have also provided advocacy at a collective bargaining level on behalf of a whole bargaining unit. That continues to be an important role that unions play. Also, they provide advocacy for individuals who may have grievances or challenges in the workplace and need the support of a broader group such as a union acting on their behalf to ensure their rights and interests are protected. This advocacy is an important function that unions have and continue to carry out, and this is something I think we would find broad agreement on in the House.

Perhaps a role of unions that gets less attention, but is still very important, is the way unions provide training, mentorship, and elements of social community to people within the workplace. Members of my extended family who have been members of unions have really benefited from the mentorship structures that exist in unions. Therefore, unions play an advocacy role as well as a community role, and they provide a lot of value when they play that role.

Unions can also help to instill a deeper sense of pride of vocation. For many of us work is not just a way to earn a living, but something we invest aspects of our identity in and we appreciate the dignity and value that comes to us through our opportunity to contribute to the work we do. Unions can help instill that sense of pride in work, and often they do that.

On our side of the House, certainly from my personal perspective, we would strongly affirm that unions have an important role to play.

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It is perhaps also worth recognizing that unions come in different forms. Some of the functions I just described, whether it be community, training, or advocacy, can often happen in a different form in a non-unionized workplace as well. Therefore, I would not say there is one model that is necessarily better than another. It is up to individual workers to evaluate and consider what type of workplace model best reflects their interests.

That is why it is important to have a democratic model for deliberation about certification and for workers coming to those decisions, as well as having a truly democratic model for deliberation about which union. There is increasing diversity of union options out there. It is logical to regard that as a positive thing, when we have different kinds of union models that provide workers with some choice in the process of certification, such as which union, what kind of union, or perhaps no union at all, in terms of how they proceed with their certification. There is an important role for unions and it ought to be one in which those functions are fulfilled.

Unions are at their best when they respect the internal diversity of opinion, the rights of their members, and democratic principles in their activities. Many unions do that. Unions are at their best when they consider their work in the context of universal human solidarity, when they are invested in the needs and interests of their workers, as well as the unemployed, as well as the long-term well-being of the company that supports their activity. Unions are at their best as well when they work to encourage excellence in the workplace. That is very common. That is something many unions do.

We can have a conversation about the details of how unions operate from a place of respect for the role they have and continue to play, but also we need to dig into these specific provisions and, recognizing the role that unions play, ask what the best way is to maximize their success.

As I was reflecting on that I thought it would be worthwhile to draw on some opinion data. I found a survey that Leger did in 2013 with some really interesting data about the opinions of the general public, as well as the opinions of members of unions, about some of the different aspects of the legislation. It is important that we listen to individual union members who have bought into this model, see the value of the work their unions do, and who also may have specific opinions about the kind of structure under which it could operate. This is from 2013, but I suspect there has not been a radical change in the opinions of union members on these types of issues.

• (1330)

The first question that was asked was whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "It should be mandatory for unions from both the private and public sectors to publicly disclose detailed financial information on a regular basis" .

Members might be interested to know that 61% of union members in that sample completely agreed with the statement that unions of both the private and public sectors should publicly disclose detailed financial information on a regular basis, and 23% somewhat agreed, so of current union members, over 80% either completely or somewhat agreed with the idea of public disclosure of financial information on a regular basis. If we are going to call some of these

things "anti-union", I think we should listen to what union members are saying and reflect on that feedback.

It was interesting to look through the full range of questions that the study asked. One of them was whether workers felt that their dues were being well spent. In terms of the numbers, 57% of unionized workers said they thought their dues were being well spent; 27% said they were not being well spent. Therefore, that is a positive number for unions. Unionized workers saying, yes, they see the value of their membership in unions, they see the value of the dues they are spending, but at the same time also saying that they see the importance of financial disclosure.

There has been some discussion of the use of union dues for certain kinds of political activities. It was interesting that 62% of unionized workers in this sample felt that making contributions to advocacy groups unrelated to workplace needs was something that they disagreed with. They did not want to see their dues used to fund advocacy groups unrelated to workplace needs. A full 77% of unionized workers said they did not want to see their dues being used to fund political parties.

That was some feedback. Workers are saying, yes, they see generally their dues being well spent, but they want to see that they are going to things related to workplace needs, not things unrelated to workplace needs, and that they see the value in public disclosure.

This one really stuck out for me, "A secret ballot vote should be required when forming or removing a union from a workplace." Of current unionized workers, 62% completely agreed with that, and 24% somewhat agreed with that. According to this particular survey, 86% of current union members said they believed that a secret ballot should be required when forming a union in the workplace.

When I hear my colleagues across the way suggest that advocating for a secret ballot is somehow going against unionized workers, when well over 80% of unionized workers are telling a pollster that they want to have a secret ballot, there is obviously some dissidence there.

May I say, I wonder if that is why we hear so little discussion of the actual substantive provisions of the legislation. We hear members of the government saying that the old bills were anti-union and their new approach is eliminating those anti-union bills, without actually saying what the specific provisions in the bill were and whether those provisions in the bill accord with what union members are asking for. If we look at the numbers, it seems pretty clear that these things do accord with what union members are asking for.

When I spoke to the bill before, I talked about how one of the key arguments for a secret ballot is that a secret ballot provides an opportunity for prior deliberation. The card check system is one where members, seeking certification, may go around and get people to sign cards and then once a sufficient number of cards are signed, that is it, the union happens. However, when there is a secret ballot, there is an opportunity for discussion, for the employer and for those seeking certification to present arguments.

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There was actually a poll question specifically about this issue of the process of deliberation. They were asked to agree or disagree with this statement, “During a union organizing drive, employees should be entitled to obtain information from both the union and the employer on the impact of workplace unionization”. Of unionized workers, 73% completely agreed with that and 24% somewhat agreed with that. A full 97% in this sample of current union members in Canada said that there should be an opportunity for the union as well as the employer to present information reflecting what their perspective is on the impact of unionization. These are some very telling numbers about the perspectives that union members have.

• (1335)

I want to conclude my discussion, of this poll at least, with reference to one additional question that asked for perspectives. They gave two options. One option was on whether unions are still as relevant today as they have ever been. The other option was on unions being needed and relevant at one time but whether today they are any longer necessary. There were 71% of unionized workers who said that unions are still as relevant today as they have ever been.

A very large majority of unionized workers very much see the value and relevance of unions, and a majority of unionized workers believe that their dollars are being well spent. This is good news for unions in the present and in the future. However, at the same time, workers are saying that they want to have a secret ballot and that they appreciate the value of financial disclosure.

I think this is where we, as a House, need to be. We need to be listening to what workers are saying. We need to recognize what they are saying about the value of unions, for them, and for our society as a whole. We also need to recognize what they are saying about these very simple but important areas of having a proper process in place for certification, and also of ensuring that there is a proper mechanism in place for disclosure.

In the remaining time I have, I will come back to this issue of the secret ballot. It amazes me to hear colleagues in this House argue against the secret ballot. We are having a discussion about so-called electoral reform right now. I do not know if anyone has proposed in the conduct of these discussions that we should eliminate the secret ballot.

The idea of eliminating the secret ballot in our election system would be seen as totally ridiculous and would be very concerning to Canadians if anyone proposed it. However, for the purposes of union certification, it is like we are entering a completely different dimension. People who were elected by a secret ballot, who are very used to the principle of a secret ballot in every other kind of election, say it is not needed when it comes to certification.

The arguments we hear stretch credulity. For instance, they say that secret ballots provide a greater opportunity for employer intimidation. Did they miss the “secret” part of secret ballot? On what basis could it be argued that there is intimidation on a secret ballot?

Again, we do not hear the government arguing against the use of the secret ballot in federal elections because of the risk of intimidation. Obviously, not. That is exactly why we have a secret

ballot, to eliminate the possibility of someone looking over another person's shoulder and saying that they should vote this way or that way.

Secret ballots also reflect something else. They reflect a fundamental right to privacy that every person should have with respect to their political opinions. Most of us here choose not to be all that private about our political opinions. However, Canadians have a right, if they wish, to not talk publicly about their views on certification within their workplace. Members might understand why not wanting to tip their hand one way or the other in terms of their views on certification would be a choice that some people would want to make.

If that is how they want to express their right to privacy, to vote in secret about certification, in elections or in any other cases, that is a fundamental function of the rights to privacy that we expect. People should be able to not expose their political opinions if they do not wish to do so.

In the context of the secret ballot, I talked about the importance of the process of deliberation, having an opportunity for debate without having a certification drive sneak up on people who are not aware of it or do not have an opportunity to have that conversation.

I will conclude by saying that this is an important bill, one on which we can and have had good debate. However, we should dig into the provisions. We should talk about the bill. I think we all accept that there is an important role for unions in society. We also need to listen to what unionized workers are telling us with regard to the specific provisions of the bill. Then we need to evaluate it accordingly.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Madam Speaker, I think the member has lost the point in regard to why we have Bill C-4 before us. Fundamentally, we disagree with the Conservatives. We need to recognize that there needs to be a balanced and fair approach in dealing with labour laws. We did not see that with the Harper Conservative government. That is what Bill C-4 is all about. It is taking a flawed Conservative way of changing labour laws and trying to restore confidence in a system that was working quite well prior to Harper.

My question is not necessarily about the content of the two bills. However, will the member acknowledge that the way in which Mr. Harper changed labour laws through private members' hour was fundamentally flawed, and the reason that we have to have this legislation is to restore confidence and balance in our labour laws? That is what we should be talking about today. Would the member not agree?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, that is one of the most ridiculous things I have heard thus far in the House. He says it is not necessarily about the provision of the bill. What is it about then? We are debating whether or not we should pass Bill C-4, a piece of legislation before us. It is exactly about the provisions of the bill. What else could it possibly be about? He said let us not talk about the provisions of the bill, let us just insult the so-called flawed way in which the Conservatives, Mr. Harper, did this and that. It is great to be able to use his name.

Government Orders

Mr. Harper did many great things for this country. This is about the provisions of the bill. Let us have a discussion about the provisions of the bill. If Liberals want to throw mud, that is fine, but I would rather engage in a serious debate about this important legislation for the future of the country.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the speech, which was certainly well delivered and thought out, and I have kind of a quirky approach to your remarks in terms of a question—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the colleague to address the questions to the Chair and not to the individual. He mentioned “you” to the previous speaker.

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, you would think after 12 years that I would finally break that old habit, and I have not. I apologize.

The hon. member made a populist case about why there should be elections, plain and simple, regardless of how many. However, as I understand it, Bill C-525 went from 35% of the cards being required to trigger an election, to 40%. If the hon. member is so proud of the Harper legislation and he condemns the idea that there would be a vote at only 35%, how does 40% suddenly meet all of his populist needs where the 35% did not?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I do not know if I was being overly populist; I was seeking to refer to opinion data from union members. It is important for us to listen to what union members are saying.

The member may have disagreement about the specific trigger threshold. It is worth noting that this legislation does not just change a trigger threshold, but it repeals two pieces of legislation, again whole hog. However, I will say that 40%, and I think the member would know this, is the average across the provinces. I would argue that is a sensible approach, given that across the provinces there have been debates and different conclusions about different thresholds.

Again, the member may advocate a different threshold, but the reality is that we need to have secret ballots. The most important thing in the bill is secret ballots. Whatever the trigger threshold is, we should all be committed to the principle of secret ballots. Having that part of it remain in the law is particularly important, and it is disappointing to see the Liberals getting rid of it.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very eloquent speech. I could not have said it better myself, given that I was the sponsor for Bill C-525 in the previous Parliament. I want to thank him for his thoughtful approach.

I guess the House could take it that every private member's bill put forward by a Liberal MP is now a bill from their government and their Prime Minister. It is nice to know that Liberal MPs do not have any rights to put forward legislation on their behalf.

Based on what my colleague said in his speech, is the current legislation as it stands now not more in line and a reflection of the public opinion that he talked about in the Leger poll? Is Bill C-4 as proposed not completely offside with the wishes of union members?

● (1345)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague both for the question and for his good work in the previous Parliament on these important issues.

The member is absolutely right. The approach we have advocated in terms of transparency as well as secret ballots is more in line with what we are hearing both from the general public and from union members.

The point my colleague made about private members' business is particularly important. We have already had some substantive proposals from government members in the form of private members' business, and I give them credit for doing that. I give credit to members of the government, as well as members of our party, for putting forward substantive ideas through private members' business, even if I do not always agree with what is being put forward. The approach taken by some members on that side of the House is to completely delegitimize this vehicle. Let us remember that private members' business is the vehicle through which changes to the words of our national anthem were proposed. We routinely deal with important things in the context of private members' business, so the members are using that argument in a way that has dangerous implications for this institution.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me pick up on the point to which the member is referring. There is a difference between private members' hour and government business. When a bill is implemented through private members' hour, many limitations are put in place, for example, the amount of time in which it may be debated. The Harper government knew that and threw its support behind the measure in the private member's bill. There was no tripartite agreement.

Changes to labour legislation include labour, management, and government, and a long-time process that is part of our tradition was not respected. That is what promoted and encouraged labour harmony in our country. The Harper government upset the apple cart on that issue and got behind that legislation. That is the reason that labour issues came to the surface at that point in time.

Would the member not at the very least acknowledge that there is a difference between the way that legislation passes through the House of Commons when it is private members' legislation versus government legislation? It was a manipulative attempt by the Harper government to change the labour laws.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I spent the first quarter of my speech laying out, in precise detail, aspects of the process for private members' business as it relates to and differs from the process for government legislation. Private members' business is the only process by which individual members of Parliament can bring forward substantive policy ideas to the floor of the House to be debated, considered, and then voted on.

Government Orders

The member has been here long enough to know that private members' bills receive relatively less debate, generally speaking, than government legislation, although with the way that the Liberal government has rushed through some things, we may be testing that. Generally speaking, private members' business receives less debate on the floor of the House, but there are not the same limitations at all in the committee process. If the issue is consultation, there is an opportunity for detailed committee hearings to happen, and that did happen on both of the bills in both the House and the Senate. The member knows that. He knows that there is a process in place that allows for that kind of consultation. It is ultimately up to members to decide when they vote whether they think the bill before them is a good bill or a bad bill.

We have had many substantive ideas come through private members' business. The member's colleague put forward a detailed bill on animal cruelty. We had a proposal earlier to change the national anthem. These are substantive pieces of legislation, and it is important that members of Parliament have the ability to pose them. If my colleague thinks that we should somehow dumb down the ability of members of Parliament to use this avenue, the only avenue they have to bring forward ideas that are important to them and their constituents, then I strongly disagree.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we resume debate, I want to remind the member who is about to speak, the hon. member for Saint John—Rothesay, that I will have to interrupt him at some point, as question period will start.

The hon. member for Saint John—Rothesay.

• (1350)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure speak in support of Bill C-4.

I rise today a proud member of my riding of Saint John—Rothesay, which is the oldest incorporated city in Canada and one of the most historic. It certainly is one of the most industrialized and strongest union cities in Canada.

I was proud to attend the National Day of Mourning at the Lily Lake Pavilion six months ago on behalf of my government. I toured the Frank and Ella Hatheway Labour Exhibit Centre and learned first-hand what a proud labour and union history our city had.

I was the only elected official this year to attend the Labour Day parade. I attended, with pride, with the firefighters from IAFF Local 771 Saint John Firefighters, its 9-1-1 service, and respected and remembered the fallen firefighters.

However, it is not so much about being pro-union or anti-union. It is about treating unions with respect, having a dialogue, and transparency with unions, which is why I rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-4. The bill would repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, which I deem, as do people in my riding, particularly union members, union-busting bills.

When I went door to door during the campaign, union leader after union leader spoke to me about these bills. They felt disrespected, that unions were degraded, demoralized, and they wanted change. This is why Bill C-4 is so important. It is the next phase of our government's attempt to reverse the degradation and demoralization of unions, which the Conservatives used in their decade of power.

This government was elected on a pledge to strength for the middle class, and we strongly believe that unions are a key partner in fighting that fight. My home town of Saint John, as I said, has a long history of unions and an industrial base. Unions help grow our economy, protect our workers, and they are there to produce a more vibrant community.

The former Conservative government neglected the middle class for more than a decade. Instead, the Conservatives focused their energy on attacking unions and dismantling them. This is a fact. The members opposite speak about how unions supported them. However, I cannot find a union or a union member in eastern Canada that supported Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

Saint John's history is of a key shipbuilding and trading port, and the British Empire shows how trade unions can create a vibrant and strong community. Only with strong unions did Saint John thrive, and only with these things again can we make Canada's middle class, especially my constituents of Saint John—Rothesay, stronger than ever before.

My riding of Saint John—Rothesay is a proud union city. I will always be immensely proud to stand up for our unions, such as our local firefighters, local 771; our police union; IBEW and Matt Wayland; the Public Service Alliance, among others.

These unions are the backbone of our city and its economy, and I will always stand up for them. This is why I care passionately about Bill C-4. It is standing up for unions and the ordinary Canadians who reap the great things that unions provide.

Bill C-4 would repeal two laws that were not supported by evidence, were not wanted by either employees or unions, created additional and needless red tape, and were designed to pit employers against employees. We all know the best way to get anything done is to work together, to work with respect back and forth, and have open, transparent dialogue. This is why Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 must be repealed.

The Conservatives justified Bill C-377 by claiming there were complaints by union members. Let us be clear. These complaints came from 0.002% of union members across Canada. It is a tiny portion of the four million Canadians who are members of unions. The Conservatives ignored the fact that federal and provincial laws already existed to ensure proper transparency about union spending to the proper people, the union members themselves.

Statements by Members

●(1355)

This led to a massive administrative burden being placed on unions, as well as limited the ability of organized labour to effectively collectively bargain, reducing the ability of unions to help affect the landscape and help their members. Anything that hurts the ability of a union to collectively bargain for its members cannot be allowed to stand. An attack on collective bargaining is an attack on the union's ability to help its members, which hurts ordinary Canadians trying to get ahead.

Former Prime Minister Harper gave the best argument against the kinds of red tape that Bill C-377 created when, in January 2011, he said, "Cutting red tape is a most effective way to show that we are making government work for people, not the other way around". He was right then, but then allowed red tape to hurt the union movement and stop it from doing good for ordinary, middle-class Canadians.

The Liberals could not justify supporting Bill C-377 then, and our resolve to help average Canadians who want to get ahead has not waned. Additionally, Bill C-525 was also something we could not support in 2014. It was without evidence then, and is certainly the same now. The government claimed the bill was the result of consultations with labour groups and employers, but there was no evidence ever given to show there were concerns about the way unions were certified. This bill was an answer in search of a problem, and a very bad answer.

Repealing Bill C-525 is also part of our government's commitment to evidence-based policy, listening to experts, and proper, thorough consultations. The mountain of evidence claimed by the Conservatives looks much more like a molehill: 6 complaints out of 4,000 Canada Industrial Relations Board decisions in the last 10 years. Actually, it is a molehill that was made to be bigger.

Bill C-525 is an anti-democratic attack. It eliminated card check certification and added an unnecessary second step for certification. It has become an invitation for employers to interfere with the democratic right of workers to choose representation. It has taken Canada away from a system of verification that worked quite well and has replaced it with one that is not fit for purpose.

Many local unions in my riding have talked to me about the new system of certification and the way the card check system is better, quicker, more efficient, fairer, and less open to employer interference, and I agree. It is right that we should listen to those in the community who have seen what the new system has done, the damage it is doing, and take what they say. We were elected to do and fight for ad back the middle class.

When I have gone door to door in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay and have talked to union members, I have yet to find a union or union member who supports Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

The first time I spoke in the House was on this bill. I am proud to speak on it again. It is an immense privilege to stand here and fight for my riding and my union members, and the people of Saint John—Rothesay. I want to acknowledge union leaders like Dave Stevens, Peter Anderson, Abel Leblanc, Pat Riley, Bob Davidson, Darlene Bambridge, Debbie Ferguson, Clint MacGorman, Paul Britt, Terry Ferguson, and many others in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay,

who stand strong and proud for unions. Unions built our middle class and the Liberal Party is here to support unions.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech of my colleague across the way. He spoke about going door to door, talking to union leader after union leader and hearing their opinions on this legislation. We should hardly be surprised.

My hon. colleague mentioned a whole bunch of union leaders in his speech, to whom he gave glowing recommendations. However, does he think so little of them that he thinks they would not get elected by secret ballot?

Mr. Wayne Long: Madam Speaker, one thing the party opposite has never really come to grips with is the culture of demoralizing, degrading, and not working with unions. One thing the Liberal Party is going to stand up for always is open and transparent dialogue. Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 are anti-union, and I am proud to support Bill C-4 to repeal those bills.

●(1400)

The Speaker: Order, please. After question period, the member will have eight and a half minutes remaining for questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

BRAZILIAN CANADIANS

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Brazil's Independence Day, celebrated earlier this month on September 7. Home to the Amazon forest, Brazil is a tropical country blessed with abundant nature and known for its love of soccer, music, coffee, festivals and, of course, its beaches.

The Brazilian Canadian community is a proud, strong, and growing community in my riding of Davenport. They are hard-working people of great warmth and laughter and huge hearts. I want to acknowledge the heroic work of leaders such as Angela Mesquita, Dolores Gontijo, Suely Anunciacao, and Zico Pereira, who have done so much to share and celebrate the Brazilian culture in Canada and to build a wonderful community.

Like so many immigrants who came before them, Brazilians have come to Canada to build a new home for themselves and their families, as a safe place where they can take advantage of the many opportunities that this great country has to offer. I have no doubt that Brazilian Canadians will continue to make their mark here in Canada and contribute to building this great country that we are lucky to call our home.

[Member spoke in Portuguese as follows:]

Parabens Brasileiros do Canada.

2016 INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, Wellington County hosted the 99th International Plowing Match and Rural Expo in the town of Minto.

Over five days, more than 100,000 people entered through the gates of the tented city for the largest event of its kind in North America. With events ranging from the RCMP Musical Ride to the Knights of Valour jousting, to educational activities for kids, and countless types of plowing, including plowing with horses, antique equipment, and modern machinery, there was something for all ages and all interests.

I want to thank and congratulate chair Ron Faulkner and his team of 1,200 volunteers who gave their time and energy to make this event a success. Volunteers are truly the lifeblood of our community and the people of Wellington County have proved this once again.

The 2016 International Plowing Match has shown the pride of rural Canada as we celebrate our agricultural heritage and innovate for the future.

* * *

2016 OLYMPIANS AND PARALYMPIANS

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate all of our Team Canada Olympic and Paralympic athletes, and to pay special tribute to an accomplished Olympic athlete from my riding of Beaches—East York.

Penny Oleksiak captured our country's imagination in Rio. She is our youngest Olympic champion, the first Canadian to win four medals in the same summer games, the first swimming gold since Mark Tewksbury in 1992, with one Olympic record and five Canadian records. Penny grew up and lives in the Beaches. On August 28, our community came together and held a parade for Penny and all of our east-end athletes.

In particular, I want to recognize the work of the Beach Village BIA and the Danforth East Community Association. We are very much a small town on the east end of Toronto. We are proud of all of our Team Canada athletes, but we are especially proud of those athletes from our community, including Penny. We cannot wait for 2020.

* * *

MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, September 17, I had the honour of bringing greetings to the Montgomery Community Association in celebration of its 70th anniversary and its recent designation as a national historic site.

In 1946, the first 25 homes built through the Veterans' Land Act were occupied in the Saskatoon neighbourhood of Montgomery. At first there was no sewer, no water, no garbage pick-up, no mail delivery, no street signs or lights, and definitely no trees.

Today the Montgomery community is a beautiful neighbourhood in my riding. People can wander the streets named after famous World War II battles and servicemen, and at the corner of Rockingham Ave and Caen Street, they can view the special

Statements by Members

memorial that pays tribute to the 568 veterans who settled in Montgomery Place between 1946 and 1977.

Please join me in congratulating the Montgomery Community Association on 70 years of remembering and honouring our veterans.

* * *

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S MEDAL IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to pay tribute to Canada's pre-eminent landscape architect, Ms. Cornelia Hahn Oberlander of Vancouver Quadra. A fearless innovator, a remarkable artist, a visionary, and yes a rebel, Cornelia has been a pioneer, creating her field for more than 60 years.

Last Tuesday, His Excellency the Right Hon. David Johnston presented Cornelia with the first ever Governor General's Medal in Landscape Architecture, awarded to those whose lifetime achievement and contributions have had a unique and lasting impact on Canadian society.

Canadians can experience her signature landscapes that unfold people in nature's beauty and resonance, and pay tribute by visiting places she designed, among them the National Gallery in Ottawa, Robson Square steps and the Law Courts in Vancouver, the Northwest Territories legislature building, and the Museum of Anthropology at UBC.

She is a personal inspiration to me, and it is fitting that someone so inspiring would gift us with a built legacy—

● (1405)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

* * *

BRUCE—GREY—OWEN SOUND

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to highlight some very important milestones and events in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Over the summer, there were a number of local events that were once again a huge success. This year, the Sydenham Sportsmen Association hosted the 29th annual Owen Sound Salmon Spectacular. Year after year, this is the highlight of the summer for local anglers.

Other highlights over the summer were the 41st annual summer folk festival in Owen Sound and the 23rd Annual Heritage Farm and Steam Show, which took place in Paisley.

Statements by Members

Just this past weekend, I had the opportunity to attend the 20th anniversary of the scarecrow invasion in Meaford and the 149th anniversary of the Rockton fall fair, which were great events to kick off the fall.

In the coming weeks there are a number of fall fairs taking place, and the Owen Sound Attack will kick off its season. I look forward to attending all and watching the Attack bring home an OHL title. Go Attack, go.

* * *

LIMITLESS HEIGHTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about the Limitless Heights Scholarship fund, which provides members of the Lawrence Heights and Neptune community with much-needed support for education and training.

[*Translation*]

The scholarship was created in conjunction with the community revitalization housing initiative in order to recognize the important contributions made by residents.

[*English*]

One of this year's recipients is Faiza Dirir. Following a surge in gun violence, Faiza helped start a neighbourhood association, leading to a better and safer community. With the scholarship, Faiza plans to go back to school to gain her food service work certificate. Her children say they cannot wait to see their mommy do homework too.

I would like to congratulate Faiza, not only for this achievement but for being an inspirational mom and a source of inspiration for her community.

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PENSIONS

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe strongly that we are judged by how we treat our most vulnerable. Today, I focus on a crisis that is of great importance to me personally, as well as my colleagues from Hamilton East—Stony Creek, and Burlington, and the caring people of Hamilton, namely, securing the pensions and benefits of our city's retired steelworkers.

I believe the best solution to the U.S. Steel Canada crisis is the emergence of a viable company that continues to make steel and employ Hamiltonians in high-paying, secure jobs. However, the pensions and benefits of retired U.S. Steel workers should not be sacrificed in the process.

I have heard their stories. They told me of days when they were younger and full of hope, when they took jobs in a hazardous work environment in the faith that their retirement benefits would cover the cost of the drugs for any illness they might develop. Today, the U.S. Steel retirees and their families are racked by uncertainty. They deserve better.

SOVEREIGN'S MEDAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today and recognize two outstanding volunteers from my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

On September 7, I had the pleasure of attending a ceremony at Rideau Hall where Sean Adams and Ernie Spiller joined dozens of Canadians from the national capital region in receiving the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, presented by the Governor General himself, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston.

Sean Adams and Ernie Spiller have dedicated over 60 combined years to their respective communities, focusing their efforts in the areas of health awareness, improving the lives of impoverished families, and the preservation of local history.

Sean and Ernie are a testament to the caring and compassionate riding that I am so fortunate to represent. I commend their community service and offer my sincerest congratulations on receiving the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers. Bravo, gentlemen.

* * *

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the work that Jonathan Maracle and the Broken Walls team did this summer to help with the suicide crisis in Attawapiskat, a community that Jonathan tells me is full of gifted people, who have a lot of potential.

Jonathan is a member of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, an indigenous community, whom I have the honour to work with in my riding of Hastings—Lennox and Addington. Broken Walls is a Christian music band that travels the world communicating a message of dignity, self-respect, and the Creator's love of all cultures, using the Mohawk water drum and other indigenous instruments.

I rise also to recognize the very real crisis of suicide facing first nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. I am eager to travel the road ahead with all of my colleagues on the indigenous and northern affairs committee this session as we work with indigenous communities to seek answers and find solutions.

* * *

● (1410)

VETERANS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to share some feedback from the town hall I held with veterans last week in my riding. I would state first and foremost that Nova Scotia has the largest number of veterans and military members in the country per capita, and the riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook has the highest percentage in Nova Scotia.

Statements by Members

It was a great evening. Many veterans and military members were able to share their perspective on various issues and concerns they might have. Many were sharing the good things that are happening, as well as some suggestions about how we could improve. It was an excellent night.

However, there were a few things that came out of that discussion. One was the need for lifelong pensions, which is extremely important to them. Another was that they would like to see a 24-hour clinic at the Camp Hill hospital to provide specialized care.

I want to thank the minister for having invited MPs to share their feedback.

I also want to thank all of the veterans who came out and shared that information with me.

* * *

POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday on Parliament Hill and across Canada police officers met to honour and respect our fallen. The Canadian Police and Peace Officers' 39th Annual Memorial service honoured more than 850 men and women whose names are engraved on the honour roll tablets on Parliament Hill.

This year, the names of five officers have been added to the memorial as a permanent reminder of their contributions and their sacrifices.

Last Friday, I paid tribute to Constable Chelsey Robinson, who died in the line of duty. A local park in my riding was dedicated to her. We must not forget those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

My deep gratitude goes out to all of the police and peace officers across this country for their dedication to keeping our communities safe.

* * *

[Translation]

RIO PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some incredibly talented Canadian ambassadors proudly represented us recently. The Canadian athletes who participated in the Rio Paralympic Games were the epitome of determination and perseverance, two important values that should inspire us all.

We were truly moved to see an athlete from the riding of Saint-Jean carry the Canadian flag at the closing ceremonies. Congratulations to the queen of the games, Aurélie Rivard, whose exceptional performances truly set her apart from the rest.

The swimmer from Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu won one silver and three gold medals and set three new records along the way. On behalf of the people of my riding, I want to congratulate our golden girl on her achievements.

We thank all the athletes, coaches, organizers, parents, and friends who invested so much during the years leading up to the Rio

Paralympic Games, as well as everyone who will ensure Canada's success at the next games.

* * *

[English]

U.S. STEEL CANADA

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing the people of Hamilton know for sure is that the Liberal government has let them down. There is now a potential deal in place for the purchase of U.S. Steel Canada. Success of the negotiations will depend on the involvement of the federal government. Talk is cheap. It is time for action.

The minister said last Thursday that he and his local colleagues are engaged in the file. What does that mean? I certainly do not know, the people of Hamilton certainly do not know, and the stakeholders in the negotiations do not know, so who does know? Perhaps the minister and his local colleagues can explain. What is their plan? Do they really have an agenda? If so, we have heard nothing about it from our local MPs.

This kind of arrogance, playing politics with the health and well-being of the over 20,000 people in the Hamilton region, is disturbing and insulting. The government should step up to the plate, get to work, and stop sitting on the sidelines when the livelihood of steelworkers and retirees is on the line.

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HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, back in June, during his selfie summer tour, our Prime Minister was quoted as saying that escalating home pricing “is a very significant crisis”. I mention this because recently his government has stood by and, to date, done nothing on new drywall tariff increases ranging from 105% to 276.5%, depending on the drywall supplier. We know this will drive up the costs of housing by thousands of dollars, only further increasing the very crisis the Prime Minister referenced back in June. Further, these increases in housing costs will hit the middle class the hardest. I know I am hearing daily from upset citizens and contractors alike who feel abandoned by our Liberal government, which talks a good game but continues to fail to deliver.

On behalf of the citizens of my riding, I am calling upon the Liberal government to take action against regulatory increases in the price of housing for Canadians.

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● (1415)

POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to acknowledge the 39th annual Canadian Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day service, which took place yesterday on the nation's front lawn here in Ottawa.

Oral Questions

Thousands of men and women in uniform from across Canada gathered just outside this chamber to pay solemn tribute to the more than 850 men and women whose names are engraved on the honour roll tablets on Parliament Hill.

Sadly, five new names were added to the memorial this year, including those of Constable Sarah Beckett, of the RCMP, and Constable Thierry Leroux, of the Lac Simon First Nations Police Service, who lost their lives in the service of their communities.

All Canadians mourn the death of a police officer in the line of duty, but none feel that loss more personally or more painfully than their families, colleagues, and friends. Yesterday was an opportunity to honour their sacrifice and to remember them in our prayers.

Every member of this House recognizes the vital role police officers and peace officers play in keeping our communities safe as well as the inherent risks they face when carrying out their duties.

These men and women are essential to the quality of life we enjoy in Canada, and they carry out their essential function with courage, pride, and professionalism.

I ask all members to join me in paying tribute to these brave police and peace officers who selflessly dedicate their lives to keeping our communities safe, and in particular—

The Speaker: Order, please. It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Liberals confirmed that they were negotiating an extradition treaty with China.

I would remind members that none of our allies have signed such a treaty. Neither Australia nor the United States has signed such a treaty. However, on the weekend, the Minister of Foreign Affairs denied that there were any such negotiations.

If the Prime Minister signs this extradition agreement, we will be seen as the accomplice of a country whose justice system has the worst human rights record.

Who is telling the truth, the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we announced a high-level national security and rule-of-law dialogue as part of comprehensive discussions with China.

Dialogue is important. Dialogue is what helps us move consular cases forward. Dialogue allows us to actually bring up difficult subjects, like human rights, and move the yardstick forward. We are proud of our dialogue, and that is the direction we will be going.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, probably the Prime Minister needs a comprehensive discussion with his minister.

This weekend, the Minister of Foreign Affairs shed some light on the negotiations with China on extradition. He said:

Your paper should check the facts. There is no negotiation. To write like pretending it is, it is wrong. Stop that please.

That is what the minister said, though last week the Prime Minister said that Canada has indeed entered into negotiations with China on an extradition treaty.

Let us check the facts. Who tells the truth to Canadians, the Prime Minister or the minister?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated many times before, our government believes in a dialogue with China. It allows us to have those difficult conversations. That is exactly what we are doing: having a dialogue with China on the rule of law, on the important discussion on national security, and also on human rights.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we also learned on the weekend that the Minister of Foreign Affairs' chief of staff was going to have to repay an additional \$32,000 in expenses, which is about what a salesperson in Quebec makes.

It was an expense that he had agreed to pay. The Minister of Foreign Affairs says one thing and the Prime Minister says another. They are contradicting one another.

We expect the government to be rigorous and not to give in on delicate matters. We do not know when they are going to balance the budget.

When will the government do due diligence?

• (1420)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question in a moment. First, I would like to say that I am very proud that Dr. Hoodfar has been released.

We know that the policy for moving expenses dates back to the 1970s. Our government realizes that this policy must be revised. That is why the Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to draft a new policy.

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals talk a big game when it comes to accountability, but they only repay the taxpayer when they get caught.

First we have the Minister of Health's limo rides. Then we have the Minister of Environment's vanity shoots. Now we have excessive moving costs from the Liberals.

How can Canadians trust the Liberals to repay all of the inappropriate moving expenses?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been government policy, for relocation expenses, to reimburse senior officials and their families since the 1970s.

This policy was revisited in 2008 and 2011 by the previous Harper government. It had an opportunity to do something. It did nothing.

The previous prime minister's office approved over \$300,000 in relocation expenses, including \$93,000 for one person.

Our government recognizes that more can be done. That is why our Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to create a new policy for moving expenses.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was \$300,00 the Conservatives approved over 10 years. The Liberals approved over \$1 million in six months.

This is about integrity and judgment, and there is a huge lack of it on the side of the Liberals. Nineteen ministers have signed off on these inappropriate costs. A couple of them have paid back some of the costs once they got caught. What is happening with the other ministers who have signed off? The government House leader signed off on \$70,000 in expenses.

Will those other expenses be paid to the taxpayer?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is about recognizing that better is possible. This is about recognizing that the current rules that are in place were—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know members are anxious to applaud, but they should wait until the end of the answer. Members will want to listen and hear the answer from the hon. government House leader.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I will continue with my response.

It is interesting, because even the opposition recognizes that we can do better and that we will do better. That is why the Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses. Let us not forget that this is the same policy that the previous prime minister and the Harper Conservatives had the opportunity to fix, and they did not.

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for over six years, the provinces have been calling on the federal government to abandon the cuts that the Conservative government planned to make to health transfers. Unfortunately, the new Minister of Health confirmed that the Liberal government is going to go ahead with the Conservative cuts.

Can she explain to the provinces and Canadians why her government is going to maintain the \$36 billion in cuts imposed by Stephen Harper?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government invested in a Canada health transfer this year that is bigger than ever, more than \$36 billion.

It will increase next year. The Canada health transfer will go up by more than \$1 billion. In addition to that, our government is going to make investments in areas where the provinces and territories have agreed with us that there are concerns and priorities, and those include things like \$3 billion for home care. We will also work to increase access to mental health care.

I look forward to further conversations with my colleagues.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals were elected on a promise to renegotiate the health transfers with the provinces. However, this weekend, the Minister of Health confirmed that her government is adopting the Conservatives' formula for health transfers.

Can the minister confirm whether the provinces agree with maintaining the \$36 billion in cuts imposed by Stephen Harper?

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had excellent conversations with my colleagues across this country, the ministers of health in the provinces and territories.

We have agreed upon a number of priorities, areas in which we think the health care systems across this country need improvement. We look forward to a further collaborative relationship.

They are on the front lines. They know where the needs are. We have agreed with what those needs are. We plan to invest in better health care for all Canadians.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, real change is turning into real betrayal real fast.

During the election, the Prime Minister told Canadians that we cannot have Tommy Douglas health care on a Stephen Harper budget. Yesterday the Minister of Health confirmed that the Liberals are adopting Stephen Harper's health care cuts.

The Liberal government was elected on a promise of real change when it comes to health care. Can the minister explain why she will not deliver it?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely intend to deliver real change on health care. In fact, I wonder how the NDP could have delivered, given its fiscal plans and its agreement to stick to a balanced budget.

We believe in new investments in health care. We will be investing in home care. We will be making sure Canadians have accessible, affordable, and appropriately prescribed prescription drugs. We will invest in innovation. We will deliver on health care for Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we will see how the Liberal government delivers better health care on Stephen Harper health care cuts.

The minister is promising millions while cutting billions every year. The truth is that the government's decision will cut over \$1 billion from health care next year alone, and a total of \$36 billion will be cut from health care over the long term.

The Liberal campaign platform also promised that Liberals would discuss any cuts with the provinces, but instead, they are going to impose these cuts without any negotiating with the provinces, just like Mr. Harper.

Will the minister tell us, do the provinces support these Harper—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are rightfully proud of our strong, publicly funded health care system.

We will continue to invest, and there will continue to be a growing Canada health transfer, but all health policy experts in this country agree that there is room for improvement. There are areas where Canadians do not have access to the home care they need and where people are lacking access to mental health care.

I have had a very good relationship with my colleagues, and I look forward to further discussions with them next month to invest in those areas.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what do the Prime Minister's best friend Gerald Butts, the Prime Minister's chief of staff Katie Telford, the chief of staff of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the chief of staff of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development have in common? Their bosses have all demonstrated a lack of judgment.

My question is simple. How do the Prime Minister and his ministers justify their lack of judgment in authorizing such astronomical relocation expenses?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you and everyone else knows, this policy on the reimbursement of moving expenses has been in place since the 1970s. It was the previous government, Stephen Harper's government, that developed the policy currently in place. The office of prime minister Stephen Harper approved more than \$300,000 in moving expenses, including over \$93,000 for one person.

We know that this policy needs to be reviewed and that is why the Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to draft a new policy.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in English or in French, a broken record is a broken record. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons needs to lead by example and put an end to these excessive expenditures.

According to Liberal ethics, they just pay some of it back if they get caught and then wait for the whole thing to go away. That will not happen, because the official opposition will not let this go as long as the Liberals continue to whoop it up on the taxpayers' dime.

Will the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons explain her own lack of judgment to the House?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

Our government knows that the policy needs to be reviewed. If they continue to ask the same question, I will continue to give the same answer. It was our Prime Minister who asked the Treasury Board to draft a new policy. We will do better. We can and we will do better.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the environment minister gave her staff over \$116,000 to come to Ottawa. Her office admits that only \$28,000 was actually used for moving. After getting caught, other Liberals have admitted their claims were unreasonable.

When will the minister come clean and explain to Canadians what they got for the rest of the money?

• (1430)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me another opportunity to remind us that these reimbursement policies for reallocation costs have been in place in since the 1970s. The previous government had an opportunity to fix it, but it did not. That is why it is our government that recognizes that these policies need to be reviewed.

Let me remind Canadians that it was prime minister Stephen Harper's office that approved \$300,000 in relocation expenses and \$93,000 for one single individual. That is why our Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to create a policy to govern relocation expenses. As for the work that the Minister of Environment—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is hiding behind the so-called rules, these same rules that they are talking about today. They had the choice. Each and every minister had the choice. The environment minister should be able to answer this question. She signed off on this money. She should be able to tell us where it went.

What is the minister hiding and where did the money go?

Oral Questions

The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are not so-called rules; these are the rules and every expense was made in accordance with the guidelines. That is the issue. It is our government that recognizes the previous Conservative government had an opportunity to do more. It did not. Our government recognizes that more can be done. That is why our Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to review the policy and bring in a new policy for relocation expenses.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend we learned that some Liberal staffers who received moving expense payments will be paying a fraction of that money back. These ministers gave their friends personalized cash payments, but now, after being caught red-handed, they are paying back what they feel is unreasonable.

Canadians want to know more about these personalized cash payments, or is this just the 2016 term for brown paper envelopes?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell if the members opposite are making light of the situation, or heavy. This is a policy that our government recognizes needs to be reviewed and I will remind Canadians that this is a policy that has been in place since the 1970s. These are the same rules that also apply to the military, the RCMP, and the public service. The previous prime minister, Stephen Harper, also approved \$300,000 in relocation expenses, including \$93,000 to one individual.

Our government recognizes that better is always possible.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure is no stranger to wasteful spending. First we had sky palace 2.0, and now we find out he has signed off on over \$50,000 in moving expenses for one of his staff. Canadians are losing their homes and their jobs, but the Minister of Infrastructure is more concerned about making sure his staffer collects tens of thousands of dollars in so-called moving expenses.

How much of this payout was used as unaccounted for personalized cash payments?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are policies that were put in place in the 1970s. Our government recognizes that they need to be reviewed. That is why our Prime Minister has shown leadership and asked the Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses.

Let us talk about the good work that the Minister of Infrastructure and his team are doing. Our government has made significant investments that help create jobs while building a strong foundation for a sustainable economic future. We have also helped to develop a historic plan to invest more than \$120 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years, and this includes \$50 billion in—

The Speaker: I remind members that one side talks and then the other side talks, not at the same time. Let us take our turns.

I am having a much easier time hearing the questions than I am hearing the answers, so I would like everyone to listen up.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberal government opens the door to an extradition treaty with China, it seems someone forgot to tell the Minister of Foreign Affairs. On Friday, the minister angrily denied that any negotiations were taking place. He said, “There is no negotiation”.

Is the cabinet divided or is the minister confused? We just heard the Minister of National Defence, to make it worse, answer that regarding dialogue, it was about rule of law and human rights.

Canadians need and deserve a clear answer. Is the government in talks with China over a proposed extradition treaty, yes or no?

• (1435)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our renewed relationship with China allows for dialogue on a range of issues, including human rights. We are engaging in a national security and rule of law dialogue as part of comprehensive discussions with China. Those discussions allow us to talk about very challenging things and very important things.

The member opposite is absolutely right. Canadians need to know that as a result of being at the table, we can talk about consular affairs, we can push our view of human rights, and we can talk about security. We are and have been very clear and very open with Canadians on this.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if that is what it means to be clear, I have seen better.

Last June, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stood by silently as his Chinese counterpart chastised a reporter who had asked him a question about China's human rights record. On Friday, the same minister criticized a journalist who asked him about negotiations for an extradition treaty with China.

Did the minister learn his media relations skills from his Chinese counterpart? Why is there so much confusion surrounding these negotiations?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada we believe in a strong media and that journalists can speak for themselves.

Oral Questions

Our relationship means that we can hear the views of China while allowing ourselves the opportunity to defend and uphold human rights. We announced this high-level security and rule of law dialogue precisely so that we can deal with some of the greatest challenges we face in a renewed relationship with China.

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JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Liberal minister from Kings—Hants is upset by the way the Prime Minister is treating Atlantic Canada, but that is no excuse for classifying Supreme Court justice appointments as cronyism.

Could he identify which members of the Supreme Court he is talking about, or better still, could he get up and do the right thing and apologize for saying that?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was referring broadly to the habits of the previous government in their appointments, not just of judges. I am not talking about Supreme Court judges, but some of the judicial appointments that occurred under the previous government, including the previous justice minister Peter MacKay's best man at his wedding and the best man's wife. These are not the kinds of appointments that actually should be occurring within a government.

We respect the Supreme Court, but the previous government's appointments over the years to a number of posts were wrong.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Liberals think that Atlantic Canadians are flattered by the fact that someone from Mississauga is now running the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Maybe that is why they think Atlantic Canada does not need to have representation on the Supreme Court of Canada. But I am pleased that at least one Liberal member, the member for Central Nova, now agrees with the Conservatives here.

I would like to know about the other 31. Are they going to stand up and do the right thing for Canada and Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process used to appoint Supreme Court justices by the previous government was opaque, outdated, and in need of an overhaul. In the mandate letter from the Prime Minister to the advisory board, they were asked that when making their selections they consider the custom of regional representation on the court as being one of the factors to be taken into consideration. Therefore, the list of qualified and functionally bilingual candidates developed by the advisory board includes candidates from Atlantic Canada and they are perfectly capable of competing in a national competition.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the minister from Nova Scotia has been busy attacking the independence of the Supreme Court, the minister for Atlantic Canada, from Mississauga, has been silent in standing up for Atlantic Canadian representation on the Supreme Court, as have all 32 Liberal MPs from Atlantic Canada.

When will the minister for Atlantic Canada from Ontario break his silence and stand up for Atlantic Canada?

● (1440)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to stand alongside 32 exemplary members of Parliament from Atlantic Canada. These fine individuals punch above their weight and they care deeply about the Atlantic Canada region. That is why we made historic investments into this region. That is why we unveiled the Atlantic growth strategy, which is an investment diversifying that region, creating jobs. Most recently we made an announcement on immigration. This is an example of how we work together to provide meaningful results for all Atlantic Canadians.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just about everyone has criticized the Liberal appointment process to shut out Atlantic Canada, from academics and lawyers to the Canadian Bar Association, to first nation leaders, and the process is being challenged in court as we speak.

When will the minister get the message and reverse this objectionable constitutionally questionable appointment process to shut out Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process employed by the previous government for Supreme Court of Canada appointees was opaque and badly in need of an overhaul. That is the reason why there was a new process that increased transparency, that increased accountability, and that is why the advisory committee has been asked to identify suitable candidates. These will be jurists of the highest calibre. They will be functionally bilingual, and they will be representative of the diversity of our great country. That list will include candidates from Atlantic Canada.

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[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency claims that it will show no mercy to the fraudsters named in the Panama Papers, but if the past is any indication, I will not be holding my breath.

In past leaks from Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and the Isle of Man, the CRA was ineffective at recovering the money owed and relied heavily on voluntary disclosure, while often granting amnesty to the fraudsters.

How can we trust the minister when the agency she oversees has such an appalling track record?

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that middle-class Canadians are paying their fair share and that some wealthy taxpayers are evading their obligations. This must stop.

The Panama Papers issue has a global reach. In April, I instructed officials to provide me with a complete list of the Canadian taxpayers who are implicated in this. I can announce that the agency is currently conducting over 2,500 audits and that it has identified 85 taxpayers who will be subject to further review. We will continue to work on this.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot about how the government is making historic investments for first nations. With reserves facing a serious housing crisis, this morning, the government announced funding to build just 300 new units this year and next for the whole country despite the fact that, according to its own department, more than 20,000 new units are needed to address the crisis.

Can the Prime Minister tell us exactly how funding for just 3% of the units this country needs is historic?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are determined to address the shortage of acceptable housing. The 2016 budget includes an investment of more than \$554 million over two years for the construction, maintenance, and renovation of 2,007 units. Agreements are already in place for two-thirds of the funding and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the CMHC, is investing in renovating and repairing 2,500 units.

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SENIORS

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spend a lot of time talking with my constituents, and they have a lot to say about enhancing old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, so it is important to me to have a solid understanding of the situation. Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development update the House on initiatives to reduce poverty among Canadian seniors and provide them with a decent standard of living?

• (1445)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Vimy and thank her for her excellent work on behalf of seniors.

We restored the eligibility age for old age security to 65, which will keep 100,000 seniors out of poverty. We also increased the guaranteed income supplement by up to \$950, which will help 900,000 seniors and lift 13,000 of them out of poverty. We invested \$200 million in our seniors' housing needs.

I encourage the member for Vimy to keep supporting and contributing to the government's policies for seniors.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been obvious for some time that the foreign affairs minister is out of touch with Canadians on a range of issues, but it is now clear that he is not even on the Prime Minister's wavelength. The minister's emotional denial that Canada is discussing an extradition treaty with China was surprising given the PM's admission and the Chinese premier's urging.

Is the minister simply not paying attention, or is there division in cabinet?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, our renewed relationship with China allows for dialogue on a range of issues. I am not sure why the member opposite does not understand what dialogue means. It means that we are providing an opportunity for Canada to be at the table with China and express, uphold, and assert the extreme value that we put on human rights. It allows us to discuss difficult matters. It is a reflection of our policy of engagement.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not the way to set up convincing foreign policy.

A month ago, the immigration minister said Canada would never negotiate an extradition treaty with China while China maintains the death penalty. The Prime Minister then acknowledged that discussions on exactly that topic have begun. The foreign minister denied it, and then he pleaded with journalists to stop reporting the facts of the matter.

What is going on here? Who is in charge?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of our foreign policy, and that is what is in charge. Both the Prime Minister and the foreign affairs minister, at every opportunity, raise this with their counterparts in China—this summer, last week. This reflects our government's policy of engagement, which is in stark contrast to the previous Harper government's policy of isolation and retreat.

We will continue to champion respect for diversity and human rights in our relations with China.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they are open and transparent, but when it comes to foreign affairs, quite the opposite is true.

We are asking the Liberals whether they are negotiating an extradition treaty with China, and the answer is yes, no, and maybe. It is unbelievable. The minister has even asked everyone to stop asking the question.

Canadians want a clear answer. Is the minister currently negotiating an extradition treaty with China, yes or no?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am here, and I am very pleased to represent the Government of Canada on behalf of the minister and the Prime Minister to enlighten the opposition as to what dialogue means. It reflects our policy of engagement. It is going to allow us to make progress on very challenging issues, including human rights.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is funny how the minister was much clearer a month ago when he said that Canada would never sign an extradition treaty with China.

Now he is talking about preliminary discussions, closer relationships, and openness, but he refuses to confirm anything. Let us call a spade a spade. When we are talking about apples, we say “apples”, not “oranges”.

When will the minister be honest with Canadians and tell us exactly what is happening right now?

[English]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually, there is nothing funny about it. A stronger Canada-China relationship unlocks opportunity for the middle class, creates new opportunities for business, and strengthens ties between us on a people-to-people basis to share our cultures and to share our rich history. Increased engagement allows opportunity for regular, respectful, and frank discussions with China on issues like the rule of law, human rights, and consular issues.

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● (1450)

*[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again, the Liberal government is being lax on an issue involving official languages.

Last week, the Commissioner of Official Languages expressed concern over the situation at Parks Canada, which is struggling to provide services in both official languages, French and English, equally. What is more, we are still waiting for a response from the government about the level of bilingualism of the RCMP officers on the Hill.

When is the minister going to enforce the Official Languages Act?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

My colleagues are working hard on matters pertaining to official bilingualism in this country. We are drafting an action plan for Canada's official languages for 2018-2023.

As far as Parks Canada, the RCMP, and our whole-of-government approach to official languages are concerned, we are working on it and will continue to strengthen standards throughout Canada.

*[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta is home to the largest inland freshwater delta on the planet. It has been a UNESCO world heritage site for more than three decades. In response to a petition filed by the Mikisew Cree First Nation, this week UNESCO launched an investigation into the government's failure to protect the park from impacts from the oil sands and dams, including Site C.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has asked Canadians to nominate new world heritage sites. How can Canadians take her seriously when her government is failing in its duty to protect this treasured site?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

We welcome the joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre and International Union for Conservation of Nature mission on Wood Buffalo National Park, which will take place between September 26 and October 4 this year.

Reactive monitoring missions are carried out around the world as an act of due diligence to assess potential threats to the outstanding universal value of world heritage sites. These missions are a very valuable tool in the ongoing protection of these international treasures, and we welcome the UNESCO visit here.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chinese premier visited Ottawa last week, and while our Prime Minister was learning all about China's basic dictatorship, eyebrows were raised over a wall erected at the Westin Hotel.

The wall was built to shield the Chinese premier from Canadians exercising their democratic right to protest. The Chinese premier does not recognize these basic rights. The wall was meant to keep protesters out of sight and is, in fact, a symbol that limits dialogue.

My question to the Prime Minister is, who paid for Ottawa's little wall of China?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, the lawn in front of the House of Commons is a point of pride for all Canadians. We welcome freedom of expression, freedom of thought, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly. We are only too happy to share those values with the Chinese government.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are baffled by the construction of the so-called Westin wall at the Westin Hotel. That is what we are talking about, and the Prime Minister's willingness to bow to China's every wish.

Oral Questions

Freedom of speech is a cherished right in Canada. The Liberals went along with blocking out Canadians who were protesting China's absolute disregard for human rights and the rule of law.

This wall was an insult to Canadians. Why did the Liberals not oppose the construction of it? Is this just another example of our Prime Minister being their puppet on a string?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to what dialogue means and to what last week represented for our two countries.

Dialogue is an opportunity for two parties to have a conversation, and possibly to solve challenging problems.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not about the Westin. It is about the Liberals' refusal to face reality with regard to China. China is not just putting up walls here. At the same time that it was insisting on the construction of the wall at the Westin Hotel, China was locking up human rights advocates behind much deadlier walls.

Are the Liberals so naive that they think giving into every demand of this basic dictatorship will bring freedom to the Chinese people?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not here to discuss China's human rights record. We are here, as Canadians, to assert and uphold the value of human rights and the value of our high standards, and we intend to get there through dialogue with China.

* * *

● (1455)

SCIENCE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investments in science play an important role in a thriving, clean economy. Could the Minister of Science update the House on what the government is doing to ensure we are making smart investments in science to support evidence-based decisions, ending the Harper government's war on science.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a rich legacy of scientific achievement. To build on these strengths, we need to take a fresh look at how the federal government supports fundamental science. That is why I launched a comprehensive review of federal support for fundamental science.

The deadline for submissions to the panel is this Friday. I encourage all members to encourage their local stakeholders to submit to the panel and have their voices heard.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the benefit of the financial transparency act was that it allowed band members to monitor and understand how their money was being spent. A perfect example was in Kashechewan, where there was an alleged theft of \$694,000 from the breakfast program.

Band members with easy access to financial information would have noticed the lack of scrambled eggs and orange juice at the table.

Would the minister explain to the people of Kashechewan why they do not deserve guaranteed access to the basic financial information that every other Canadian enjoys?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, accountability and transparency are key tenets of the government and are vital in ensuring the delivery of the historic investments to indigenous and northern communities through budget 2016.

We are engaging first nations on the way forward in transparency and accountability. First nations continue their long-standing practice of reporting on their financial program performance, and any illegal activities will be pursued.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hardships experienced by families affected by pyrrhotite in Trois-Rivières are occurring elsewhere. First it was Mont-Laurier, and now the State of Connecticut is turning to the expertise of the Trois-Rivières coalition.

However, in Canada, only the government can prevent other cases by reviewing federal standards for the aggregates in concrete. The Liberals are just as silent about this as the Conservatives were.

How much longer must we wait for the government to take action and change the standards that gave rise to the worst construction fiasco ever seen in Canada?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières.

In fact, it was the Trudeau government that made available \$30 million to families affected—

The Speaker: I must remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that unless he was referring to another prime minister, which I do not believe is the case, we do not mention the name of members in this place.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. Obviously I wanted to talk about this government, which addressed this issue in its first budget. I am proud to say that my colleagues made a point of providing \$30 million in the first budget to help these families. This prime minister went to visit a family in Trois-Rivières to ascertain the damage and to provide moral and financial support. This government is there for the families dealing with pyrrhotite.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while on a trip to Iran to visit her family and conduct research in her capacity as a professor at Concordia University, Dr. Hoodfar was imprisoned for months. Her family, colleagues, students, the government, and all Canadians were very concerned about her arrest and her health problems. We got some good news this morning. She has been freed.

Could the parliamentary secretary give us an update on this matter?

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his work on this file.

[*English*]

We are relieved that Dr. Hoodfar has been released from jail and soon will be reunited with her family, friends, students, and colleagues.

Our government has been engaged at the highest level in Dr. Hoodfar's case, and we have been advocating for her release. I want to take a moment to thank my colleagues in the House and the thousands of Canadians who raised this case.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the strength of her family, particularly her niece, Amanda Ghahremani, for her work. We look forward to welcoming Dr. Hoodfar back home.

* * *

• (1500)

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have just learned that it appears the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship hid the cost of moving a senior Liberal staffer to Ottawa from Thailand.

In an official response to Parliament, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship said that no such expenses existed, but moments ago we received documents that tell us otherwise.

Given that it seems there is a bit of a pattern here with Liberal ministers feeling like they can hide expenses from Canadians, I have a very simple question. Are there any other Liberal ministers who want to come clean with these expenses?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been said time and time again, there is a relocation policy that has been in place since the 1970s. The previous government had an opportunity to revisit these policies. It did not.

The government recognizes the need to review these policies. That is why our Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to revisit this policy and to create a new policy that governs relocation expenses.

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec health minister has made a devastating discovery: the federal government imposes more conditions on assisting sick people in Quebec than it does on selling its armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia. Yes, this was revealed by a Liberal health minister.

This would be yet another good reason why Quebec should become independent if our sick were not paying the price.

Will the minister change her approach and restore the amount of the health transfers to 6%, as the Government of Quebec is asking?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud of their public health care system and they expect their government to make sure that it will always be there for them.

We know that the provinces and territories are on the front lines providing excellent care and that they know what improvements need to be made. However, I am going to meet with my provincial and territorial counterparts again in the coming weeks and we will continue our discussion on how to create a health care system that meets Canadians' needs.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government makes the wrong compromises in the wrong places. It compromised on gender equality, it compromised on the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia, it compromised on human rights in China, and it compromised on torture in Syria, but it refuses to compromise when it comes to helping sick people in Quebec.

My question is a simple one. Will the minister restore health transfer increases to 6%?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had very good conversations with my colleagues, including the minister of health from Quebec. We have made it clear to them that we will increase investments in the Canada health transfer.

I have also talked with the minister of health from Quebec about other areas where we can make further investments. We appreciate their excellent work on the ground in Quebec in delivering care. We will be a good partner with them to increase investments and ensure that Canadians have the health care they need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, under the federal government, the Government of Quebec has to jump through more hoops to take care of sick people than Saudi Arabia does to fire on dissidents. That is what it has come to: the Liberal government will not give sick people an inch but lets barbarians take a mile.

Will anyone in government start making sense, do as the Government of Quebec has asked, and restore health transfer increases?

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce that we are going to boost health transfers. Next year there will be more than \$1 billion of additional money in the Canada health transfer.

I also look forward to making investments in areas where we believe the provinces and territories want to work to increase access to care, including home care, palliative care, and mental health care. I look forward to excellent conversations with my colleagues as we meet to discuss this and ensure Canadians have the care they need.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the hon. member for Niagara Falls drawing attention to my advocacy for Atlantic Canada, the suggestion that I do so alone is blatantly false when I am proud to stand alongside 31 other—

● (1505)

The Speaker: Questions of what is true and what is false are not matters, thankfully, on which the Speaker is asked to decide. Therefore, it is a matter of debate.

* * *

[Translation]

VACANCY

CALGARY MIDNAPORE

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that the following vacancy has occurred in the representation.

[English]

The vacancy is that of the Hon. Jason Kenney, member for the electoral district of Calgary Midnapore, by resignation effective Friday, September 23, 2016.

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PROTECTING BURNABY LAKES AND RIVERS ACT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-302, An Act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Burnaby Lake, Deer Lake and Brunette River).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a private member's bill to restore key environmental protections to local lakes and rivers of my riding of Burnaby South. The protecting Burnaby lakes and rivers act would re-add Burnaby Lake, Deer Lake, and Brunette River to the official schedule of waterways protected in Canada.

At the demand of the oil and gas lobbyists, the Conservatives under Stephen Harper gutted our environmental laws and removed

protections for 98% of Canada's lakes and rivers. As a result, many proposed development projects, including some pipelines, no longer need environmental assessments or public consultations before proceeding.

The Liberals promised during the election that they would reverse these changes. They have yet to even table legislation to restore the protections that were lost. That is why I am putting forward this bill today on behalf of my constituents.

In my riding, where we just celebrated World Rivers Day yesterday, the stewardship of the Brunette River has been a stellar example of our community coming together to preserve our cherished waterways. We need to ensure that our lakes and rivers are protected so future generations can enjoy them as well.

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

* * *

● (1510)

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT, 2015

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-303, An Act respecting the repeal of the Acts enacted by the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015 and amending or repealing certain provisions enacted by that Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a private member's bill that would repeal all aspects of Bill C-51, a bill in force for more than a year now, which still manages to infringe our civil liberties without making us safer.

This private member's bill is about doing away with the overly broad definition of national security contained in Bill C-51 that allows surveillance of those engaged in legitimate defence of their rights, including aboriginal people and environmentalists. It is about restoring the fundamental principles of Canadian privacy law. It is about doing away with the powers Bill C-51 gave to CSIS to act illegally in secret without oversight. It is about eliminating the prohibition on free speech contained in the new broad definition of supporting terrorism in the Criminal Code. It is about restoring the previous standard that required reasonable grounds for police action in national security, instead of the grounds of mere suspicion as contained in Bill C-51.

We are putting forward our proposal today for what to do about the infringement of civil liberties in Bill C-51, and we await the government's putting a specific proposal forward.

Routine Proceedings

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

[English]

* * *

PETITIONS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners who signed this petition point out that in the 41st Parliament the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion calling upon the government to create a national strategy on palliative care. However, they go on to point that it is impossible for a person to give informed consent to assisted suicide or euthanasia if appropriate palliative care is not available to them.

Therefore, our petitioners are calling upon Parliament to establish a national strategy on palliative care.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents and people right across British Columbia who oppose Kinder Morgan's plan to build a new 890,000-barrel-a-day pipeline from Burnaby to Edmonton.

The petitioners say this project will bring massive environmental and economic risk, without any benefit, and that 40,000 barrels have already leaked from the existing pipeline.

The petitioners also bring to the attention of the government the point that although there is promise of part-time jobs, these jobs will be filled by temporary foreign workers and only 50 full-time permanent jobs will be created, which is not enough for them to take this risk.

I urge the government to take seriously this petition. There will be many more to come over the coming days.

JUSTICE

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by Canadians from my riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to pass legislation that would recognize preborn children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against their mothers, allowing two charges to be laid against the offender instead of just one.

HEALTH

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition as it relates to federal health and safety officers in northern Ontario.

The petitioners recognize how valuable the work of federal health and safety officers is in maintaining safe and healthy workplaces. Canada has lost more than half of its federal health and safety officers since 2005, so this is part of a bigger trim.

[Translation]

This is a very real problem in northern Ontario, which has a single officer covering the whole region. That person's work can be held up by just one injury, illness, or absence.

The only way to fix the problem is to add more officers in the region.

The petitioners join the call by the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives to address this critical shortage in the areas of postal services, air and rail transport and, of course, many other areas of the federal jurisdiction.

• (1515)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present this petition representing thousands of my constituents and Canadians across this country.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support residents, families, communities, and businesses of Canada by saying yes to liquefied natural gas and approve B.C. LNG projects such as Pacific NorthWest LNG; to establish as a clean energy global leader by providing access to much-needed LNG resources to markets in areas such as Asia, assisting in the reduction of global GHG emissions; to reduce the federal deficit through significant contributions of federal, provincial, municipal governments via taxes and royalties related to LNG; and last, to help stimulate the economy and put Canadians back to work in rural communities, such as my own and the ones in northeastern British Columbia, with the approval of B.C. LNG projects.

ASBESTOS

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present an e-petition signed by many folks and concerned citizens across Canada calling for the complete ban on all products containing asbestos, as well as ensuring that Health Canada and the federal government inform and educate all Canadians about, and provide funding to treat and prevent all ailments arising from, exposure to asbestos.

Included in their petition, the petitioners ask that we make it clear that Canada bans the importation and exportation of asbestos and asbestos products from Canada, that government websites stop promoting a safe-use level of asbestos, and that we ensure that the asbestos annex is listed as part of the Rotterdam Convention.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of residents in my riding who are supporters of the Falun Gong movement. They are asking for a number of things, one of which is that the Canadian Parliament pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions.

The first petition deals with the fact that 92% of Canadians believe that sex-selective pregnancies should be illegal. This gendercide has created a global gender imbalance crisis, resulting in violence and the trafficking of girls. Therefore, the petitioners ask that members of Parliament condemn the discrimination against girls occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners in the second petition believe that the current impaired driving laws are too lenient and ask for the implementation of a new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. They also want the Criminal Code of Canada to be changed to redefine the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline consisting of meditation, exercise, and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. In July 1999, the Chinese Communist Party launched an intensive nation-wide persecution campaign to eradicate Falun Gong practitioners. The petitioners are asking that we look at taking action to support the end of the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, an Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Order, please. We are on questions and comments, following the speech by the member for Saint John—Rothesay. We have eight and half minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to my colleague in respect of this

Government Orders

piece of legislation. One thing that came to my mind, and where I think the member was really hitting the nail on the head, is how important it is that we respect the roles of unions within our society. He really spoke to that. Therefore, could he provide the House with his perspective on why government needs to work to promote harmony between management and labour, and how as a society we benefit if we have good, sound labour laws? That is why we need to work with the stakeholders before any such changes are made, something that the Harper government did not do.

• (1520)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4 restores fairness and balance to our labour system. It allows unions an opportunity to go back to the way things were. There were no problems with respect to labour relations by and large before the Harper government came into office. There were maybe six complaints out of 4,000 complaints about unfair hearings, and so on and so forth, made to the labour board. Therefore, what we are doing as a government is bringing balance and fairness back by treating unions with fairness, respect, and transparency.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I again seek a comment from my colleague on the whole issue of Canada Post. We have seen a new attitude toward labour relations and how important it is that we allow the opportunity for negotiated settlements as much as possible. We encourage that and saw a good example of it with respect to our ministry of labour and the minister responsible for Canada Post, when an agreement was reached between management and the union. What does the member feel about the agreement between Canada Post and its union?

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, with respect to Canada Post and the Public Service Alliance, negotiation is about dialogue, being open, and having a back-and-forth discussion about issues. It is not always about being pro-union or anti-union. It is about being fair and transparent.

Certainly with respect to Canada Post, there was no back-to-work legislation. There was open and fair dialogue. That is what our government stands for.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is talking about introducing labour policy reforms. My colleague from Jonquière introduced anti-scab legislation that we will be voting on two days from now, on Wednesday.

I would like to know if the member intends to act in the spirit of labour policy reform by voting in favour of my colleague's bill.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, again, we are here to talk about Bill C-4.

We made a commitment during the election to repeal Bill C-525 and Bill C-377. We are living up to that. We are restoring fairness and balance to our labour system. We are working with our unions. Going door to door during the election, I could not find anyone in favour of Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, despite what member of the Conservative Party thought.

We are going to restore fairness and balance to the labour environment across Canada.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to talk about one specific bill, but if the government is really serious about promoting workers' rights, I have to repeat my question. Does the member plan to vote in favour of the anti-scab legislation introduced by my colleague from Jonquière?

[English]

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, again, we stand very clearly on our position on Bill C-4.

Bill C-4 is aimed at repealing Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. I am proud of the bill. Certainly, my riding of Saint John—Rothesay, which is a very strong union riding, is very proud of our government for intending to repeal those bills. We are going forward with Bill C-4 to repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. We are going to work with unions. We are going to restore respect for unions. We are going to treat unions with the respect they deserve.

One thing for certain that I noticed going door to door during the campaign was that unions were demoralized, felt disrespected, and that their morale was very low. We are going to restore that right across the country.

• (1525)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member for Saint John—Rothesay, in response to the question asked twice by my colleague, the member for Hochelaga, is keen to stay on the topic of Bill C-4. However, I could not help but notice that when the member for Winnipeg North asked him a question about postal workers, he was willing to expand more on a topic that does not directly with Bill C-4.

I would just ask, in that same spirit, if the member would now tell us whether or not he is prepared to support the anti-scab legislation that is coming forward to the House for a vote in the next couple of days.

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, again, let me very clear that we are here to speak about Bill C-4.

Our government is going to move forward with Bill C-4. We are going to repeal Bill C-525 and Bill C-377. I am very proud of that. I stand behind that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have a very quick question about what the NDP is talking about doing, similar to something the Harper government did.

When we look at bringing in labour legislation, there is a process that involves both unions and management, and the stakeholders and the government, and that is how we develop good legislation.

I am sure that the former questioner would be aware that even the New Democrats in Manitoba, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan have never implemented anti-scab legislation. The chances are there is a good reason for that.

I am wondering if the member would explain how important labour harmony is, which his speech focused so much attention on. It is important that we build a consensus between labour, management, and the government, as well as stakeholders, as opposed to the piecemeal approach being suggested, whether by the Harper government or the New Democrats.

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the thoughtful words.

One thing that has been missing in our country over the last 10 years is good labour relations. That starts with a culture and leadership. One thing that was certainly missing in the past 10 years was leadership from the top. It trickled right down to our unions and our union executive. They never felt respected. They felt demoralized. We are here to restore faith. We are here to restore bargaining. We are not here to legislate workers back. We are here to repair the damage that was done.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Hamilton Mountain.

I am very pleased to be speaking at third reading of Bill C-4. I wish I had had the opportunity to do it sooner, because this is a good example of legislation that ought to have passed through the House far more quickly than it has. It was a clear commitment of the government during the election campaign. There is multi-party support within the House to get it done. It has been reported recently, and it is quite true, that it has been a relatively light legislative agenda from the government. Here we have a piece of legislation that is not competing for time with other government bills, because there are not that many. It is almost a year into the government's mandate and we are still talking about repealing Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. With the exception of those members who belong to the party that brought those bills in, there is virtually a consensus here in the House. If there was a bill that was going to move quickly through Parliament, this would have been the bill. It is a bit of a mystery why it is we are still debating it almost a year out from the election when we should be passing it.

I know all the members in the chamber by now are quite familiar with what Bill C-4 does. It repeals two acts from the previous Parliament. One is Bill C-377, which was a kind of red tape bill for unions. It was based on the pretense that simply because union members get some money back on their taxes for the dues they claim, the government has the right to mandate that they make all of their expenses public to everyone. It was not being asked of non-profit groups, whose donors also receive money back. The government was not saying that because corporations get to write off expenses, which is money back from the government, their books should be made open. It was discriminatory in the sense that it really did just focus on unions, who happened to be, it is fair to say, an opponent of the previous government. Therefore, there was a sense that it was a politically motivated targeting.

There were many parties in the House that agreed the bill simply had to go. I am glad to see we are moving forward with that, although I believe we could move forward more quickly.

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Bill C-525 from the last Parliament made it easier to decertify unions, and therefore, made it harder to have a higher rate of unionization within the federal workforce. We know from many studies that in the lead-up to secret ballot voting it did that in two ways. It raised the threshold of members in a workplace who would have to consent to have a secret ballot vote in order to certify and it took away the option to certify through a card check. Card check means members in a workplace sign a card affirming they would like to be represented by a union and which union they would like to represent them. If a certain threshold of workers sign cards, that obviates the need to go to a secret ballot vote because a majority, whatever that majority happens to be, in this case it was 50% plus 1%, have indicated their support for the idea of having a union in the workplace.

We know through a number of studies and research into this that in the lead-up to secret ballot votes there are often instances of intimidation by employers of their employees. That can lead to a change in the outcome of the vote. In fact, success with those secret ballot votes is often inversely correlated with the length of time between announcing the intention to vote and the vote itself. The longer the period between the stated intention of having a vote to certify and the vote itself, the less likely that vote is to be successful. We know that is often because it gives the employer more time to use certain kinds of intimidation tactics on their employees to make them afraid of certifying.

That is the package we are talking about getting rid of.

I have already spoken a bit about how I think it would have been better if we had been able to pass Bill C-4 earlier in the term. I am thinking of a few other related labour-type issues and legislation that we have been dealing with in the House. I am trying to learn a lesson about the new government and what it means for something to be a priority of the government, because if anything was a priority, if we look at election commitments, this was a very clear commitment. It was shouted from the rooftops by the Liberals during the election. A major part of their strategy for doing outreach within the labour world was that they were going to get this done.

● (1530)

This should be a priority. Why it is not done I cannot fathom. Some may say on the other side of the House that it is because Conservatives want to talk out the bill, but Conservatives were not in favour of Bill C-10. We were not in favour of Bill C-10. I believe my colleagues from the Bloc and the Green Party were not in favour of Bill C-10. Nobody else in the House except members of the government were in favour of Bill C-10, an act that has made it easier to export aerospace maintenance jobs out of Canada to other shores, even though that was not an election commitment, even though that came out of left field, and in an important sense was not therefore a priority of government, certainly not one of stated ones. I have not seen that on the list of any priorities of the Liberals, to make it harder to employ Canadian aerospace maintenance workers. That does not appear on any document that I have seen. If it does appear somewhere, I would sure like to see it. Maybe we could have that tabled.

That was not a priority of government and that is signed, sealed, and delivered for the executives of Air Canada. That is done. This

was a priority for Canadian workers, for labour activists, and a stated priority of the Liberal government, and here we are still talking about it when the ship for Bill C-10, which may be mixing metaphors, has long since sailed. I find that one hard to wrap my head around.

I think about another labour issue that has been before the House, Bill C-7, which sets a framework for RCMP members to bargain collectively. That had a Supreme Court imposed deadline. In fact, I think it is fair to say with hindsight that the deadline was used as an excuse to get that legislation through. We were told that maybe there were things that were not great about the bill, but it had to get passed by May 16 or the sky was going to fall and we were not going to be able to proceed in an orderly fashion with the certification of the union for RCMP members. That is what we were told. May 16 has long since gone by and that bill went to the Senate where amendments were made, but we have been back now for two weeks and I do not see when we are going to start talking about Bill C-7. If the government has a plan to bring that forward, I would sure like to know and I know there are RCMP members across the country who would like to know it is going to be brought forward.

There we have it again. Another priority of the government and it is sitting on the books, when legislative favours for Air Canada executives are what is really being rammed through and that is where the real priority of the Liberals has been. It is to get those things done that they never talked about, while things that have been on the books for a while and stated priorities of the government continue to languish. If there is a lesson in all of this, it is that it is not very good to be on the priority list of the government because it will launch consultations. They are not doing consultations on Bill C-4. They do not need to. That issue has been debated plenty in Canada and part of the decision that was made on October 19, 2015, was to reject that approach to labour legislation, but here we are. The same laws are on the books.

Part of what some people wanted and certainly RCMP members imagined was that when we had a government that thought about labour issues differently, it would be good for them because they would get an appropriate bargaining framework that they did not trust the Conservatives to deliver on. Yet the legislation that the Liberals decided to move forward with was almost a carbon copy of some of the worst aspects of the previous Conservative bill. Here we are. It is sitting on the books. I will say one last time in case anyone missed it, Bill C-10, which was not a promise of the government, which it did not consult thoroughly on, has passed. Government members talk about not moving forward with anti-scab because we do not have a robust consultation process. There was no robust consultation process for Bill C-10 and the sell-out of Canadian aerospace workers, so where was the ethos of consultation on that one?

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The lesson learned is, God forbid something is named a government priority. It is far better to simply be a friend. Then the Liberals will get it done. If it is a stated priority for election purposes, the sooner the bill passes the sooner they have to stop talking about it, which means the sooner they have to stop reaping whatever political benefits caused them to make the commitment in the first place. That is disappointing. I hope we can end this debate, get this passed, and move on to some of the other things they said are priorities. Some of them are good priorities. It would be nice to do something about them rather than nothing.

• (1535)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate joining the debate with my friend and colleague, the member for Elmwood—Transcona. I have a great deal of respect for his ability to step dance and I know first-hand the opposition he posed to both Bills C-377 and C-525 and the work that he does within the labour movement in this country.

He is very supportive of the bill, but in the last exchange, he brought up the anti-scab legislation that his party is proposing in the private member's bill that it is putting forward now. He would know that when Bills C-377 and C-525 were in committee, witness after witness said private members' bills are not the way to change the Canada Labour Code. That is not the way to change labour law in this country. We need a tripartite system where employers, employees, and government can sit down to find a way forward through consultation and consensus.

Does he know that one of the gurus of labour relations in this country, Andrews Sims, said not to change the labour code through private member's legislation, that it is the wrong way to go, and to do it through a tripartite approach by making amendments to the code?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, there are two things I would like to say in response to that.

The first is that I hear the member's criticism and the echoes of it from the last Parliament about private members' business and changing labour law through private members' bills. That was an apt criticism for government. There were some problems with, instead of using government bills to change the legislation, using government backbenchers to change the legislation. However, that is different than opposition parties making suggestions on how to improve labour law in Canada by presenting private members' bills.

It is a different scenario when we are talking about a government advancing its agenda through private members' legislation because it does not have the courage to take it on as its own, versus opposition parties using the tools at their disposal to improve the laws of the land. That is number one.

The second aspect is that if the member is concerned and feels this needs to be done through proper consultation, we would entertain the idea, or I certainly would. As I understand can sometimes be done, bills can go to committee before second reading and committees can do good work discussing what ought to go into the bill.

If the government wants to announce today that it is committed to bringing in better protections for workers who are on strike and not allowing replacement workers, and they are going to launch a

process, then we might be interested in waiting to see what the conclusion of that process would be.

• (1540)

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona made mention of the transparency of unions in Bill C-377. Does he believe or not that union employees should know and have a right to know where their finances go within the union?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I know, as a proud member of a union, that I had access to that information long before the Conservatives cooked up Bills C-377 and C-525. It was a made-up problem.

The answer to the member's question is, yes, they should have access to that information. That is something for unions to make available to them in-house. It does not mean it needs to be broadcast on a website to the entire country.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the treasurer of my union for 15 years, I submitted budgets and financial statements every time we had a general meeting. The books were open on the table, and I was available to answer members' questions.

I have a feeling my colleague experienced exactly the same thing, so I wonder if he could elaborate on what he saw. Would he agree that the books are already open and everything is clear to members?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As she said, any union member who wants that information can simply go to the union office and ask for it. That information is shared at union meetings.

In my case, the union leaders' expenditures had to be voted on at every meeting, on a monthly basis. In my union, we knew exactly how much money was spent and how it was spent. This is really a solution in search of a problem.

[English]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act, and the Income Tax Act.

Bill C-4 is a small step forward. It recognizes the need to respect the rights of hard-working men and women across the country. Since I have been an advocate for the rights of working men and women for many years, it should come as no surprise that I support this legislation.

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My colleagues in the NDP caucus and I are happy to see critical rights restored to hard-working Canadians. However, this bill is only a first small step. We worry about the erosion of workers' rights under the previous government. There are so many questions and concerns. We look to the Liberal government to restore each and every one of the rights stolen from Canadian workers.

We also ask the government to update parts of the Canada Labour Code that are about 60 years out of date. One way to rectify this problem would be to act immediately on the recommendations in the final report of the 2006 review of the Labour Code. This is something long overdue. Many of the recommendations would provide much-needed updates and would benefit many hard-working Canadians who work two or three part-time jobs trying to support a family and purchase or maintain a home.

It is amazing that in a few short years we have seen the dismantling of the rights of each and every individual across the nation. These are rights that have taken decades to create and develop. These are rights that protect each and every one of us, especially those who are the most vulnerable.

New Democrats vigorously opposed the former Conservative government's attempts to restrict the rights of unions and to change the rules governing labour relations under the guise of increased transparency. During the election, we committed that an NDP government would repeal Bill C-525, on union representation, and Bill C-377, concerning the supposed transparency of labour organizations.

Bill C-377 was an unnecessary and discriminatory law designed to impose onerous and absurdly detailed reporting requirements on unions. The bill was pushed through Parliament by the previous government despite widespread opposition from a variety of interests, not just unions.

Many people knew there would be negative effects from this legislation well beyond its impact on unions. Many groups and associations represented individuals whose rights they consider important, whether one belonged to a union or not. Those groups included the NHL Players' Association, provincial governments, Conservative and Liberal senators, the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, the Canadian Bar Association, and the insurance and mutual fund industry in Canada.

New Democrats agree with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, who believes that the bill goes against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If this legislation is not repealed, it will almost certainly be defeated in the courts.

New Democrats opposed Bill C-377 at every stage, because the legislation was as unnecessary as it was irresponsible. It corrupted the very ideal of fairness and balance in negotiations between the parties and undermined the fundamental right to free collective bargaining. It was a partisan assault on the men and women who go to work every day to provide for their families.

Canada needs a strong and healthy trade union movement. Unions in Canada have done so much not only for their members but for Canadian society as a whole. When unions are weakened, all working people feel it, and why is that? It is because attacks on collective bargaining do not promote economic growth. In fact, the

opposite occurs. Attacks like these promote inequality, not a healthy economy.

The previous government claimed its support of Bill C-377 was based on providing transparency. What it failed to mention was that unions are already required to make their financial information available to their members. The bill represented an unnecessary duplication. It was a solution to a non-existing problem.

On top of this, the bill would have cost taxpayers a great deal of money to implement. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated that it would cost much more than the \$2 million allocated by the CRA for this level of monitoring. It was estimated that the Canada Revenue Agency would have to spend \$21 million over the first two years just to establish an electronic database and \$2.1 million each year thereafter. That is ridiculously expensive, especially for something that is clearly redundant and represents unnecessary harassment. The bill should never have seen the light of day, and its repealing just makes sense.

● (1545)

Bill C-4 would also repeal another anti-union private member's bill supported by the previous government, Bill C-525. New Democrats fully support repealing that bill. The bill attacks the fundamental right of association, making certification of new worker associations or unions much more difficult while at the same time allowing the decertification of existing unions to be much easier.

These changes to labour laws were made despite there being zero evidence of any problems with the previous system of union certification.

A union, like any other type of association, exists to provide support and a voice to its members. What right does a government have to meddle in the daily management of any worker association or union? Very simply, it has no right. Such destructive meddling represented more than some childish act of union busting, and the effects would have had an impact on all Canadians.

Whether a person supports unions or not, the fact is that unions have been a driving force in ensuring that all hard-working Canadians, whether unionized or not, receive a basic level of rights, freedoms, and protections.

Organized associations of working people are important to Canadians and the economy. Higher wages negotiated by unions improve the lives of everyday Canadians by injecting an additional \$786 million into the Canadian economy each week. Standing in the way of the well-being of hard-working Canadians is bad policy, bad governance, and bad fiscal management, and it is bad for the economy.

I join with the Canadian unions that are pleased that the federal government has introduced legislation to repeal both Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

The president of the Canadian Labour Congress, Hassan Yussuff, has said:

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...these bills were nothing more than an attempt to undermine unions' ability to do important work like protecting jobs, promoting health and safety in the workplace, and advocating on behalf of all Canadian workers.

Mark Hancock, National President of CUPE, echoed those sentiments when he said:

This is good news for all Canadian workers. These bills were nothing more than political attacks on unions and we are happy that the new government is moving quickly to correct these wrongs.... This is a good step in re-establishing a sense of respect for unions, the democratic voice of working people.

The UFCW said this:

UFCW is pleased to see the government tabling Bill C-4. Our union campaigned vigorously against the Conservative Government's Bill C-377 in the last parliament. The bill was undemocratic, and part of the Conservative government's campaign against workers and workplace democracy. It was also a major invasion of the privacy of individual union members and it infringed on provincial jurisdiction over labour issues.

Repealing Bill C-377 is positive for all Canadians as this bill would have been expensive for the government to implement and monitor.

The NDP will continue to push the government to restore and enhance collective bargaining rights as well as fair working conditions for all Canadians. The NDP will continue to pressure the government to reinstate a federal minimum wage and to enact anti-scab and proactive pay equity legislation.

Likewise, the NDP will also push the government to repeal the previous government's dangerous legislation, also entitled Bill C-4, and not just review it. This contentious Conservative legislation has been called unconstitutional and stacks the deck in the government's favour, undermining fair collective bargaining. Some people claim that the bill turned back the clock almost 50 years, and I certainly agree. A bill this backward needs to be repealed and not just reviewed.

Having fought hard against these unnecessary and irresponsible bills, the NDP welcomes the changes tabled by the current government. The rights of working people have been under attack for far too long and the repeal of these bills is a good first step, but there is much more to do for workers' rights and for working conditions for Canadian men and women.

The NDP will push the government to restore good faith bargaining with our public sector workers. We will push the government to reinstate a federal minimum wage and to ensure that workers have fair and independent health and safety protections. We will push the government to adopt anti-scab and pay equity legislation, because all Canadian workers deserve fairness and respect.

Bill C-4 is a very good step. However, it does not go far enough, and there are still many questions and concerns. We can and we must do better. Canadians are counting on us.

• (1550)

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his fine speech.

During the election campaign, I certainly heard in many parts of my riding opposition to what the Conservatives had brought in with Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

I wonder if the member could highlight some of the reasons he thinks the Conservatives brought that in, why it was so unfair and

unpopular with workers, not only in my riding but across the country, and why it is important to make sure that we repeal those bills now.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, what I heard in my riding and from the labour movement was that this was a way of union busting. It was basically to get back at the unions for something they believed strongly in: protecting the rights of workers.

A lot of people have come out with suggestions that the Harper government did this on purpose to make it very costly for unions to report their income to their union members, something they do already. It is not only to the members. Each union has what it calls trustees who actually look at the books on a quarterly basis and report back to their unions, to the membership, about what money is being spent.

There is nothing here to hide. We do not know why the government did this. It certainly looked like it was to get back at the unions.

• (1555)

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noted that the members from Elmwood—Transcona and Hamilton Mountain both stated that the unions were required to supply information to the unions.

I wonder if the member could tell me under what authority they are compelled to supply that information. What is the legal entity that compels them?

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question.

It is the constitution of the union that compels them to do this. It is stated right in there. For instance, I will speak for the United Steelworkers. In their constitution, they have to have a president, vice-president, trustees, and a financial officer. There are policies in there on how many people can sign a cheque. They have to report all finances, and anything that has been spent has to be approved by the membership of that local.

I am hoping that answers the question. It is in the constitution. It is also in the bylaws of the local union. Everything is there for people to understand.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if my colleagues agree that the previous bill, which this bill is trying to repeal, could ensure the security of police officers, because a lot of them are unionized. The ones who work in unions could have their names and addresses published. They really worry about that.

Would the previous bill, which this bill would repeal, secure police officers in their work?

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the question was.

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Repealing this bill now is a very important step to make sure that all rights are protected and that nobody is treated unfairly.

Prior to 1977, everyone used a card. The majority of members signed up for a card, and that is how it was presented. There was a union if the majority of the members wanted it.

Going to a ballot system was done only after 1977, by a few provinces, and I hate to say it, but they were all Conservatives that actually put this stuff in. They were trying to lower the number of unions that could be formed. There was intimidation by the companies. There were threats of jobs being lost. They were going to close the shops.

That is why it is in front of us today. We are repealing something that was just bad legislation. There was actually great progress made going to the cards.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to address the House in support of Bill C-4, which was tabled last January by my colleague, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

As members know, improving labour relations is one of our government's priorities. I therefore ask all hon. members to support this bill.

The purpose of Bill C-4 is to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act, and the Income Tax Act by repealing the provisions enacted by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

These bills force unions to produce useless financial statements and make it harder for Canadians in federally regulated workplaces to unionize. Basically, Bill C-4 is a matter of justice and fairness for the workers affected.

Members know as well as I do that good labour relations are essential in ensuring Canada's economic growth and prosperity. Labour relation legislation ensures some balance between employer, employees, and unions. Our government understands this.

When the previous government supported Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, we opposed them and tried to make the government understand that these legislative measures were unjust and unfair. However, our efforts were in vain. The previous government refused to listen to reason and chose to move ahead, even if it meant jeopardizing the fragile balance that had been achieved in employer-employee relations. We were not the only ones who raised the red flag on those bills.

Bill C-4 is the right thing to do. The purpose of the bill is to essentially remedy this by restoring justice and fairness to Canadian labour relations. Many stakeholders expressed their concern. Overwhelming evidence has been heard on Bill C-4.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada supported Bill C-4, saying that Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 were flawed, were introduced without proper consultation, and were detrimental to the rights of workers.

Further, Bill C-4 is hailed by the Canadian Labour Congress president Hassan Yussuff and the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario for restoring the labour relations in Canada.

Bill C-377 would force unions and labour trusts to declare their expenses, assets, debts, and the salaries of certain individuals. That information would then be made publicly available on the Canada Revenue Agency's website. They would also have to provide details on time spent on political and lobbying activities, as well as any activities not directly related to labour relations.

Thankfully, the Minister of National Revenue has already taken steps to lift these obligations while Parliament examines Bill C-4.

We have to understand that if this information was made public, these measures would put unions at a huge disadvantage to employers.

Bill C-377 unfortunately upset the balance that had existed. However, provisions were already in place to ensure that unions met their financial responsibilities. Section 110 of the Canada Labour Code and many provincial labour relations laws already require unions and employers to provide financial statements.

Bill C-525 would also create a major advantage for management. The bill amended the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act to change the union certification system.

• (1600)

The traditional card verification system was replaced by a mandatory voting system. Unions are no longer certified automatically, even if the majority of workers have signed a membership card. The rule in existence was clear and well understood. Private sector workers with federally regulated employers could obtain union certification by signing a union membership card.

For example, under the Canada Labour Code, if the majority of employees' signatures were recorded on union membership cards, those cards were sent to the Canada Industrial Relations Board to obtain certification. Even if 35% of the workers were in favour of unionization, a formal vote was taken. However, unions now have to obtain support from 40% of workers before mandatory secret ballot votes can be held.

This system had a proven track record, however, the previous government chose to change things for purely ideological reasons. This double standard is grossly unfair because it makes unionization much more difficult.

We recognize the essential role unions play in protecting the rights of workers and helping the middle class grow and prosper. The prosperity of the middle class and of the Canadian economy depend upon harmonious and balanced labour relations. Bill C-4 has been tabled to redress the imbalances in labour relations created by the previous government.

I sincerely hope that other hon. members will see the benefits of Bill C-4, which would re-establish a balance between the rights and responsibilities of the employers and those of employees. We have a duty to intervene, and we are proud to do so today.

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● (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government says it wants to enhance labour rights with Bill C-4. It claims to respect unions and says it is listening to them.

I was speaking earlier about anti-scab legislation. The response to my colleague was that there must be some reason for the lack of provincial legislation on the matter. However, the Quebec Labour Code has included robust anti-scab provisions for 40 years now.

On Wednesday, the House will be voting on a bill introduced by my colleague from Jonquière that deals specifically with anti-scab legislation. It is about improving working conditions for Canadians and about respecting unions.

In the spirit of respect for Canadian workers and unions, on Wednesday, does my colleague opposite plan to vote in favour of the bill introduced by my colleague from Jonquière?

[*English*]

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Mr. Speaker, we recognize the bigger role being played by the unions in our economy and helping the middle class to prosper. The prosperity of the middle class and the Canadian economy depend upon the harmonious balance of that relationship. However, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 created imbalances in the relationship between the unions, employers, and employees, which would be corrected by Bill C-4. We suggest that Bill C-4 is the only bill that can remedy the problems created by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the Liberal government support the Rand formula?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Mr. Speaker, the bills have created imbalances in the labour relationships and have not served any purpose in creating better unionization. There was no possibility of getting unionized properly. At this time, we think Bill C-4 would bring those changes and improve the relationship between unions and employers.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we saw where the Rand Formula got Tim Hudak last time around.

People who follow the labour movement and issues related to it would know what Andrew Sims, probably the foremost authority on labour relations in our country, has said. The member for Hochelaga talked about the anti-scab legislation. During his last review of the Canada Labour Code, Andrew Sims said that there was an issue that employers and employees could not agree on, which was back-to-work legislation, that the way the current system worked was fine, and that it was not perfect, but it was the best it could be.

There was one thing that came out loud and clear during the hearings on Bills C-377 and C-525. Hassan Yussuff, Jerry Dias, AFL-CIO, and all those who gave presentations from the labour movement and labour relations across the country said that it should be done in a tripartite manner, with employers, employees, and government, not by single one-off private member's legislation. There was a consistency in that testimony.

Does my colleague believe that this is one of the main reasons for repealing these two bad bills? There was no need for these bills. They were a solution in search of a problem. Does he agree that is part of the reason these bills should be repealed?

● (1610)

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4 would repeal Bills C-377 and C-525, which totally restrict unions from working and having relationships with labour unions and employers. Until Bill C-4 is passed, the relationship between the unions and the employers will not be solid and will not benefit workers. They are not going to work properly. The Liberals feel the relationship should be restored. The balance among unions, employers, and employees must be restored, and Bill C-4 would do that.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the diatribe from the parliamentary secretary, I want to ask the hon. member if he ever actually had one single constituent tell him during the last election campaign that he or she did not want the right to vote and did not want any transparency about any financial information ever?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Mr. Speaker, it did not happen only once; it happened many times during my election campaign. The card check system was in existence for a long time and it was not flawed. It was a proper system and it was working. The new system, where 40% of members have a secret ballot vote, gives more power to fewer people, those who can influence the unions and cause the disintegration of them. That will cause an imbalance in the entire system. That imbalance needs to be removed by Bill C-4.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I asked earlier if the hon. member supported the Rand Formula and he did not answer clearly. Therefore, I will give him another opportunity. The Rand Formula is the entire basis for the exclusive majority representation model of bargaining in a workplace, which we have in all 10 Canadian provinces and the federal jurisdiction.

I want to confirm that in fact his government supports the Rand Formula.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Mr. Speaker, the actual process, which was already in existence with the labour relationship, was to maintain better unions and give prosperity to the Canadian middle class. However, the total system was disturbed by the creation of new laws which were unnecessary. Both of the bills created a total imbalance in the labour relationship. They were not required. They were unnecessary paperwork. On the order for the financial statements to be given by unions, a system already exists under the Canada Labour Code, which says that unions have to provide financial statements. The provincial laws are there, and unions themselves have their own constitution to provide financial statements. These laws were unnecessary, and Bill C-4 is the only bill which can make the changes to set the situation right and bring a balance to these relationships.

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• (1615)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to underline that what we have heard from the other side was a need to bring more balance and fairness to the relationship between unionized employees and their employer. One thing we need to point out is that the Canada Labour Code review is best done by a tripartite, but that process is not always going to be able to arrive at a consensus. That is exactly what happened the last time that we reviewed replacement workers, or anti-scab legislation.

Would my colleague agree that sometimes it is important for the government to lead? When one process does not come to consensus, although there is evidence for both sides, does the government not sometimes have to lead a process, and would he agree that this might be the place to do it around anti-scab legislation?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Mr. Speaker, intervention by the government is not the remedy for a better solution. The better solution is independent unions, independent employee and employer relationships. That can bring valuable output to the bargaining table, and that is where it needs to be done.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, 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 Drummond, Official Languages; the hon. member for Victoria, Canada Revenue Agency.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Foothills.

Whenever we debate labour law in this country, we have to start by recognizing the extraordinary and unmatched powers that unions enjoy under labour legislation in all 10 provinces and in the federal jurisdiction. There is no other organization in this country, other than governments, that can compel any individual to pay dues or to be exclusively represented by that organization under the law as a condition of employment. No other organization has that power.

Some will say that that power exists because when a union negotiates on behalf of a workplace, those workers who may not otherwise wish to pay dues or be represented are indirect beneficiaries of that negotiating work. Some will say that that when a union grieves on behalf of members of a workplace, those beneficiaries of that grieving would be free riders if they were not also compelled to pay mandatory dues to cover the cost of grieving. In other words, the union acts on behalf of all workers, even those workers within the bargaining unit who do not want to be part of it, and therefore all should pay into it.

This is an interesting piece of logic to defend the model. It is a piece of logic that does not extend to other private organizations, of course. For example, no one would deny that every cancer patient benefits from the advocacy of the Canadian Cancer Society. There are plenty of small businesses that benefit from the advocacy of, say, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. There are organizations that fight for research and better treatment for those who are suffering with diabetes. Yet, we do not force people who fall into any of those categories to pay dues to those same organizations. It is true that they do benefit from the work and the advocacy of

those organizations, but they are not required by any law to pay mandatory dues. Imagine if we had extended that logic to those organizations, if we said that a cancer patient must, under law, pay dues to the Canadian Cancer Society. I am sure that no one in the House would propose laws requiring such payments, nor would they call a cancer patient who is unwilling or unable to pay such dues a “free rider”.

We recognize that there are private associations that promote different causes across society and that people decide whether or not they are going to contribute to them. That is the case. That is freedom of association as defined and as defended in subsection 2(d) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That is freedom of association, as distinct from forced association, that is, being a requirement to be part of an organization or to pay into it against one's will.

Nevertheless, we have something unique and entirely different for unions as a private association, and that is based on the principle of exclusive majority representation. Exclusive majority representation means that with any bargaining unit, that is to say a cluster of employees, when a majority decides that unit should be represented by a single agent, then that agent exclusively represents everybody in that unit. Let us take an automotive plant with 100 workers as an example. When 51 of those workers want to be represented by the ABC union, all of them are represented by the ABC union, even those who are not part of the 51 out of 100. That is because of exclusive majority representation. A majority equals 100% even if it really only equals 51%.

Such has been the case since 1946 with the famous arbitration ruling of Justice Ivan Rand, hence the question earlier to the hon. member about the Rand formula.

• (1620)

I will read from the introduction to that award, which states:

His award denies [a] union shop, which has been asked [for] by the union, but provides for a new form of union security and the compulsory check-off of union dues from the wages of all workers under the agreement whether union members or not.

If I could add my own commentary, what that means is that even if one is not a member of the union, under this formula he or she would pay dues. Therefore, membership was not compulsory under the Rand formula, but dues were.

It continues:

The award also provides for penalties against individuals in the case of “wildcat” strikes and against the union in the case of a strike called without a secret ballot of all employees.

Here in the introduction, prior to even getting into the formal text of the award, we see the principle of a secret ballot as it applies to strike votes. However, we will return to that concept in a moment.

Government Orders

Therefore, the principle was that where a union had the support of a majority of workers in a unit, every single worker had to pay into the union and be represented by the union in all matters related to relations with the employer. That included the formation of a contract, a single contract that applies to all workers within the union, and furthermore to grievances. That is why, in many unionized workplaces today, workers cannot actually grieve for themselves. If they have a problem with the employer or with the way they have been treated, they have to go through the union. They are required to be represented by the organization, whether they choose to be or not.

I go back into all of this history because this is the legal foundation for our entire labour relations system in unionized environments right to the present day, in all 13 provinces and territories, plus the federal jurisdiction. This arrangement is extraordinary. It gives an incredible amount of power to organizations known as unions. They effectively have the power of taxation. They can force people to pay dues just for the privilege of working. They can force people to be represented by them. There is no other organization or agent, other than governments, that have the power to do that. Think of the agents we deal with in our daily life. Real estate agents cannot force someone to be represented by them, nor can sports agents force hockey players to be represented by them. Only bargaining agents have that legal authority. No organization has the authority to force people to pay dues, except for a union.

However, with that power comes responsibility. I quote further from the Rand decision, which gave us that structure. It states:

The preservation of the individual as a centre of thought and action and its reconciliation with the general security is the end of...government. But unguarded power cannot be trusted and the maintenance of social balance demands that the use or exercise of power be subject to controls. Politically this resides in alert public opinion and the secret ballot.

That is what is at stake in this legislation. The previous government, through a private member's bill, enacted the requirement that no organization could take over a workplace. It could not force people to be represented by and pay dues to a union without, at the very least, giving those workers the chance to vote on the question. They would not be intimidated either by the employer or by the proposed bargaining agent, and no one could show up at their home late at night and intimidate them into signing a card, or refusing to sign a card, for that matter. No one could know their true views, because in a truly democratic system, people are able to express themselves without fear of any form of retribution or enticement.

As a result, we have secret ballot elections that elect 100% of the members of Parliament in this place. I submit that people ought to have the basic right to determine their destiny within a bargaining unit by freeing themselves from that form of intimidation, and by casting their ballot yea or nay for one bargaining unit or another. That is the basic premise of a democratic system. It is how we choose governments. It is how we pass referenda. It should be how workers decide if and by whom they are represented.

● (1625)

Therefore, I stand here today to ask the government to reconsider what I think is a very extreme piece of legislation, which the Liberals have introduced. It is out of touch with all 50 American states and

the majority of Canadian provinces. They should reinstate the basic principle of a secret ballot so that our men and women who go to work every day can determine their own destiny based on the fundamentally basic method of decision-making, and that is secret ballot democracy.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments and the speech by my colleague across, although I may not agree with much of it.

It is essential to know, for people who follow this debate and these issues, that during the course of Bill C-377, the government said that there is a benefit to unions, because one has to join a union to work on particular sites, and there is a tax benefit, a tax deduction. However, we know that if one wants to practise law in Ontario, one has to be a member of the Ontario Bar Association and pay to be a member, and that membership is tax-deductible. We have a number of lawyers here who are nodding.

If this is about openness and transparency, then let it be open and transparent for everybody. However, when we put forward the amendment to include lawyers and medical professionals, the Conservatives at the time voted against it. Does my colleague not see the contradiction in that? If it is good for the goose, it should be good for the gander.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the amendment of which the hon. member speaks, but the basic principle of Bill C-377 was that union dues are tax deductible. Therefore, there is an implication for the treasury, which comes with requirements for transparency. Hence, there is the basic requirement in Bill C-377, supported by the overwhelming majority of unionized workers, that the finances of labour organizations be made public.

However, the member did not address the other half of this debate, which is whether or not a union should be able to take over a workplace without holding a vote to determine that in fact the will of the majority of workers in that unit is represented. I regret that he did not address that point, because I think on that ground the government is in an indefensible position.

If the Liberals feel strongly about Bill C-377, fine, they can introduce a bill to reverse it alone. However, they do not have to eliminate the right of workers to vote at the same time. Therefore, I would encourage the parliamentary secretary to revisit that second issue, because I know that privately he supports the principle of secret ballots. I think he would win a lot of praise if he and his government amended the bill to preserve that principle.

● (1630)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague who gave a very learned speech in the House today and is representing his constituents admirably in this place by doing what is right.

Government Orders

In this place today I have heard a lot of arguments from the other side about a tripartite approach to dealing with labour, yet I have heard nothing from the government about consultations on Bill C-4. Bill C-4, right out of the gate, was presented in Parliament. It is the third bill that was presented before the House. I have not heard of any committee being struck to consult across the country. There is basically just a giant eraser coming out to erase legislation that came from the previous Parliament.

Other than a few news articles about union-paid workers showing up as so-called volunteers on campaigns and not disclosing those costs during campaign expenses and a secret meeting between some union leaders and the Prime Minister just after the election, I have not heard of any consultations. Has the hon. member heard of any tripartite approach that led to the tabling of Bill C-4?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that was the member who gave federally regulated workers the right to vote in matters of union certification, so I congratulate him for doing that.

I have not heard of any such consultations. However, I object to this notion of tripartite consultations. The three are big corporations, big unions, and big government. We forget that the people who really matter in this debate are the workers themselves. It is really important that we talk to the big corporate CEOs, the union bosses, and the top politicians and bureaucrats. They all have to be in the room, but the actual people who will be paying the union dues and represented in the workplace, they do not need to be anywhere near the debate. Do not let them close because we would not want them to make their own decision, would we? That is the basic premise of the government's approach to consultation and to law in fact. It does not want workers to decide.

Earlier, we heard the Minister of Employment come out and say, "I found this document showing that the Conservatives were briefed that if workers were given a chance to vote they don't unionize in as high numbers. Aha, now we know the real motive." That only proves that when workers are given the democratic choice, they do not make the decision the Liberals want. That is why this bill seeks to silence the voices of workers by stripping them of the right to vote.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-4. I have been really discouraged as I have listened to the debate over the past eight or nine months. One of the themes that keeps coming up is that somehow private members' bills are illegitimate and that this is something that we were bringing through the back door.

We did a lot of consultation. Again, I would like to commend my colleague, the member from Red Deer—Lacombe, who put a lot of work into crafting this private member's bill that was passed in the House in a democratic process, through a vote, which I think is a fundamental part of this, that gave workers the opportunity to a secret ballot. It is disappointing that I have heard from my colleagues across the floor that these bills, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, do nothing more than force unions to bring forward useless financial information and that it is unfair to have a secret ballot.

For a government that campaigned on a foundation of openness and transparency, I find it very ironic that it is now, today, and has been for the last eight months, on Bill C-4, talking about how unfair

it is to have a secret ballot and how unfair it is to ask unions to make public their financial information, financial information consisting of a half a billion dollars of taxpayer money that is tax exempt. I think the Canadian people have a right to know how those dollars are being spent, but most important, it is important that the workers themselves know how those dollars are being spent.

My colleague, the member for Carleton, did a phenomenal job of talking about the history of secret ballots and our labour relations program, but what I want to talk about today is what I find frustrating in terms of the priorities of the Liberal government.

Obviously, I come from the province of Alberta. Things are very difficult right now. It is difficult to see that one of the first things the Minister of Employment did when she came into government was to try to repeal legislation that we put forward to ensure that unions had open and transparent government and employees had the opportunity to a secret ballot. Things have only gotten worse in Alberta over that time and I have not seen our employment minister speak once about what is going on in Alberta and some of the things that the government could be doing to try to turn the situation around.

One part of the employment minister's title that has not been stripped from her role is "workforce development". I think she has an opportunity to change her priorities from repealing what is good legislation to talking about getting Albertans and Canadians back to work. There are probably more than 100,000 energy workers now unemployed and looking for work. These are families who are having a tough time paying their mortgages, putting food on the table, putting their kids in sports, in hockey, and it is only getting worse. Employment insurance claims in Alberta are up 90% over the past year. The Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors has said that employment will be down 60%, from 2014 numbers. This is something that is going on across the country. I know we talk about the employment situation in Alberta being dire, that there is an 8.6% unemployment rate, which is the highest it has been in decades, but this is something that impacts Canadians from coast to coast.

It is very unfortunate that we have a Liberal government and an employment minister, specifically, who has really been missing in action on this. Her number one priority is repealing these pieces of legislation. I think that her priority and her focus right now should actually be on workforce development, which is one of her roles. One of those things that we could be doing in terms of workforce development is advocating for shovel-ready projects, things like the northern gateway pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline, things that will actually develop a workforce and get these unemployed Canadians, especially, Albertans in the energy sector, back to work.

Government Orders

When the Trans Mountain pipeline comes to cabinet, perhaps next month, will the minister be in that cabinet room? Will she be a voice for Canadian workers? Will she be a voice for Canada's energy sector? Will she be a voice for investment in Canada, or will she be just standing there, missing in action? Will she be a voice for and support the trans-Canada pipeline and get Canadians back to work rather than spending her time advocating for, what I feel, is a very low priority, which is Bill C-4?

I hope she has an opportunity to answer that today on how she will be advocating for the Trans Mountain pipeline when it comes before cabinet next month.

• (1635)

I look at Bill C-4 as a real step backward. Bill C-525 gave Canadian workers a chance for a secret ballot, which is I believe in vehemently. It is a cornerstone, a foundation, of our Canadian democracy. I am surprised that the Liberal government wants to repeal this.

Quite regularly now, the Liberal government is trying arbitrarily to make a change to a fundamental piece of our democracy, including now how we elect our parliamentarians. The Liberals are doing this with, we will say, consultations. They want to make a change to a fundamental part of our democracy without really consulting Canadians through a referendum. Why should we be surprised they would want to make a change to how unions could have a secret-ballot vote when they are going to make that same change to how Canadians elect their government? I find it ironic that the Liberals, piece by piece, are taking away the voice of Canadians.

It also shows, in my opinion, that when we spoke to Bills C-525 and C-377, we had very strong support from union workers. Some of our polling across Canada showed that as many as 86% of those polled supported this kind of legislation. To repeal that with very little if any consultation, I find very disingenuous. I do not think the Liberals have taken the opportunity to speak to union members and to get their feedback on that.

During the election last fall, I spoke to tens of thousands of my residents, and not once did this issue come up as a priority for the people in the riding of Foothills—not once. Certainly I had people talking about creating jobs and ensuring that our economy is strong, but I never had a single person at a door say to me that he or she would like us to repeal bills that encourage openness and transparency and give Canadian workers the opportunity for a secret-ballot vote. I would encourage the members opposite to tell me how often they had that answer at doors.

Bill C-4 is really about eliminating openness and transparency and removing the opportunity for Canadian workers to have a secret-ballot vote, which is a fundamental part of our democracy. To me, it is a cornerstone of what Canada was built on. It just seems backward for us to be taking away that right from Canadian workers.

Parliament is also discussing Bill C-7, which is a similar process for the RCMP. Are my Liberal colleagues on the other side of the floor also saying that they want to deny RCMP members the right to a secret-ballot vote when it comes to their opportunity to form or not form a union? I find this extremely disingenuous.

Looking through some data, what I find the most frustrating about this is that we are taking up some very important time in the House when we could be dealing with more important issues, such as employment and the economy. When we ask Canadians, we hear they support openness and transparency. When we ask Canadian workers, they say they support openness and transparency. However, it seems the only ones who do not are the members of the current Liberal government, which flies against everything they have talked about as we go through this.

The Liberals talked about consultation, which I do not believe has happened with Bill C-4. The more we sit here and talk about this, the more they delay a decision on the Trans Mountain pipeline; the more they delay a decision on the hearings on energy east; and the more they delay a decision on northern gateway, the ratification of the trans-Pacific partnership, and a softwood lumber agreement. On the really important things that the current government should be getting at and doing, it is not acting. The Liberals are spending their time pandering to big union bosses rather than pounding the pavement and helping to create jobs for Canadians who are struggling woefully right now.

In conclusion, I want to assure the residents of my constituency of Foothills that the Conservatives are fighting hard to ensure that they have a voice and an advocate for what they feel are most important: jobs, a strong economy, and their family.

Unlike the Liberals, who seem to think that workforce development is a bit of an oxymoron, we will be a champion for the energy sector, for small business, for Canadian investors, and for our farmers and our ranchers. These are the people who are creating growth. These are the groups and the folks who are creating jobs. It is not the union bosses. That should be the priority.

• (1640)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the express need of Albertans to get infrastructure investments to get people back to work in very troubling times. I wonder if the member opposite would care to reflect on the fact that his government failed to sign an infrastructure agreement with Alberta in its last two years in office. That resulted in zero dollars in new infrastructure money being delivered to the major city of Edmonton, Alberta. Also, if they are truly concerned about getting Alberta back to work, why was the government so inept in delivering infrastructure dollars to a province that quite clearly needed it?

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, but it has absolutely nothing to do with what we are talking about here today. Again, it just goes to show that the Liberals are not taking seriously these very important issues to all Canadians. Rather than talk about the issue we are addressing today, secret ballots and financial transparency, he wants to talk about something else because they do not want to talk about these important issues.

Government Orders

Just so he knows, if he has ever actually left downtown Toronto, I can speak for Albertans. I know how Albertans are feeling right now. They are feeling very frustrated that they have a government that does not care what they are going through, that is not doing anything about it, but would rather have some rhetorical discussions about issues that take two to tango, by the way.

• (1645)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we continue with questions and comments, just on the issue of relevance that does come up from time to time during questions and comments, generally speaking, hon. members realize that the questions posed during that 5 or 10-minute period should be relevant to the topic that is before the House. However, in addition, if the hon. member in the course of his or her remarks or speech enters a topic area that might be related or indirectly related to the topic that is before the House, a question or comment on the remarks of the hon. member who just spoke would also be in order. That is something to keep in mind when hon. members are thinking about how to pose their questions during this 5 or 10-minute period for questions and comments.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if my colleague could explain something to me. We are currently debating an amendment to send the bill back to committee, but when we studied the bill in committee the Conservatives did not present any amendments. Why are they trying to send the bill back to committee if they did not put any amendments forward when we were studying it in committee? There were four meetings.

He just said in his speech that the Conservatives are working hard, but he had four meetings to table amendments and the Conservatives tabled none. Therefore, I have difficulty understanding the process and what exactly they are trying to do. If he could clarify that, it would be really appreciated.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate her question, but I am not on the committee, so I do not want to speak for my colleagues on the committee.

What I can say is that we were quite satisfied, obviously, with Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. There was great support from Canadians. We do not want to see those two pieces of legislation repealed. I do not think there is an amendment to Bill C-4 that we would be in support of because Bill C-4 is repealing two critical pieces of legislation.

I cannot speak for the NDP members, but we heard from our colleagues across the floor that one of the biggest issues with bills C-525 and C-377 was they were private members' bills. I'm really looking forward to seeing those two bills put back into legislation, but maybe through a government bill from the Liberal Party.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the Liberal government continues to talk about the middle class, transparency, and accountability while it talks about big business and the elite in big government and large unions. The Liberals talk to the CEOs and the union leaders, but who are the middle class? The middle class are the folks who get up every day and go to work. They put in their hours, buy the food, come home, and look after their families.

We talk about big government. In fact, it just gave \$1.1 million to its elite people in government to move. Therefore, I am wondering what this has to do with creating jobs and preserving democracy in our country, which we seem to be jeopardizing right now.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague asked that question, because in just about every answer from across the floor we hear that they are working hard to strengthen the middle class and those who are working hard to join it. What about the 125,000 who have just left the middle class in Alberta's energy sector? We do not hear a word about that. Repealing Bill C-4 would certainly not get those people back to work.

Our priority in the House right now should be to come up with ideas and a plan and policy that would attract investment back to Canada. We talked about it the other day. Encana is now investing \$1 billion in the oil sector in Texas, not here in Canada. The United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and France all have similar legislation to Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

Why are we the one western democracy to be eliminating the opportunity for Canadian workers to have a secret ballot, when our priority should really be finding a way to get those 125,000 Canadians back to work?

• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill C-4. Today, I will be splitting my time with a colleague, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

The bill that was introduced by the Liberal government certainly attacks the principles of our democracy, our accountability, and certainly our transparency. Two previous private members' bills, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525—and we have talked all afternoon in the House about them—which passed, are now under major attack.

Bill C-377 dealt with accountability. Bill C-525 deals with the democratic process, and we have talked a lot about the secret ballot.

Let us talk about the transparency of Bill C-377. All public bodies have rulings requiring transparency and accountability: members of Parliament, all 338 of us, all federal and provincial departments, crown corporations, municipalities, and RMs. In many ways, this is how we are judged in life. We are judged personally, and we are certainly judged by it in government. At the end of the day, how well we manage our affairs is what we are remembered for.

Government Orders

Charitable organizations are constantly asking for donations, and they have to be transparent. We want to know where the money is going. It is called a paper trail. Is management taking a lead role in transparency in charitable organizations? Many of us, coast to coast to coast, do a lot of charity work in our communities. I urge members to get to know more about the organization. What does it stand for, and, not only that, where is the money going? That is the essence of Bill C-4.

Under a union shop, employees pay a percentage of union dues. Are the employees aware of what the dues are used for? Where are the dues going? Are unions and their leaders transparent? They should be, especially when there is a major tax credit for deductions.

Many of us who have been union members over the last number of years, like me, for nearly 40 years, made voluntary payments to the union and it spent the money. That is the way it goes. If I went to another charity, for example, I could pick my charity, but in the union, it goes to that union.

Deductions add up to roughly, and we all heard it in House today, \$500 million annually. That is a half a billion dollars. Canadians should know where that money is going.

In the past federal election, we had unions actively involved in third-party advertising. We had unions actually paying members to stand behind a party when they were doing announcements. Imagine actually paying members to participate? That was certainly a no-no. Transparency is one of the fundamental principles of democracy.

Now, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 are under attack. Unions are taking those dues and spending millions of dollars in advertising. Are members aware of how much of their money is going to advertising? Members may not have the same view as that of the union, and yet they have little or no say on where that money is going or on which billboard.

Are members aware of salaries that are being paid to their union leaders? Are they aware of the travel involved and all of the benefits that some of these union leaders charge?

Canadians care about accountability. They want every government to be accountable. I do not have to remind members across the way about developments that have happened in the last week. All 338 members show our expenses to the public. This is what we call transparency. Even those who are not elected, as we found out last week, are now being singled out for the lack of accountability, and they certainly should be. All Canadians, all 38 million people, want to know about that, especially after it was the Prime Minister who signed off on these expenses.

• (1655)

Bill C-525 requires a secret ballot for union certification. If union members wanted to terminate their union certification, that also had to be done by secret ballot. The secret ballot, of course, has always been part of democracy. All members in the House were elected by the secret ballot. Even as we look at electoral reform right now, we all understand it is mandatory to have the secret ballot. That will occur in 2019. I would say that will never change.

How can members of the House of Commons be against a secret ballot? Secret ballot principles exist in provincial legislatures, in my

home province of Saskatchewan, along with B.C., Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. Years ago, some union shop members pressured my members to vote a certain way. We certainly hope that does not happen in the year of 2016.

Members pay union dues, and I think they should have a say in where their money goes and how it is spent. It is called accountability. We expect our union leaders, who are elected by a secret ballot, to be accountable to their membership. As I mentioned, I was part of the union for 39 years. We expected our leadership to come forward each and every month with the financial situation.

I think the biggest losers in all of the talk we have heard today are the ordinary union members who go about their business each day trusting that everything is on the up and up. They are the ones who work hard every day in this country, who do not want to get involved in the union issues because of family, or simply because they are not interested. Yet, they are a union member and are told to pay union dues. They are the ones who are hurt by this bill, because they have a harder time getting access now to certain information. We all need democracy in this system, which includes secret ballots.

We move on to Bill C-525, and it is all about accountability. If the workers are happy with their union, they will support them on a secret ballot. If accountability does not happen, then they have the right to decertify. They should have that opportunity, also through the secret ballot.

Some say that the former government, our Conservative government, was pro-business, and so be it. There is always a balance between business and workers. If treated well by owners, there are no union issues. In my previous career, we had 40 years with the union and not once did we ever lock out, not once did we ever threaten the company. We were always at work. We may have taken a little longer sometimes to get an agreement, but that was the process we wished to have.

If workers are treated well by owners, there is no union issue. Too often, though, in the past, it was the union that pushed the envelope, causing tension between some workers and owners. That is when there are issues that can damage a relationship and cause devastating results. It can essentially cause a business to close. We have seen that in this country. That is when everyone, including the owner and the workers, is the loser. We have seen that with EI going up in the last year.

As I conclude, every day in this country, there are agreements signed between management and unions. Some take longer than others for various reasons. Bill C-4 undermines the secret ballot vote, a cornerstone of our democracy. If the process is good enough to elect us, the MPs, it should be good enough to ratify collective agreement from coast to coast to coast.

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Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across has tried to dismiss what Bill C-377 was about. He tried to say that we ask the same of charities, so why can we not ask this of organized labour?

The highest degree of revenue by any charity in the country is a hospital in Toronto. They file a form of about 24 pages. One of the smallest filings we are going to see, if we let Bill C-377 go forward for organized labour, will be about 400 pages. The member should try not to mislead the Canadian public, saying that it is looking for the same. Everything over \$5,000, every salary over \$5,000, will have to be shown.

My hon. colleague said that members of Parliament would have to do this. I would ask the member if he posts the individual salaries of his staff on his website.

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, I think the point is that if I go through a charity, I have a choice of a charity. Years ago, unions took their fees, paid for their memberships, for shop stewards, for personal development of that union, but they did not pay for third-party advertising. That is what has changed, and in the last year we saw that. There are no restrictions now. I did not pay for my union to put up a billboard promoting another party. I had many in my union shops who voted for me, and yet when they drove to work, there was an advertisement there. I did not pay for that, and neither did my workers pay for the advertisement. That is the difference in the bill.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises another significant point. I have a lot of respect for my colleague across the way, but he forgets that the union organization already has all the information that is needed. With an organization that garners a benefit of \$500 million from taxpayers in a year, does the member not believe that they should be accountable for that? I am wondering if he could comment.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, we have seen six provinces sign off, including my province of Saskatchewan. It is interesting because the provinces that have signed, such as Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C., are progressive. We believe that unions are good and that we can work with unions. The average income in our three provinces has gone up substantially, and it is good. People have a good style of living, that is, other than in the last 18 months to 24 months because of the oil and commodity situation. Before then, we were in pretty good shape.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the party across the way, and I used to think that Conservatives were a party for small government. However, it is a party, that while in power, and even now, talked about wanting to run charities and detailed how they are structured and get engaged as a government. It is a party that wants to get involved in unions and decide how they should be run and what rules should be followed. It was the same thing with the aboriginal communities. They wanted to decide how band councils should report to the membership and detailed that. In fact, private members' bills came forward on how to run political parties for the Parliament of this country. The amount of control that the Conservative Party

wants in the everyday life of democratic social organizations is extraordinary.

If unions want a free vote or a private vote, is it not their choice? Does the member not believe in these sorts of freedoms being extended to self-organized, self-regulated organizations?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, we have talked about the tripartite voting in this House of big government, big employers, and big unions. No one has ever talked about the pawns in this situation, being the everyday worker in this country. You are the government of consultation right now. You have not done a lot of consultation on Bill C-4 at all. None. Zero. We have seen that. At least when our private member's bill was debated in the House of Commons, we took that to the public last October. The two private members' bills passed. We never heard that much on this side of the House, obviously. However, we do have some issues when unions start becoming third party during elections, which we saw last October.

The Deputy Speaker: I will remind all hon. members to remember to direct their commentary to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary, on a point of order.

• (1705)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I was not certain, but the hon. member knew that we won the last election, did he not? Is that a point of order?

The Deputy Speaker: I do not think so. It is a point of debate. When the hon. parliamentary secretary has a moment, he can perhaps connect with the hon. member in question.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood for his excellent speech.

The former Conservative government was a government of principle. We believe in democracy and people's choice and we are working to make the federal government more transparent. We worked toward that goal for the nearly 10 years that we were in office. That is why we supported Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, and Bill C-525, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act, also known as the Employees' Voting Rights Act.

These two bills, which were introduced by members and passed by both chambers, helped to advance the labour movement, regulate it in a transparent manner, and modernize it. Bill C-525 made voting by secret ballot mandatory. Secret ballot voting is so revolutionary. It has never been tested before, except in referendums and federal, provincial, municipal, and school elections.

It took a law to make unions hold secret ballot votes. In fact, many provincial legislatures had to enact legislation in that regard, including Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia.

Government Orders

Bill C-377 required unions to disclose how union dues were spent. It was not complicated, it was just common sense, especially because the money was deducted from paycheques as a result of an established practice. In short, these two bills would have made much-needed changes to unions.

I wanted to participate in the debate to speak out against what the government is doing. It is disappointing. The government's Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, will repeal these two bills.

It is disappointing to see that the Liberals, who claim to defend the middle class, widows, and orphans, are reinstating union secrecy. On the other side of the House, secret ballots and transparency concerning the use of financial resources are not important. It is not very surprising, but it is disappointing.

The Liberals' priority is to thank the big unions for throwing money at them to help get them elected. That is exactly what this government is doing with Bill C-4: it is thanking the big unions that spent big money during the last election.

It is partly for that reason that we had the longest election campaign on record. It was to prevent major unions from repeating what they did in the last Ontario election: they plastered the province with negative ads about a party in order to influence the vote. For these big unions, and for the Liberals, the interests of workers, their members, are far less important than their own corporate interests. It is not even close.

Bill C-4 spells the end for union certification by secret ballot. The big unions are free to keep using their intimidation and scare tactics to force employees into joining a union against their will. It is sad to see a strong-arm policy being enshrined by the government.

The government is failing to protect the silent majority, middle-class workers who have a hard time making ends meet and fear reprisals. They end up buying peace by keeping mum and voting against their conscience. The government is favouring the corporate interests of the big unions that need the millions of dollars in union dues that are taken off the paycheques of unionized workers.

There are many stories of intimidation. Out of fear of reprisals, or to stop the intolerable pressure, many people end up folding and agreeing to sign the certification form. They do not sign because they believe a union might be good for them, but because they feel threatened.

When the time comes to vote for or against unionization, the vote is rarely done by secret ballot. It is by a show of hands, or twisted arms if I may put it that way. Out of fear of being branded if they do not comply with their leaders, many workers choose to go with the flow instead of voting their conscience.

• (1710)

Workers do not vote their conscience. They are intimidated during the process, and they know that the intimidation will not stop if they persist in their opposition.

Even dictatorships that hold elections to legitimize their leaders' leadership do not vote that way. Most of the time, there is a secret

ballot that gives people a choice: they can support the dictator or not. That is the way it has to be.

Everyone here would be up in arms if people could not vote their conscience because of intimidation or if intimidation shaped the outcome of any election to public office. The system as we know it would collapse. Why, then, would we accept or tolerate such a system for unions? It is inconceivable. Such behaviour is not tolerated in schoolyards, and so much is being done to counter bullying, but the government has no problem with bullying in a union context.

Secret ballots also protect employees from the possibility of their employer pressuring them not to unionize. Many employers abuse their workers and threaten to close up shop to avoid unionization.

If the majority want to unionize, and a secret ballot vote confirms it, there can be doubt about the will expressed by the workers. Why does anyone need to know how people voted, other than to apply pressure? No one in the House knows exactly who voted for whom in the last election. Secret ballot voting allows everyone to vote according to his or her conscience.

We can understand the Liberals' interest in letting the big labour organizations work under a shroud of secrecy with the money they collect every week from their members. After all, this government loves its doublespeak.

First of all, the government got caught using the public purse as a slush fund to pay for its own little whims. It was not until it was caught red-handed that the government agreed to apologize and admit its mistakes. It was not until the Minister of Health was caught making excessive expense claims for limousine service while in Toronto that she finally apologized and agreed to pay back that unjustifiable expense. It is even worse here, when we all know that Canadians already pay for a car and driver service for ministers.

Were it not for the monitoring by the House, we and Canadians would have been kept in the dark about the piles of money made available to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for hiring photographers to take a bunch of pictures. Like a big union, the government would have preferred this crazy expense to be kept under wraps for good.

The same goes for the exorbitant moving expenses that the Prime Minister signed off on for his two main advisors and friends, Gerald Butts and Katie Telford. More than \$220,000 was paid out to his close friends. It pays to be in the Prime Minister's inner circle.

Canadians are outraged to see their money being used as petty cash for the Prime Minister's close friends. Of course, in four years Canadians can get rid of the government if they are not satisfied.

Government Orders

Canadians benefit from having an opposition that hounds the government to be accountable with public money. Sadly, that is not the case with the big unions.

Although a unionized member can request access to statements showing how the union uses the funds it receives, that member cannot do much to limit the union's choice to support causes other than protecting and promoting workers' rights.

Let me be clear. I recognize that unions have a role to play as the representatives of workers when working conditions are being negotiated. However, influencing the outcome of an election and supporting charitable organizations are not really activities that protect workers.

The millions of dollars spent by Ontario unions on advertising in Ontario during the last election campaign boggles the mind. The big unions were defending their own corporate interests and not those of their members. Many union members are calling for more transparency from their unions and less involvement in matters that have nothing to do with protecting workers' rights. Paying for a plane to fly a banner urging people not to elect a prime minister does not help a union's members in the least. If leaders want to be involved in politics, they should stand for election. Many parties defend the interests of big unions in the House. They have lots to choose from.

However, if they are interested in protecting their workers, that is what their activities should focus on. Most of the time, union leaders spend money on things that have nothing to do with their mandate and without obtaining the support of their members. They act somewhat like kings who view the union dues collected as their booty. Workers are entitled to the same rigour from their union leaders when it comes to the money collected from their paycheques.

• (1715)

It is important to understand that there is no freedom of association in Canada's labour movement. With the Rand formula, when a union reaches the number of members required to become certified, union dues are automatically deducted from the paycheques of all employees, whether they were in favour of certification or not. That being the case, I think it is even more appropriate to have measures requiring large unions to keep their members and the general public informed of what they are doing with the dues they receive.

Our parliamentary system is based on the principle of no taxation without representation. In order to bring in a tax, authorization must be obtained from an elected chamber. There is a principle of accountability. Unions do not have that principle. Although workers' dues are collected systematically like taxes, there are transparency measures to show how the amounts collected by the unions are used.

For all of the reasons that I just mentioned and for many others put forward by my colleagues before me, including the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, who did excellent work on this file, I have to say that I oppose this bill. This bill is not in keeping with this government's commitment to be open and transparent. It rewards the big unions and does nothing to protect workers—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us proceed to questions and comments. The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the previous Parliament, I was an assistant and not a member, but in the debate on Bill C-377, the Liberals proposed an amendment. They actually did a good job in opposition, unlike the current one. The amendment sought to extend this obligation to all professional bodies, not just unions. The Conservatives opposed it.

Why did the Conservatives want to target just unions and not all professional bodies?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, that detail escapes me, because like my hon. colleague, I was not here at the time. However, I can say that Bill C-377 was aimed strictly at unions because some extremely important work needed to be done in that regard, for all the reasons I just outlined in my speech, such as transparency and control over what unions are doing.

What is most disappointing about this right now is that with Bill C-4, instead of amending the law, the government is going to completely abolish something that was done to benefit workers.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, maybe my colleague can help us understand what is going on.

As I said before to another member, we are debating an amendment that would send Bill C-4 back to committee. Over the course of the four meetings that the committee spent studying the bill, the Conservatives presented no amendments. Now they want it to go back to committee. When I asked them whether they planned to present amendments and why they wanted to send it back to committee, they said that there was no way to improve it and that they had no plans to present any amendments.

Why do the Conservatives not just vote against the bill at third reading instead of trying to use an amendment to send it back to committee? I just do not understand what they are trying to do. We disagree on the bill, but it seems to me that if they do not plan to present any amendments, they should not send it back to committee. They should just vote against it if that is what they are going to do. I would like to understand what is going on. Can my colleague help me understand why this amendment is on the table?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I would have to hear the question again to follow what my colleague said, but for us, today's debate is on Bill C-4, which would repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. It is unacceptable to us that Bill C-4 would repeal those two pieces of legislation.

My colleague and I would have to discuss this further outside because I cannot remember everything she said. It is clear to us that Bill C-4 would simply nullify what our government did to achieve union transparency and respect.

Government Orders

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, does the member recognize how important it is that there be a sense of balance and fairness when we talk about labour legislation? Government should be promoting and encouraging harmony within the sectors that are involved through negotiations and so forth, and, at the very least, acknowledge that there is a process allowing for consensus to be built when the stakeholders and the government are at the table when it comes time to change labour legislation. The best way to achieve harmony is to have those people at the table.

Would the member not agree that harmony should be the ultimate goal as we aim to ensure that both labour and management are being looked after?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand the reasoning of my colleagues in government and those from the other opposition.

Things are quite clear to us. We had Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, which helped our unionized workers and allowed them to see what the big unions were doing with their money. That made things very transparent. We, the members of the former Conservative government, offered transparency to unionized workers. Today, the government wants to bring back union secrecy. It makes no sense.

I am trying to understand the question because I believe that what the government is currently doing makes no sense.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased this afternoon to be sharing my time with the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix. That has to be about the longest constituency name there is in Parliament. I congratulate the member for being the representative of a riding that I have a hard time pronouncing. However, she assures me it is a beautiful riding, and I must say that it is well represented.

I am pleased to voice my opposition to Bill C-4, the Liberal government's legislation to repeal two private members' bills that were actually passed in the former Parliament.

Bill C-377 provided a more robust accountability for union leaders. It added transparency to the process. Bill C-525 required the holding of a secret ballot for the creation and abolition of trade unions.

The Conservative government passed these two key laws on democracy and union transparency for one reason. Many of the workers approached these members of Parliament and told them stories about how they felt, that their rights or their ability to stand up and voice their frustrations or concerns were hindered. Therefore, two members brought the bills forward. However, the Liberals are reversing these two bills that brought accountability, transparency, and a stronger measure of democracy to the trade union system in Canada.

It is a shame that members of the Liberal Party have, throughout speeches earlier on today, undermined the private members' business process, diminishing the fact that it was just private members who brought these bills forward.

I remember when these bills came forward in the last Parliament. Russ Hiebert and also the member for Red Deer—Lacombe, when these bills came before caucus, sat down with opposition members and caucus members, and talked about the pros and cons. They told the stories about individuals who came forward saying that this would make a good bill, because they felt their rights were being hampered. Therefore, in some ways, to hear the attack on private members' business is disappointing. The result of what they have tried to do in Bill C-4 is actually anti-democratic, but the Liberals will not respect that.

What is worse is that these two bills are being repealed today by the government party and they are two bills that really strengthened Canada's democracy. They strengthened the accountability when it came to watch dogging the actions of unions in Canada. These two bills that the Liberals are scrapping gave Canadians and Canadian workers more insight into the workings of unions in Canada. They added transparency into the workings of unions for all Canadians, but most important, for those members themselves.

I might add that all the parties in the House of Commons, except for the Conservative Party of Canada, support this restoration of power of the union bosses over the average worker who is a member of the union. That average working Joe or Jane is also probably a member of the middle class, and we have the Liberals stripping rights from members of the middle class. Bill C-4 would strengthen the rights of the elites in the labour movement in Canada above the rights of those average union members.

This question was posed earlier. Did any constituents come to the Liberals now about Bill C-4?

I have had a couple of phone calls of disappointment that the Liberal government is doing this. However, in the last Parliament, I received a number of calls from my constituents, at meetings as well as calls into my riding, commending us for bringing this transparency and accountability into the union process. For the most part, they encouraged me to stand up in support of workers and union members against the iron-fist rule of their union bosses.

Canadians know that both before and during the election, for example, unions spent thousands of dollars, maybe hundreds of thousands of dollars, to campaign in the last federal election, and that is nothing new.

• (1725)

I can recall a time a number of years ago when a constituent came to me, a member of the nurses' union, and told me how during the provincial election the union bosses, the union reps, went out of Edmonton, down to their union meeting, and laid down the law. I told her that she had a free vote, that she could vote for whomever she wanted in that provincial election. She told me that it was more than intimidation; it was bullying.

Government Orders

I am not saying that happens all the time, but the measures we brought forward in the last Parliament prevented that type of thing. Many members supported the Conservative Party, yet they were helpless when it came to stopping the unions from spending their union dues to fight against the Conservative Party of Canada in the last election. These union members were not asked by their union bosses if their union dues should be spent in the election; they just did it. There was no way for those Canadians to stop them from working for one party or another.

In fact, many union members did not even know their union was spending a great deal of money in the last federal campaign, and let us be honest, in many campaigns. The ones I am very much aware of in my riding were more in the provincial elections. If they did know, they had no way of finding out how much money their union was spending and how much of their dues actually went to fight an election.

What are the observations about the bill?

I believe the bill would be a bad law for democracy. It would be a bad thing for democracy in the whole structure of the workplace, unionization or not. It would be bad for transparency. It would cut out a level of transparency and accountability in Canada. In fact, this law would allow a backward step on democracy and transparency.

It is clear that, today, with Bill C-4, the Liberal Party is thanking the unions for spending the millions of dollars in the last election without having consulted their members. I think it is a payback.

It is an interesting observation that the first bill introduced by the government is not a bill to create jobs. It is not a bill to stimulate economic growth. It is not a bill that would do anything to help the economy. It would seem that the Liberals have given up on the economy. They said that they would go into \$10-billion deficit. Then it was \$30 billion, and hopefully that would kick-start the economy.

The bill would do nothing to create jobs. In fact, it would only serve to please union bosses. It would reduce transparency. We saw that with the first nations transparency act as well. It seems the government is bound and determined that those are the accomplishments it wants to be known for.

The big loser in this bill would be the average union workers who would be forced to pay union dues, while the union bosses would not have to consult with them or be accountable to their management for those union dues.

Moreover, with the passage of Bill C-4, workers would now be forced into a position of publicly informing their colleagues whether they supported their union. This would exert undue pressure upon individual workers. At a public meeting, rather than having a secret ballot, even on the formation of a union or the disbanding of a union, the Liberals are now saying, no, the member should stand publicly and make his or her voice known.

Bill C-4 would abolish that secret ballot, and this is an attack on the process. The bill would violate the fundamental principle of transparency. It is a disgrace and it is shameful. Bill C-4 would make it law that union bosses would be able to continue spending their members' fees without having to be accountable.

Why is it that important? Why do the members in Parliament worry about what the unions do?

● (1730)

Accountability is important to the public interest of Canadians, because union fees, as we have already discussed here in the House, reduce tax revenues, and it affects all Canadians. Union dues are not taxable, and therefore they reduce federal revenues.

I will not be supporting this bill. I realize that there was no consultation when this bill came forward. I recall, as I have stated, that the members who brought these private members' bills forward in the former Parliament did their due diligence. They did their homework. They spoke with unions, union workers, businesses, and colleagues here.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess I can put my friend and colleague from the class of 2000, the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, down as undecided.

Today the Conservatives, speaker after speaker, have said very similar things. My friend from Battle River—Crowfoot said that it was about the bullying tactics of organized labour, the big union bosses intimidating and bullying people to sign up. He said that in his comments.

Let us check what the Canada Industrial Relations Board said. It was asked how often this happens, how many grievances it had had about the card check system. There were six: four against employers and two against organized labour.

Conservatives say that the Liberal government is not doing enough for the economy. When their government took over, oil was at \$1.16 a barrel, and when it left, it was at \$32 a barrel, but the thing they were motivated about was bringing in a bunch of legislation that hurt organized labour in this country.

One can say that this is about openness and transparency. These two bills were about an attack on organized labour in this country, plain and simple.

Government Orders

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, when Conservatives formed government in 2006, we paid down the national debt by \$40 billion, we lowered the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, we lowered the tax rate to the lowest rate in 50 years, and we invested in infrastructure. We did all of those things. We put money into the pockets of Canadians through the universal child care benefit. The average family of four received up to \$6,600 through tough times. The world went into a downturn. However, because of the strong leadership of former prime minister Harper, we were the last to go into the recession and the first to come out of it.

What this country needs at this time, with the economy in Alberta and throughout Canada stagnant, is an announcement of \$30 billion toward kick-starting the economy. What we do not need is another carbon tax piled on top of all of the other taxes the Liberals are bringing forward. What we do not need is the enhancement of red tape. We need to make sure that the government cuts red tape and makes it easier to create jobs.

Why is it that the government is so content to raise taxes on the people who we expect and hope will be creating jobs, such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business? Everything the Liberal Party is doing is hurting our economy and hindering the ability to hire. That is why the unemployment rate keeps rising.

• (1735)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot a question based on his years of experience. He has been here longer than I have, I dare say, doing a great job. When I was the MP for Wetaskiwin, I moved a bill in the previous Parliament. I was always chasing the member for Battle River—Crowfoot in terms of who could get the most votes in a federal election. Clearly he has the confidence of the people he represents.

I want to ask him this question. I have asked this question across the way and have not had a straight answer from any of the members over there. At any point, has any voter ever asked the member for Battle River—Crowfoot to please go to Ottawa and pass a bill that removes his or her right to a secret ballot vote and removes financial disclosure and transparency? Has he ever heard a single Canadian voter utter those words?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I think the obvious answer is no, we have never heard that.

We have heard that the Liberals are trying to paint this thing as being Conservative anti-unionism. That is not the case. The individuals who come forward to bring concerns are actually union members who support us, union members who are there working for us and putting up signs for us. They are nurses, welders, and other union members who are working in Fort McMurray or coming back home.

They want the ability to have a secret ballot, to voice their concerns publicly if they want to, and to put that *x* on a secret ballot so that they are not going to be intimidated. If we allow this debate to get to the place where it is pro-union or anti-union, that is not well-served.

I am not anti-union. My wife is in a union as a nurse. My daughter is in a union. They want the ability to hold their union to account and to have it be transparent.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot. I want to thank this charming man for trying to pronounce the name of my riding correctly. That is to his credit.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to defend democracy and the hard work of all members elected democratically. I would never question their commitment. Whether it is on this side of the House or the government side, all bills must be dealt with in the same way. There are no backdoor bills. They are all equal because they come in through the front door and are voted on here, in the house, by all MPs who were duly elected in a secret democratic vote.

Today, however, I have to say that the debate on Bill C-4 speaks to me because this bill is a direct attack on democracy, transparency, and accountability. Every time the Liberal government stands up and claims to be transparent I just want to laugh. It is about as transparent as mud.

The way the Liberals have been behaving these past few months shows they do not care a fig about transparency. Bill C-4 is the Liberal way of doing things. Before that, Bill C-377 required unions to disclose detailed information about their finances. That was called “accountability and transparency”. There was also Bill C-525, which called for a secret ballot instead of a vote by a show of hands. That is democracy.

Bill C-4 guts the very principle of democracy. We all have a duty in the House to be transparent and to protect our beautiful democracy. As elected members, we are asked to open our books, so why would we not ask the same of the unions?

The government should be far more concerned about this. Accountability is top of mind for everyday Canadians. They have had it with cover-ups and endless spending. They want the truth and so do we. Coming from a government that spends with no regard for taxpayers' money, Bill C-4 does away with transparency and accountability, principles that we Tories on this side of the House have long stood for.

Taxpayers have the right to know and understand. We should all vote to make unions transparent, not just to their members, but also to the general public. Bill C-4 allows unions to hold votes by show of hands, which would allow unions not to disclose all their expenses or, worse yet, not to be accountable to union members, the government, and the general public.

In the most extreme cases, union leaders may threaten or intimidate their members into voting a certain way. It is also important to remember that, like any self-respecting country and like any government that respects its voters and citizens, we know that we have standards of transparency for unions that we expect them to uphold.

Government Orders

France, the United States, and Germany have laws in place to ensure union transparency because, like us, they know that nothing should be kept hidden from taxpayers. Why should unions not have these same standards of transparency? After all, they have taxation authority over their members.

• (1740)

It is appropriate for them to be accountable to the public. They are the only non-government institution that has the right to impose a tax on its members. In short, voting by secret ballot is essential to ensure the safety of all members, to make sure that everyone votes according to what they think is best for their working conditions, and above all, to allow the public to know where its money is going.

Robyn Benson of the Public Service Alliance of Canada clearly stated that “PSAC has no issue with voting by secret ballot. We do it regularly to elect our officers, ratify collective agreements, and vote for strike action, as examples.” What is more, Marc Roumy, an Air Canada employee, indicated that unions would be stronger and more legitimate and would receive more support if they were more accountable and transparent. I am wondering what my colleagues opposite think about that testimony from a union leader and an employee.

I do not know what the minister is hearing from the people in her riding, but those in my riding of Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix want to know where their hard-earned money is going. My colleagues on this side of the House are all telling me the same thing.

We have to wonder what the government has to gain from such a bill. Why does the government have the support of the other opposition parties? Here is why: because they are financed by those very unions. Maybe this is just a way of thanking unions for the contributions they made a year ago. Nobody knows. It might also be them keeping the first of their election promises.

I am disappointed that the government is more interested in what union leaders have to say than in what the general population has to say. This government only has ears for its buddies and is happy to give them whatever they want. It does not listen to Canadians unless there is a photo op involved.

This has made me aware of some of the Liberal Party's disabilities. It is deaf to the people's opinions, dumb to union leaders, and blind to its friends' theft of taxpayer money.

I am very disappointed in this government. I will vote against this bill because I believe that transparency and accountability are of paramount importance to taxpayers.

• (1745)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a lot to say about union transparency, but the former prime minister never told us who contributed to his leadership campaign. That was more than 10 years ago. How ironic is that?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That is a little rich coming from the member across the way, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that the Liberal Party still owes us \$40 million that we have never seen a penny of.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix see a pattern from the government across the aisle, which says it wants to be transparent but makes changes to an aboriginal act with no transparency and brings forward this bill? Do you see a definite pattern there?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Just to clarify, I am sure the hon. member meant to ask, “Does the hon. member from Beauport see a pattern”, not me the Speaker because the members are speaking through the Speaker. I would just clarify that.

I just want to remind all members of the House this afternoon that they are speaking through the Speaker and not directly to other hon. members. I have noticed it with a few people during the afternoon.

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

We are seeing a trend. When we ask the government opposite for transparency, it is never very clear. The Liberals are very opaque and would have Canadians believe they are listening to them. That is their thing and always will be. Average Canadians, our constituents, are asking us members and the government to be transparent, so it is particularly disappointing that we are not asking the same of the unions.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have had an opportunity for good debate throughout the day on this important piece of legislation. It is a priority, as the second piece of legislation the government brought forward, recognizing the importance of unions and of harmony. It is a good government initiative. We have seen the many benefits of it, when members have been afforded the opportunity to speak on it. We have had others say that it should be passed as quickly as possible, in particular, our New Democrat colleagues. We appreciate the support we are getting from the New Democrats, the Bloc Québécois, and others.

My question for the member is about our trying to rectify a wrong and how quickly she believes legislation should be debated or passed. Ultimately, we want members to be able to speak to it. I would like to get her thoughts on that.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

As hon. members know, I am voting against this bill, which contains neither transparency nor accountability.

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It is not surprising that the Liberals want to move quickly on this since the bill will make the legislation opaque. Canadians will no longer have access to information to help them determine how their union is using their money to vote against a political party at election time.

Unions' money is supposed to be used to help workers in difficulty, not to help election campaigns.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before resuming debate, I would like to inform hon. members that we have completed five hours of debate. The 20 minutes of speeches followed by 10 minutes of questions and comments will now change to 10 minutes of debate followed by five minutes of questions and comments.

[*English*]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will try not to take it personally that you cut the time just as I took the floor. I know that these things are done by time, and I will respect that, especially given the fact that you control the microphone.

Here we are today discussing Bill C-4. The first thing I want to do is compliment the government on responding to an important promise it made. I see my good friend ready to fall over, but I hope he hangs on, because I am not done. I would ask him to hold on and stay nearby.

I want to straight up compliment the government on bringing in Bill C-4 and unravelling much of the damage that was done by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. This was one of the priorities of the labour movement going into the election. Our party would have done the same, but it stands alone as a compliment to the government for doing this. It is the right thing to do. The Liberals are keeping their promise, and I will give credit where credit is due.

However, it does not end today in terms of standing up for labour. The government will get a great opportunity on Wednesday to stand up for labour by voting for Bill C-234, put forward by my colleague from Jonquière, our deputy labour critic. It is anti-scab legislation.

So far it has been kind of motherhood stuff, easy to do. Bill C-4, for those of us who are progressive in any way, is not exactly a big leap, but if the government really wants to show that it is listening to the labour movement and wants to make sure that the labour movement has the ability to do the things the government gives it so many compliments for, it will be fascinating to once again watch the Liberals do their dance around things like anti-scab legislation.

I raise this in the context of Bill C-4, because in our opinion, the government cannot say that it is the best friend labour ever had by virtue of one bill, when there are other things. One of those other things, to the best of my knowledge, happens on Wednesday, with the vote on the anti-scab legislation. Liberals have 48 hours to sit back and think about whether they want to get re-elected, whether they really meant what they said to labour, whether passing Bill C-4 is going to cut it, or whether people in the labour movement are going to say that it is a fine start, but it is just a start.

The anti-scab legislation that comes up Wednesday will be a really historic day for labour. The Liberals talk a good game, but as soon as that legislation is in front of them, they run and hide and vote against

it. I have seen it in minority governments, when we could have passed that legislation, but the Liberals let us down. This time they could do it on their own. They will start out with 44 votes in the NDP caucus, because we have always stood for anti-scab legislation. If the government really wants to balance the tables, that is the way to do it. That will be interesting to see.

In the context of Bill C-4 going forward, it will be interesting to see what the government will do about the other labour issues that are still in front of it and that are facing workers today. For instance, precarious work is one of the biggest issues. How many of us have children and grandchildren who do not have full-time work and do not expect to have full-time work, let alone lifetime work? They are living contract to contract. They do not have big unions to help them organize and bargain collective agreements. They are out there on their own. They need the government to step in and provide them with some rights. What is the government going to do about precarious work? What is the government going to do about pay equity? What is the government going to do about part-time and precarious work.

Those are just a few of the issues, but there are many more coming forward. As much as it hurts my heart a bit, I would be more than glad to stand here and compliment the government again if it delivers on those things. We shall see what we shall see.

Speaking to Bill C-4, I have been listening in particular to the Conservatives, although I do not know why, because it always gives me a migraine when it comes to these kinds of issues.

• (1755)

They go on and on about the middle class. Who do they think really created the middle class, not just in Canada but in any other modern, mature democracy? In large part, that was the labour movement. Remember, child labour did not just come out of nowhere. There were people in the day who believed that was okay. We would not now. I like to think down the road anti-scab legislation will be seen as motherhood as the right to collective bargain. However, we still have that struggle in front of us right now.

I am reminded of something when I listen to the Conservatives talk about the damage they say is being done by repealing their two bills under Bill C-4. Let us remember. If we want to talk basics, let us go back to the 1940s, particularly in Ontario, which I know best, but it is a similar story across our country. That is when we had some of the major strikes that created and defined the labour movement. If we want to talk about guts, those people who went out on strike for their collective rights in those days put their jobs on the line. If we go back far enough, even meeting together could have gotten their heads busted open and/or they could have been thrown in jail.

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Let me jump to a couple of things. The Rand formula in Ontario was a compromise between the need for a viable labour movement and a union that had the funds and structure to actually support and enforce the rights of members and to go into collective bargaining, and all that other stuff. They needed to do all of that, and in order for them to maintain that, while respecting the right of individuals to not necessarily agree with the philosophical direction of their union, the Rand formula said that workers did not have to join the union as a member, but they had to pay the dues. That was because they were getting the benefit of the negotiations that happened in their favour. Whether they supported the union or not, their wages went up, their health and safety was better protected, their vacation rights were extended, and they got those rights. However, they did not have to actually join the union, and the union had an obligation to serve all its members equally whether they joined or not.

That kind of foundation started to be blown apart with the two bills from the Conservatives, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. That is why Bill C-4 is so important. It brings us back into the realm of reality in terms of what the history of the labour movement is, and I cannot believe I am going to use this term, and the social contract that was agreed between all of society in terms of how we would manage this new entity that exists to give rights to ordinary people when they did not have them before. They get their rights by working and bargaining collectively, and ultimately, if they have to, withdrawing that labour. It is a free country. It is that basic.

I just want to end with a reminder. When I was first active in the labour movement in the 1970s, I was a young guy of 24, elected to be president of my union of 2,200 members. I can remember at that time, in the seventies, people were saying there was no need for the labour movement, that it was okay in its day but it was not needed now. I have been hearing that for decades. Just ask the employees at U.S. Steel, or any of the other companies where benefits are being lost and retirement rights that were fought for and earned for a lifetime are being taken away. Ask them whether they think the labour movement should still be there.

The government is making some changes to CPP. Make no mistake, if the Canadian labour movement was not front and centre on that fight, and every other fight that matters to Canadians, these things would not happen. That is why it is important that Bill C-4 carry, but that it only be the first step. There is much more to be done.

• (1800)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I genuinely appreciate the comments from the member. I believe that unions, and the movement as a whole, have done so much in developing us as a nation. It has become a very part of our fabric. We make reference to those social programs. Whether it is the pension type of programs or Canada health, there are many different pieces of legislation, not only labour legislation. One would argue that this is one of the reasons we need to do what we can to promote and encourage the development of Canada's unions, not recognize them as a negative thing, as many Conservatives do. The unions contribute far beyond just negotiations on behalf of Canada's workers.

I am wondering if he might want to just add a few more of his thoughts. I know he was running out of time very quickly, so I will sit down and he can answer the question or add any more comments that he would like to address to the House.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, if I was not clear, that certainly was the overarching message, that we are very proud of Canada. We all talk about our values and how we project those values around the world. Make no mistake, those values are very much a result of the labour movement being in the forefront. Often they are negotiating for themselves, which is what the dues are for. They negotiate wages and vacations, and the things I mentioned.

However, that is not the whole story. Who do members think came up with the idea of paid weekends, paid maternity leave, or comprehensive health and safety legislation? All those things can be covered in a collective agreement. They do not need legislation. As for minimum wage, the labour movement does not need minimum wage in its contracts. I do not think there is a single contract that would dare call for even minimum wage, let alone anything less.

There is no benefit to them in this. It is a benefit to all workers in Canada. The understanding is that the Canadian labour movement has that broader view. They are not just isolated, taking care of themselves, and the heck with everybody else. They have always taken the broader view, asking what they can do to make life better for their members who are paying the dues but also what they can do, because they have the means, to help create those values and enforce those values, and bring in legislation and programs that give life to those values, that give us the very reputation on the international stage that we are all so very proud of.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his great speech and comments, his passion, and all the years of advocacy he has done on behalf of working people in his riding.

I would like to give my colleague a few more minutes to comment on the theme of his speech around how this is a good first step, and what might be a second great step for the government to take. We have heard in some of the comments that we have a private member's bill coming up on Wednesday, in case anyone did not remember, around anti-scab legislation. We have heard comments from the other side that we cannot bring in changes to the labour code through a private member's bill, and that if we want to change the Canada Labour Code we have to do it tripartite.

I want to ask my hon. colleague to comment on the last time we looked at replacement workers. There was a review of the Canada Labour Code, but there was no consensus on it. Although there was evidence there that replacement workers definitely undermined the integrity of the bargaining process, that it really tipped it in favour of the employer, that particular commission could not come to a consensus on the evidence.

Would my hon. colleague not agree with me that this is the time when a government needs to step up, make a decision, and bring forward balance and fairness, when sometimes those processes do not get us to where we need to be?

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●(1805)

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my colleague from Saskatoon West who is not just one of our rising stars in this new Parliament but is also our labour critic, and doing a fantastic job. I know she was there at the news conference, along with our colleague from Jonquière.

People seem to think that there is something equal in that when the workers go out on strike, management hurts too. No, when the employees go out on strike, the paycheques stop. They cannot pay the rent. They do not have money for their mortgages. They cannot pay the hydro. They cannot buy their kids presents. However, the people who run the companies, their cheques are still coming in just fine.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to Bill C-4, which seeks to repeal both Bill C-525 and Bill C-377.

By way of a brief background, Bill C-525 imposes a requirement for a secret ballot for union certification and decertification, whereas Bill C-377 imposes minimal public financial disclosure requirements on unions.

I stand in opposition to Bill C-4, because fundamentally I believe the bill is regressive legislation. It would be bad for workers, for union members, for taxpayers, for openness, for transparency, and for democracy. Indeed, the only group of persons who would benefit from Bill C-4 are a select group of union bosses.

There has been a lot of heated rhetoric from some union leaders, the Liberals, and the NDP over the years about Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. Therefore, I would submit that it is good to take a step back in this debate on Bill C-4 and look at exactly what Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 actually do.

Bill C-525 simply requires a secret ballot for union certification or decertification, nothing more and nothing less. It replaces the old card check system; a system that was rife for abuse and intimidation. Under the former card check system, union certification could take place no matter that a worker may have been intimidated by a co-worker or union leader to sign up for a union card. Under card check, certification could take place even if, for example, the majority of workers were unaware of certification efforts until certification was a fait accompli.

Bill C-525 simply ensures that on the question of deciding whether to be represented by a union, that the process is an open and democratic one made by secret ballot with the majority of support of workers. What could be wrong with that? After all, the secret ballot is fundamental to our democratic system of governance in Canada and around the world.

Unions use secret ballots to decide all manner of things. Unions use secret ballots in internal union elections. Collective agreements are ratified by secret ballots. Strike action is decided by secret ballot. Yet, on something as fundamental as to whether to be represented by a union, with the consequence, by the way, for a worker, in the case of certification, which one either pays mandatory union dues or one is fired, there was no choice, no secret ballot, and that was what Bill C-525 corrected.

In the context of Canada, Bill C-525 was hardly radical legislation. Indeed, some six provinces have passed similar legislation requiring a secret ballot for certification or decertification of a union. Many of those provinces have had laws on the books for some time. I think Nova Scotia, for example, has had a requirement for a secret ballot since 1977. Therefore, in that context, Bill C-525 is simply extending rights to federally regulated workers that are enjoyed by workers in a majority of provinces across Canada.

What about Bill C-377? What does it do?

●(1810)

All Bill C-377 does is require unions to report expenditures of \$5,000 or more, or salaries of \$100,000 or more.

Each year in Canada, unions collect about \$4.5 billion in union dues. That is \$4.5 billion with a “b”. Those union dues are tax deductible and consequently unions receive a tax benefit. The tax benefit that unions receive equals about \$400 million a year. Of the billions of dollars that unions collect, unions funnel those billions of dollars collectively into various different causes and efforts.

Having regard for that fact, it seems to me to be more than reasonable to impose some basic minimal financial disclosure requirements on unions so that union members, who after all are mandated to pay union dues, and the broader public, who after all subsidize unions to the tune of \$400 million, know where those dollars are spent and how they are allocated.

It is certainly nothing revolutionary when we talk about financial disclosure. As it has been pointed out in this debate today, charities, publicly traded companies, crown corporations, all levels of government have public disclosure and public reporting requirements. Why should unions be treated any differently? All Bill C-377 does is put unions on a level playing field.

For a government that talked so much about openness and transparency during the election and after, it really is ironic that it would choose to introduce Bill C-4 as one of its first pieces of legislation, a bill that takes away the right of a secret ballot from workers to decide whether to certify or decertify, a bill that takes away the right of workers to decide, without intimidation and without coercion, whether they want to be represented by a union, and a bill that takes away basic transparency measures on the billions of dollars in union dues that unions collect that are taxpayer subsidized and mandated from their members.

In short, Bill C-4 is antithetical to basic principles of openness, transparency, and democracy, and therefore needs to be defeated out of hand.

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•(1815)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really do not understand why the Conservatives think unions are not transparent.

I was the treasurer for a union for 15 years, and I opened the books at every general meeting and put them on the table. All members could consult them. That was part of our statutes and regulations, which also enabled members to ask to consult the books at any time. There was no hiding; everything was completely open and transparent.

Earlier my colleague from Hamilton Centre said the same thing regarding his union. It is part of the unions' statutes and regulations. The openness is already there.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it is true that some unions are transparent and open, and it is also true that some unions are not. I was not in the House during Bill C-377 in the last Parliament, but I do know, having followed it, that there was a considerable body of evidence that was presented at committee from union members who said that they could not get basic information from their unions.

All Bill C-377 does is make it open and transparent to everyone, including taxpayers, who after all subsidize unions to the tune of \$400 million. It is common-sense legislation. It is good for workers. It is good for unions. It is good for taxpayers and it is good for transparency.

I do not understand really why the New Democrats would oppose such a good piece of legislation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one cannot help but note that all political parties, with the exception of the Conservative Party, support Bill C-4. Bill C-4 rectifies a wrong brought by the Harper Conservative government with respect to its attack on labour.

When those private members' bills were introduced, not only did the other parties still oppose them, there was overwhelming negative opposition from many of the different stakeholders in every region of the country. It appears that it is only the mindset of the Conservative Party to not allow Bill C-4 to pass but to use our labour laws to cause division.

Does the member not recognize that if government is to be involved, as it should be at times, that the involvement should be one of promoting and encouraging harmony between labour and management, recognizing the valuable contributions that both make to this debate, especially with respect to the unions given the previous administration of the Harper Conservative government? It seems to me that the Conservatives have lost touch with what Canadians think on important issues such as this. I would ask him to explain to me and Canadians why the Conservative Party continues to be out of touch with Canadians.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it is true that certain union bosses and elites stood up and vocally opposed Bill C-525 and Bill C-377. However, there have been many public opinion polls that

show the vast majority of Canadians, including workers, support both of these measures.

I do not really understand what the hon. member is talking about with respect to harmony in the workplace. I agree with him that harmony in the workplace is to be encouraged. However, I do not know how attacking openness, transparency and a worker's right to a secret ballot enhances harmony in the workplace.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise again and speak wholeheartedly against this new Liberal government's Bill C-4, a bill that by its number tells us exactly what the priorities of the current Liberal government are. The ink was not even dry on the minister's signing papers before this piece of legislation was before Parliament. There was clearly no opportunity, as the Liberals across the way say, to consult with industry, with unions, with governments, or with frankly anybody. This was simply an opportunity to pay back those who were loyal to the Liberal Party during the last election. I will get to that during the course of my notes as I go through.

I want to talk a bit about the process. Much has been said here. Members will notice that the arguments coming from the New Democrats and the Liberals have nothing to do with the actual veracity or contents of Bills C-377 or C-525. There is nothing from the other side about the principles that underlie those legislative changes. Everything is masked as being that it was the approach.

I have been here for a long time, and I have no qualms about letting every member of Parliament in the House table the piece of legislation that he or she deems fit. It is what we are elected to do. We are legislators, first and foremost, and if our ability to bring forward legislation for debate, legislation for amendments, new legislation, or repealing legislation is ever hindered, then we have lost our way as members of Parliament.

I am very saddened to hear members, particularly from the governing party, talk so negatively toward the private members' legislation process. That process is exactly the same as a piece of government legislation through all the steps, save but the amount of time allocated for debate in the House. Everything else is exactly the same. It has to pass at least three votes here in the House of Commons: once at second reading, once at report stage from committee, and once at third reading. It has to go through the full scrutiny at a committee meeting, including clause by clause, line by line on any amendments or changes made to that legislation. As well, it has to go through the exact same process in the Senate, the place down the hall, the other place. To say that Bills C-525 and C-377 are illegitimate actually is an insult to this institution.

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Now I would like to talk a bit about public support. My friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was very eloquent today. Folks watching back home would be surprised to know this, and this is where the misinformation campaign comes from. I have all kinds of people trolling me on Twitter and on Facebook, making all kinds of accusations about what the bill that I put forward in the last Parliament actually did. When I educate them on what the bill does, they find that they have been misled by their union leaders or others who were giving them a misinformation campaign, paid for probably by their own union dues, about what was actually at stake.

We have heard long testimony here and before committee about what the bill was about. It was about democracy. It was about the right to vote. When we asked people through NRG Research Group on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 71% of respondents actually agreed. If we look at the Leger poll from 2013, we see that 77% of people polled in a unionized workplace completely agreed with the notion of a mandatory secret ballot. This is not something new. We have been voting in this country since Confederation. This is not a new concept. As a matter of fact, the old legislation before Bill C-525 was passed allowed for the labour relations board, whoever it happened to be, to optionally pursue a vote if the members wanted to. What is wrong with having a mandatory vote? Let us find out what the true sense of the bargaining unit actually is. No one has been able to explain this to me, and I have asked the question.

• (1820)

The argument on the other side is that when people are given a choice to vote, there will be fewer unions. Does that not mean that the process we are currently using does not reflect the actual will of the members of the bargaining unit? Nothing else could possibly explain that departure. How does that happen? Does it happen through intimidation by those conducting the union drive? Does it happen through intimidation by the employer? Would it not be nice, in privacy and confidentiality, to determine one's own fate at one's own workplace on one's own? That is what Bill C-525 does.

Let me go back to other polling information. I can go back to 2012. Leger marketing said that 83% of Albertans agreed that a secret ballot vote was necessary when certifying or decertifying a union. In 2009, Leger found that 71% of Quebecers supported the provincial government amending its laws to make secret ballot voting mandatory when forming a union. That was in Quebec. Is that not where the Prime Minister is from? In 2008, Sigma Analytics found that 75% of those polled in Saskatchewan supported secret ballot voting. I could go on and on.

Every member of Parliament in the House who votes in favour of Bill C-4 is on the wrong side of the issue. The issue is not whether unions are good or bad. The issue is whether one wants accountability in our country and here in this place. It is the secret ballot vote that keeps me and every other member of Parliament in the House honest and accountable. It is through the debate and discourse we have here in front of all Canadians, with their tax dollars being spent in full and open transparency, that allows them to determine their fate and who should be governing on their behalf.

This is absolutely no different. People should, in this day and age, have the right to determine for themselves, through a secret ballot,

whether they want to be members of a bargaining unit. What my bill did was actually create a level playing field. The same bar, 40% of people signing cards, creates a mandatory election. It is a simple majority of votes cast in that particular case.

That means that to create a union in Canada right now, with 100 people in a bargaining unit, only 40 need to sign cards. Hypothetically, of those same 40 who come out for a secret ballot vote, only 21 are required. That means that 21 people, under the current legislation, could actually create a union. This is too onerous? This is too onerous a process for the members of the NDP and the Liberal Party to have a little democracy and let people have a say? That is hogwash. I do not believe that for one second.

I want to go back to what I talked about earlier. It is all about accountability. We see it time and time again here in the House. If we look at where this legislation is coming from, it was not six days after the last general election was over that the Prime Minister sat down in a private closed-door meeting with the biggest union bosses in this country, the Canadian Labour Congress. Lo and behold, just after the ink was dry on the swearing in of the cabinet minister, there was a bill before the House of Commons that would do exactly what the union leaders wanted, union leaders who, by the way, when they testified at committee stage on Bill C-525, actually all said that they would support the notion of a secret ballot vote.

There is a disconnect all right. I will agree with the parliamentary secretary. He is very much disconnected from the reality on the ground.

If people were actually paying attention to what the government is proposing through Bill C-4, they would see what rights would be taken away and what transparency they were not going to have any more on the dues they are paying. As union-dues-paying members, they would be very frustrated.

They have been sold a bill of goods that simply does not add up. Whether it is first nations' financial transparency, which we know is not being enforced by the current administration, whether it Treasury Board rules pertaining to office moves, which is a decision at the discretion of the minister or the Prime Minister, or whether we see it here, Liberal friends are going to do very well over the next three years.

However, ordinary hard-working Canadian taxpayers cannot depend on a Liberal government for transparency and accountability. They are going to have to rely on Conservative MPs for that.

• (1825)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the member's last point, Canadians do not have to be fearful in the sense that we have a very aggressive, progressive Prime Minister and Liberal caucus that want to make things better in many different ways. Bill C-4 would be one of the ways in which we would restore confidence within our labour movement on all sides. It is only the Conservative Party that wants to do otherwise.

As I asked the previous speaker, why does the member believe that only the Conservative Party seems to be right on this issue when we have opposition not only inside this chamber, but opposition from a vast majority of the different stakeholders out there to what it is doing?

• (1830)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, that does not seem to be true because I do not know of a single Canadian who approached any member of Parliament running in an election and asked to have his or her rights to have a secret ballot vote taken away or asked that a member of Parliament to go to Ottawa and remove any provisions that provided for financial transparency and accountability.

Why do we need this legislation now? There is no labour unrest. There are no massive disputes. There are no protests. There is nobody hanging from the rafters on Parliament Hill, asking for this legislation.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise again in the House this evening to discuss my bill, Bill C-203, an act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages).

I previously asked my hon. colleague a question about whether the Liberals plan to pass this bill, which calls for all Supreme Court justices to be bilingual. This summer, the Prime Minister of Canada announced a process for appointing justices to the Supreme Court. This process is to be open and transparent and will require justices to be bilingual, which is excellent news.

The NDP has been calling for this since 2008. It has really been a key issue for us. My colleague, the former member for Acadie—Bathurst, Yvon Godin, introduced two separate bills on this since 2008. Then in 2010, he introduced another bill regarding a bilingual requirement for justices, and the Liberals voted in favour of it.

Unfortunately, however, after that bill went to the Senate, the Conservatives let it die on the Order Paper. We were really disappointed, which is why we are introducing it again.

Now that the Liberals are in power, we expected that they would support and pass the bill introduced to ensure the bilingualism of judges.

Everyone supports this bill, including the Commissioner of Official Languages, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, the Barreau du Québec, and Jean-Marc Fournier, the Quebec minister responsible for Canadian relations, who said, “Enshrining bilingualism in law is necessary”.

Does everyone believe that the bilingualism of Supreme Court judges must be enshrined in law? No, the Liberals do not. That is really sad. We are asking the Liberals why they do not want to

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support a bill to ensure the bilingualism of Supreme Court justices in perpetuity.

Previous Conservative governments appointed unilingual English judges and this created serious problems with respect to the interpretation of certain rulings. However, under the Official Languages Act, the official languages have equality in fact. This equality in fact must exist in the highest court as well.

What are the Liberals talking about to avoid voting? They are talking about the Nadon case. Let us discuss this case, then. I asked jurists in this Parliament about it. I asked them whether the Nadon case prevented bilingualism from being one of the criterion for the appointment of judges. The answer was no, the Nadon case did not prevent it. In fact, to determine whether it is constitutional or not, we would have to ask the Supreme Court for an opinion.

For that reason I asked the Liberals why they are refusing to ask for a Supreme Court opinion. If they have opinions that run counter to those of the House of Commons jurists, they should provide them. To date, we have not seen any legal opinions to the effect that bilingualism as an appointment criterion for Supreme Court justices is unconstitutional.

If the Liberals have any such opinions, they should produce them.

• (1835)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, access to justice in both official languages is an important issue for our country. Canadians want to live in a law-abiding society with a fair, accessible, and equitable justice system.

On August 2, 2016, the Prime Minister announced a new process for appointing Supreme Court of Canada justices that is open and transparent and that sets a stricter standard for accountability. It is important to many Canadians that the Supreme Court be able to work in both official languages.

The qualifications and assessment criteria that were established to fill the current vacancy indicate “that a Supreme Court judge can read materials and understand oral argument without the need for translation or interpretation in French and English.” The government’s commitment to meeting the Supreme Court’s institutional needs in this process is closely aligned with the proposals put forward by the hon. member.

The Supreme Court of Canada is Canada’s final court of appeal. It serves Canadians by deciding legal issues of public importance, thereby contributing to the development of both civil and common law in Canada.

The importance of the court’s decisions for Canadian society is well recognized. The court assures uniformity, consistency and correctness in the articulation, development and interpretation of legal principles throughout the Canadian judicial system.

The Supreme Court is one of our most respected national institutions, and its excellent reputation is well-deserved. Our government wants to uphold and safeguard the tradition of appointing outstanding individuals to the court. Fortunately, Canada has many exceptional jurists to choose from.

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In closing, I can assure members of the House that we know key players in the justice system must be bilingual if members of official language minority communities, like all Canadians, are to have equal access to justice in our courts.

I would like to reiterate how proud we are that Canadians have access to a final court of appeal that is known and respected worldwide for its excellence, professionalism, integrity, and independence. It is also important for the Supreme Court to reflect the diversity and bilingualism of Canadian society.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. I know him to be a very good person who does good work. Unfortunately, he did not answer my questions and that is very disappointing.

The NDP is very proud of its work on official languages. We are the ones who introduced Bill C-419 to ensure that all officers of Parliament are bilingual. That is thanks to former hon. member Alexandrine Latendresse. We are very proud of that bill.

We continued to work very hard. As I said, Yvon Godin worked very hard. We are the only ones who want to pass a bill to ensure that Supreme Court justices are bilingual.

Unfortunately, my hon. colleague did not answer my question. I would like to give him one last chance because this is my last attempt for today.

Does he at least support the recommendations of the latest report by the Commissioner of Official Languages tabled in 2013 regarding access to justice and judges in superior courts?

• (1840)

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, access to justice in both official languages is an issue that affects all Canadians. Canadians want to live in a law-abiding society that has a justice system that is fair and accessible for everyone.

In criminal justice, these principles mean that the lower courts have to be able to operate in French or in English, according to the official language chosen by the accused for his or her trial. The government's commitment regarding official languages, and more specifically the administration of justice, is undeniable.

On behalf of the government, I thank my colleague for his question and for his commitment to ensuring that the justice system is accessible to members of official language minority communities and to all Canadians.

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I believe, at this stage of the proceedings, I am asking a question of my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, involving a matter that has been of great concern.

It first arose in my riding of Victoria, when in 2000 a very wealthy family purchased a tax product sold to them by the firm KPMG. In May, I asked the Minister of National Revenue whether the government would bring criminal prosecution against those individuals implicated in the Isle of Man tax evasion scheme and

against KPMG, the firm that conceived and managed the tax evasion at issue.

The continuing refusal to answer that question in the House or in the finance committee hearings, I submit, is deeply eroding Canadians' faith in the integrity of our tax system.

This problem is enormous. Billions of dollars are lost each year to tax havens. Many people in my riding and across the country are saying that we have created a two-tier system, one standard for regular people who pay their taxes and play by the rules, and another standard for the wealthy and well-connected.

I submit that this particular case involving KPMG and the Isle of Man is a textbook example of how that works.

Of course, there are many other stories that bring this into context. In 2007, there was a leak from the Liechtenstein LGT Bank that revealed 106 accounts held by Canadians. The Canada Revenue Agency identified \$22.4 million in taxes owing, and took six years to recover merely \$8 million, less 30% of what was owing.

In 2008, the Swiss UBS AG Bank leak revealed that there were 4,450 accounts, including a number from Canadians. The CRA identified \$87 million in unreported income, but has not yet reported collecting any of it.

There is a very poor record of enforcement. Let me quote Professor Arthur Cockfield of Queen's University faculty of law, who said the following in a *Globe and Mail* editorial, and who has of course testified to like effect recently at the finance committee:

To the best of our knowledge, the CRA has not had a single successful prosecution of international tax evasion in the past 10 years.... These cases may have an international dimension such as assets maintained offshore, but the actual prosecution was purely for domestic offences, and not the crime of offshore tax evasion.

My question is as follows. What is the government doing to proactively deter these kinds of schemes? Ordinary Canadians are tired of sweetheart amnesty agreements and secret settlements. We saw an amnesty agreement in the KPMG situation, no matter what the government chooses to call it.

Will firms that devise these schemes face fines large enough to actually deter them? Will their lawyers and accountants be held responsible for facilitating large-scale tax evasion? What is the government doing to change the paradigm from belated slaps on the wrist to effective deterrents?

• (1845)

[Translation]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to answer the question raised by my hon. colleague.

Adjournment Proceedings

First of all, we should understand that the offshore tax avoidance scheme set up by KPMG was discovered thanks to the efforts of the Canada Revenue Agency. Many of the participants have already been identified and the file is still active. There will be no amnesty for tax evaders who, unlike the majority of Canada's middle class, do not pay their fair share of taxes.

As the opposition member knows, the KPMG case is before the courts and the Agency's work on this issue is not yet complete. Therefore, I am unable to comment further on this matter as this could undermine or influence the judicial process under way.

The member asked a question about what the current government is doing. Rather than talking about incidents or events that occurred 10 years ago, let us look at what the current government is doing. We decided to allocate an additional \$444 million to the CRA so that it could do more to combat international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. This historic investment will produce real results for the good of all Canadians.

Thanks to this investment and targeted surveillance activities that will be carried out by the CRA, we expect to see an increase in revenue of \$2.6 billion over the next five years. That is, without question, an excellent return on investment.

In the future, the CRA will put a stop to the activities of those who develop and promote similar tax schemes. The CRA will hire more auditors and specialists to review the actions of high-risk wealthy individuals. By so doing, the CRA will be able to collect \$432 million in new tax revenue. The CRA will hire 100 additional auditors to examine high-risk multinational corporations, which will allow it to recover an additional \$500 million over five years.

The new funding will also help the agency develop solid corporate intelligence infrastructure to collect and analyze any information that will allow it to detect tax evasion and avoidance activities.

To ensure that these investments achieve results, the agency will include lawyers on its investigative teams. When prosecution is warranted, the lawyers forward the case to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada so that it may be tried quickly.

In closing, the Minister of National Revenue has already announced a series of concrete measures the agency will be taking to ensure compliance with Canada's tax laws. Briefly, they include: expanding international co-operation to combat tax evasion; creating an independent advisory board on offshore compliance; and finally, beginning work to estimate the tax gap. Those are just a few of the measures our government is taking.

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his account, and I salute the government for finally putting its money where its mouth is and going after this problem.

However, I go back, not to generalities but to the specifics of the KPMG case. The firm got 15% of the taxes that were dodged. That firm was given nothing by way of a sanction. Of course, the individuals who scammed the system, thanks to the advice they got from this international firm, got an amnesty agreement.

Will the government go after the enablers?

I am not interested necessarily in what the government is doing with the others. We know they got off scot-free. However, I want to know what happens to those people who enable, such as those from KPMG. Has the government got them in their sights, or will they get off as well?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Mr. Speaker, my colleague would like a specific response regarding KPMG.

I would remind him that the Canada Revenue Agency was the first to uncover the scheme. Then, to ensure due diligence, in early March the agency ordered an independent and thorough review of how the KPMG matter was being handled, and it made efforts to obtain the names of all the taxpayers involved in the scheme. The findings confirmed that the agency had acted correctly in how it handled the KPMG matter.

Specifically, the results found that the observation measures used by the agency were consistent with policies and procedures, as well as reasonable and substantiated by evidence. The review also showed that the measures taken by the employees were consistent with CRA's code of integrity and professional conduct. Once again, we continue to apply those measures to ensure that everything is running smoothly at the agency.

● (1850)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)

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