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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 20, 2012

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 20, 2012

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will have the singing of the national anthem today led by the hon. member for Brampton West.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

RCMP MUSICAL RIDE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am excited to announce that on August 6 my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul will have the privilege of hosting the RCMP Musical Ride.

Having started well over a century ago, the world-renowned Musical Ride represents a colourful tradition in Canada's history through the horse and the scarlet uniform. The Musical Ride is performed by a full troop of 32 riders and horses, plus the member in charge, demanding utmost control, timing and coordination, a true example of talent and discipline.

The RCMP Musical Ride provides Canadians from coast to coast with the opportunity to experience a unique part of our heritage and national identity.

I want to thank Mayor Bruce Henley and the councillors of West St. Paul, as well as Sergeant Paul Gilligan from the RCMP's East St. Paul detachment, for their hard work to secure the RCMP Musical Ride in my riding.

I invite all my constituents and all members of the House to come out and enjoy this wonderful experience and the full festivities on August 6 at the Sunova Centre in West St. Paul, Manitoba.

[Translation]

QUEBEC NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year, on this very date, the Conservative government was so caught up in violating postal workers' rights that it did not think the House should adjourn for a single day to enable Quebec members of Parliament to celebrate the national holiday in their ridings.

What a lack of respect from a party that brags about recognizing the Quebec nation, but Quebecers are not fooled. All year long they have seen the Conservatives refuse to listen to Quebec's legitimate requests, in particular regarding the firearms registry and young offenders.

The NDP succeeded where the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party failed miserably. Our party achieved the greatest national reconciliation in Canada by obtaining and maintaining massive support from Quebecers.

As the national holiday is just a few days away, I want to reiterate the commitment we have made to work tirelessly to maintain the trust that Quebec has given us.

I want to wish all Quebecers a happy national holiday.

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[English]

WAR OF 1812

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend we marked the 200-year anniversary of the War of 1812. British North America faced retaliation by American armies for press gangs and a blockade. At the time, many echoed Thomas Jefferson's bold prediction that an American victory was inevitable and would be a mere matter of marching, yet the small and professional British army, alongside colonial militia and Indian allies, were able to repel repeated American invasions.

The War of 1812 ensured that the historic traditions of British liberty would live on in North America. It gave strength to the Canadian militia movement and to the notion of a citizen's duty and responsibility to bear arms for the defence of the nation. These same principles of freedom, liberty and voluntary military service are just as important today as they were 200 years ago.

We remember the sacrifices made by our soldiers then and now.

Statements by Members

Today, we share the world's longest non-militarized border with the United States. May it be that way for our children and all future generations.

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[Translation]

MUSEUM OF PRIME MINISTER JEAN CHRÉTIEN

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Museum of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in Shawinigan was inaugurated on June 15. The objects on display attest to the breadth of this great prime minister's contribution to Canada's development.

The museum recounts the political career of the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien and the evolution of Canada's foreign policy over several decades. Jean Chrétien's story is inextricably linked to the history of Canada's place in the world from the early 1960s on.

Mr. Chrétien was a contemporary of Lester B. Pearson and Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Working tirelessly, he held a series of high-profile ministerial portfolios over the years. The museum pays tribute to the politician and to the man who befriended many a world leader and spoke on behalf of those who could not speak for themselves.

He offers a message of hope to generations—

The Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up.

The hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

* * *

[English]

CENTRE FOR ISRAEL AND JEWISH AFFAIRS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the internship program that my office has benefited from this year.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs parliamentary internship program is an annual competition for university graduates who have an interest in governmental affairs. The program provides MPs from across party lines with competent assistants and gives university graduates an opportunity to supplement their theoretical knowledge of Parliament with practical experience.

Each year, dozens of graduate vie for one of up to 10 coveted opportunities to work with an MP of their choice. The interns gain a wealth of experience and earn a living allowance paid for by the centre, not by taxpayers.

I was honoured this year to have one of the successful applicants, Jasen Sagman, who chose to work for me, and I am grateful for the many tasks he helped me with throughout the year. Jasen did everything from research work, constituents correspondence, hosting visitors and committee work to writing speeches for various occasions, including members' statements.

I thank Jason and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

[Translation]

VILLE-MARIE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other members from Quebec may not like to hear this, but the travel section of *La Presse* has declared that the most beautiful town in Quebec is in my riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue: Ville-Marie. It is not Ville-Marie in Montreal, but Ville-Marie in Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Ville-Marie is a real gem in my region. I invite everyone to visit us this summer—to savour the delicacies of the Foire gourmande, admire the works at the International Miniature Art Biennial, enjoy the boom town-style architecture, visit the Fort Témiscamingue National Historic Site, attend a performance at the Parc du Centenaire, or simply watch the sun set over Lake Timiskaming, the most beautiful lake in Quebec, according to *L'actualité* magazine.

I am delighted to share my pride and that of the residents of Ville-Marie in Abitibi—Témiscamingue. I would also like to congratulate Mayor Bernard Flébus and his entire team. I invite everyone to come and discover the Témiscamingue region this summer, and the most beautiful town in all of Quebec: Ville-Marie.

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● (1410)

[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hope, growth and opportunity: these are the outcomes we seek as we advance our ideals in policy or legislation.

A government that keeps taxes low, while making balanced budgets a priority, is a government setting the stage for long-term economic growth. We will not solve our problems with debt financing and easy money, for no nation has ever taxed itself into prosperity.

By reducing needless and overlapping regulations, we fuel growth. Making hard decisions today means avoiding impossible ones tomorrow, as we experienced in the 1990s and today are witnessing in parts of Europe because of years of chronic and reckless overspending.

Governments need to prioritize what is important and what is not. They should focus more on education and less on corporate handouts; reward work, not idleness; and understand our great challenges as a nation will not be solved by government officials but by the hard work and ingenuity of ordinary hard-working Canadians.

* * *

NATIONAL PARKS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, Conservatives made a commitment to establish a new national park in the Golden Horseshoe. We reinforced that commitment in the Speech from the Throne and in the budget. This government is delivering on that commitment.

Statements by Members

Several weeks ago, the government announced more than \$140 million in funding over the next 10 years to establish Rouge National urban park and over \$7 million a year in annual operating funding.

This new national park has generated a lot of excitement and the public will soon have an opportunity to provide their input through public consultations.

This new national park will be accessible to the more than eight million Canadians who live in the Golden Horseshoe. It will be a wonderful opportunity for Canadians, especially new Canadians, to get acquainted with the great outdoors and to connect, many for the first time, with Canada's national park system.

This new national park, along with the fact that in the last six years more space has been added to our national park system than in any previous period, shows this government's commitment to Canada's national parks.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is inspiring to observe grace and dignity in politics, because they are rare commodities.

Anne McGrath, the chief of staff to the late Jack Layton and to subsequent leaders of the official opposition, possesses such rare qualities.

Anne McGrath is tough, insightful and effective. Her determination and strong principles of social justice gave her the authority to be trusted by all sides, her insights and advice always sought and always respected.

Most of all, if we look around at the young people working on Parliament Hill, so many have learned their trade from her.

[*Translation*]

Anne McGrath is an excellent role model for all young women on the Hill, regardless of their political stripes.

Her patience, grace and dignity will be greatly missed.

[*English*]

This is Anne McGrath's last day on the Hill. We wish her well in all her future endeavours. We thank Anne on behalf of all New Democrats and the House.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the public safety committee studied and adopted our Conservative government's proposed regulations to end the backdoor long gun registry and ensure the will of Parliament will be respected with regard to ending the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry for good.

However, the member for Gatineau stated that the NDP had no position on bringing back this wasteful and ineffective measure that had done nothing to reduce crime. I would remind her that the NDP

leader said that he would work to register firearms and that everyone in the NDP would follow.

Rather than trying to hide their anti-western and rural agenda from Canadians, I encourage the NDP members to be upfront with the hunters and farmers whose livelihoods they want to impact.

The truth is, Conservatives are the only ones who will stand up for the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

* * *

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on this World Refugee Day to outline the Conservatives' contempt for women.

In Bill C-31, a bill against refugees, the Conservatives are targeting the most vulnerable women by directly attacking sexual abuse survivors who are seeking asylum. The Conservatives do not care.

The Conservatives also attacked women in Bill C-10 by putting more and more women in prison for minor crimes, when statistics show that the majority of women in prison are also mothers. This legislation is breaking up families.

The omnibus budget bill, which was passed on Monday, amends the Employment Equity Act. Again, women are being targeted.

The height of contempt is Motion M-312, a motion that, in 2012, opens the abortion debate. Women have fought for their rights, and the Conservatives are allowing a man to interfere and send women back to the days of knitting-needle abortions.

Looking back over the past year, there is not much here for women. What is more, our Prime Minister does not even trust the women in his caucus to speak on his behalf during question period. Indeed, only 22 questions out of 349 were answered by women. That is a measly 6%.

That is sad, but the NDP will always be proud to stand up for women.

* * *

[*English*]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new NDP leader threatens dangerous economic experiments, job-killing taxes and reckless spending that the average, everyday Canadian simply cannot afford.

He and his team have blocked measures that would put the rights of victims first and have fought to defend a criminal justice system that privileges the rights of criminals instead. The NDP has gone to great lengths to prevent responsible resource development of our natural resources, going so far as to travel abroad to criticize Canada. What is worse, the leader of the NDP even went as far as to call a sector of our economy a disease.

Statements by Members

Our government will continue to put the interests of Canadians first. Unfortunately, the NDP leader has made it clear that the NDP does not stand for the interests of everyday hard-working Canadian families.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that opening new markets and creating new business opportunities leads to jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for all Canadians. That is why we are committed to deepening Canada's trading relationships with the dynamic and fast-growing economies of the Asia-Pacific.

The nine current members of the trans-Pacific partnership represent a market of 510 million people and a GDP of nearly \$18 trillion. Yesterday, Canada welcomed the support of all TPP members for our participation in the negotiations toward an agreement that would enhance trade in the Asia-Pacific region and would provide greater economic opportunity for all Canadians. Once again, our government is delivering on our pro-trade plan. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture applauded the news, saying, "The TPP represents significant market opportunities for Canadian farmers and a strong boost to the Canadian economy".

Our government looks forward to helping develop a 21st century agreement as a full and ambitious partner at the table.

* * *

AIR INDIA

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, early in the morning a few days from now, on the coast of Ireland, a few families will be lighting candles and sending them into the water.

In Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver, people will come together and reflect on the terrible events of June 23, 1985, when hundreds of children, women and men were killed by bombs that were built and set in Canada. These families and friends have kept this vigil for 27 long years. There is no closure for them, only memories that make the loss seem as if it happened yesterday.

[*Translation*]

The Air India attack was a horrific act of violence and terror, and it took Canadians far too long to fully acknowledge the magnitude of this event.

[*English*]

We recognize the courage and dignity of those who died, as well as those who live. We remember the words that are found on each monument across this country, and in Ireland, memorializing these lives:

Time flies
Suns rise and shadows fall
Let it pass by
Love reigns forever over all

AIR INDIA

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on June 23, 1985, 331 people lost their lives in the bombing of Air India flight 182. Two hundred and eighty of them were Canadian citizens. On behalf of New Democrats, I want to express our deepest sympathies to the families of the victims.

For too long, some have looked on the Air India disaster as a foreign tragedy, but it was a Canadian tragedy. It is the worst example of mass murder and terrorism in our country's history. The families, friends and communities of the victims still feel the profound loss of this tragedy, a loss that has had to be relived throughout the lengthy investigation and prosecution process.

I invite all Canadians today to join New Democrats, and all parties, in honouring the memory of the victims of the Air India tragedy. As parliamentarians, we stand with the community and resolve to ensure that these acts of violence are never repeated.

* * *

● (1420)

AIR INDIA

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Saturday marks the 27th anniversary of the bombing of Air India flight 182. The anniversary of this atrocity, which took the lives of 280 Canadians, including my cousin's husband, is a stark reminder that Canada is by no means immune from the threat of terrorism.

The first duty of any government is to keep its citizens safe. I am proud that our government has responded to the recommendations of Justice Major's report through the Air India report action plan. It responds to the six key areas, including combatting the financing of terrorism, streamlining the prosecution of terrorism offences and protecting air travellers.

We have also recently announced the first recipients of funding under the Kanishka project, to ensure that Canada is a world leader in research into combatting terrorism.

As we approach this solemn anniversary, I encourage all members of this House to work to ensure that such a tragedy never happens again.

The Speaker: Following discussion among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is agreement to observe a moment of silence. I invite hon. members to rise.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months the Conservative government has been begging to be let into the trans-Pacific trade negotiations. The question now is what the Prime Minister gave up just to get a seat at the table. Did he agree to limit access to low-cost prescription drugs? Did he sell out poultry, dairy and egg farmers by agreeing to dismantle supply management the way he dismantled the Wheat Board?

Could the Prime Minister tell this House right now that he will not limit access to generic drugs and that he will not dismantle supply management? Could he simply tell us for once, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has made no such commitments. We have indicated for some time that Canada was more than willing to aspire to the same high ambitions that other members of the trans-Pacific partnership have.

I know the depth of the NDP's ideological aversion to trade, but on this side of the House we believe very strongly that the Asia-Pacific region is a growing region. It is very necessary for this country to not just be part of this process, but to make sure we are able to increase exports in order to create jobs and growth for Canadian families.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that he has made no concessions, but the trans-Pacific partnership negotiations began two years ago. There have already been 12 rounds of negotiations. The Prime Minister said yesterday that he will not try to undo what has already been done.

So the question is: What did the Prime Minister give up to get Canada a seat at the negotiating table?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer is nothing. Our analysis of the negotiations to date indicates that they are at a very preliminary stage. It is important for Canada to be part of the negotiations.

We believe that trade is very important to the Canadian economy. I am well aware of the NDP's aversion to any kind of international trade. It is an ideological aversion. It is in the best interests of Canadian families for our exports to have access to global markets, especially in growing regions such as the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is all very vague. Canadians have the right to know what the Conservatives intend to sacrifice for the sake of the trans-Pacific partnership.

What concessions did the Prime Minister make?

Did he accept all the clauses that were negotiated before Canada arrived at the table, yes or no? Did he agree to dismantle supply management, yes or no? Did he agree to offer up access to generic drugs, yes or no?

Oral Questions

What is the answer?

Why not be transparent and clearly state for once what Canada is giving up to be part of these negotiations?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, Canada is at the negotiating table to promote and defend all our interests. It is necessary in a global economy.

I know the NDP thinks we can ignore the world of trade, but that is not the economic reality.

Our party is the one that concluded the free trade agreement with the United States—a great success for our country—and we intend to maintain our systems and promote our exports throughout the world.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2010, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board said, “the Parliamentary Budget Officer has improved how decisions are made by Parliament”. However, the Minister of Foreign Affairs does not agree. Yesterday he claimed that the Parliamentary Budget Officer had overstepped his mandate.

Once again, there is trouble in the Conservative ranks. Who is telling the truth?

Do the Conservatives really think that Kevin Page has overstepped his mandate?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me state right off the top, it has never been the position of this government to interpret the mandate of the budget officer or the way he interprets his mandate. Indeed, we have echoes of that from opposition members. I recall the 2009 unanimous all-party committee report on the PBO that said, “The committee is of the opinion that the PBO's approach is inconsistent with the Act governing his position.”

This seems to be a general consensus in this House. We simply ask that the PBO do his job, and of course we will do our job through the regular means of reporting to Parliament.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a different minister made outrageous accusations, and frankly he has it wrong. The PBO has a legal opinion backing him up. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has a legal right to free and timely access to any financial or economic data.

The Conservatives have the nerve to accuse Kevin Page of breaking his legal mandate, even though it is the Conservatives who are breaking their own law by withholding information. If they actually believe their ridiculous accusations, will they repeat them outside this House and provide some examples?

Oral Questions

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is relying on lawyers. We are relying on an all party unanimous report from a committee of this Parliament that said that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's approach was inconsistent with the act governing his position. We are relying on that.

At the same time, we are fully reporting to this Parliament through the regular means, through the quarterly reports, through the public accounts and through other means that we have available to Parliament to report to parliamentarians and to the people of Canada on the plans of the budget, which are designed to grow jobs and opportunity for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party's 2006 plan clearly says that the plan is meant to ensure truth in budgeting. It announces the creation of a Parliamentary Budget Office that would be, and I quote, "independent" and that would demand timely and accurate information from federal departments and agencies.

So how is the Parliamentary Budget Officer overstepping his mandate?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Liberal Party noted, it was the Conservative government that established this office. We are more than familiar with this office's mandate. As usual, we will give all the information to parliamentarians through the regular means.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the trouble with what has taken place is that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has asked for information from departments and he has done so according to the act, which was passed by this House, with respect to giving him powers. The act, if I may say so, is consistent with the Conservative Party plan that it presented to people in 2006 in which it said that information from government departments will be given to the Parliamentary Budget Officer in a timely manner and in a timely manner that is also complete.

My question is again for the Prime Minister. How is this going beyond his powers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, as the leader of the Liberal Party noted, it was in fact this party, this government, that established the parliamentary budget office, so this government is more than familiar with its intention in terms of the mandate it set up.

In terms of specific information, we give information to all parliamentarians on a complete and timely basis. There are a number of means through which we do that and we will continue to do so.

* * *

FEDERAL ELECTION DATE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, another feature of the Conservative plan of 2006 was that there would be

something called fixed election dates. The fixed election date now is supposed to be sometime in the fall of 2015.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Is it still the government's plan to proceed with an election in the fall of 2015 when there are several provinces that have an election on the same date? If the Prime Minister is going to change the date, could he tell us what he will change it to?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not know the timing of the next election was still a subject in which the leader of the Liberal Party was keenly interested.

We have noted, as he has just noted, that the date in law for the next election currently conflicts with several provincial elections that will occur at the same time. We are talking to our friends in the provinces about how to resolve this. I can assure parliamentarians we will bring forward a proposal on this well before the next election.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the international community is once again accusing us of systematically obstructing environmental negotiations. The stone-age Conservative government has won yet another fossil of the day award.

Rather than working with our partners, the Conservatives are doing everything in their power to sabotage environmental agreements. A government can either participate and support sustainable development, or it can block progress.

Why not let those who are serious work, instead of blocking them?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the chemicals management plan, the air quality health index, Technology Development Canada, world leader in corporate social responsibility practices and green accounting practices pioneered here by Statistics Canada, this is the real track record of Canada. This is our environmental track record. We are world leaders in environmental stewardship. We should be taking pride in this instead of taking pride in awards that are presented by false organizations.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can the Conservatives be proud when the international community is calling us out for our inaction?

The last time I announced in the House that we had won the fossil of the year award, the Conservatives were foolish enough to applaud. Spoiler alert: it is not a good thing. We did it again. We won this dubious dishonour at the Earth Summit in Rio for watering down language aimed at protecting fisheries and oceans and trouncing on our environmental record with the Conservative Trojan Horse budget bill.

Will the Conservatives provide real action on environment both here and abroad?

Oral Questions

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the last Rio conference in 1992, Canada has doubled its amount of protected parkland in this country. We have cleaned up Lake Simcoe. We have invested in Lake Winnipeg. For the first time we are seeing the stabilization of growth in greenhouse gas emissions while our economy grows. Our government understands that we can have environmental stewardship and economic growth, a principle the NDP does not understand.

Our track record speaks for itself. Our environment is in good hands with the Conservative government. I hope the NDP will support our budgetary measures to continue this good work.

• (1435)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the last month has seen many major oil spills in Canada: a quarter of a million-litre oil spill near Elk Point, a half million-litre spill into the Red Deer River threatening the water supply, and, nearly a million litres in northern Alberta. The Conservatives response has been to cut corners on reviewing the northern gateway pipeline.

British Columbians and all Canadians want strong rules that protect public health and the environment, and the NDP agrees with them.

Will the Conservatives now listen to reason, listen to Canadians and stop gutting environmental protection rules?

[Translation]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Elk Point pipeline is under provincial jurisdiction.

Technology is improving steadily, making oil pipelines even safer. Our government is taking steps to enhance pipeline safety. We are doubling the number of audits, increasing the number of annual inspections by 50% and penalizing those who break our laws. The opposition parties opposed these measures.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Conservatives have actually done is give cabinet special powers, allowing Conservative politicians to override experts and scientists. There are words for this: it is wrong.

[Translation]

The Conservatives are not only using their chainsaws on assessments, they are eviscerating the whole process. Over half of the pipeline companies inspected by the National Energy Board do not have adequate safety mechanisms in place.

The NDP believes that Canadian families deserve better.

Why is the government putting people's health and safety at risk? Why is it being so irresponsible?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, we are increasing environmental protection. We are putting in over \$165 million to improve maritime protection and pipeline protection.

Pipeline technology has improved over the last 50 years with increased sophistication of leak detection systems, pipeline inspection technology and improvements in pipeline coating technologies. Manufacturing quality control has improved pipeline quality. In addition to that, we are continuing to focus on protection of the environment. No project will go ahead unless it is safe for Canadians.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if members believe that, I have a pipeline for sale.

British Columbians are very concerned about the closure of Coast Guard stations on our coast. They understand the Coast Guard is the front line of safety on the ocean, but so far the Conservatives have been deaf to their concerns.

Conservative cuts will mean only two marine communication centres to monitor 27,000 kilometres of coastline and delay response times off Vancouver, the busiest port in the country.

Will the Conservatives listen to the people of British Columbia and reverse these risky Coast Guard cuts?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard is the safety of mariners.

Our government is committed to reducing the deficit and has found a fair, balanced and moderate savings to meet these goals. Canadians can be assured that the efficiencies planned will have no impact on the world-class rescue services that Canadians from coast to coast to coast have come to rely on.

Our government remains steadfast in supporting the Canadian Coast Guard and that is why we have made major investments in budget 2012 in fleet renewal.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister just does not get it. Perhaps if there were somebody in his caucus who could explain to him the seriousness of this, the minister would understand that these cuts are bad for the west coast.

Just like the HST, the Conservatives are imposing changes onto British Columbia without any consultation. The B.C. Conservative MPs end up saying one thing to their constituents while voting a different way here in Ottawa.

Does the minister agree that bureaucrats are responsible for these cuts or will he take responsibility for the decisions of DFO?

Oral Questions

•(1440)

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my previous answer to the member opposite, we are finding efficiencies within the Coast Guard and we are not putting anybody at risk, certainly not our mariners.

This is a top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard and it is something that Canadians want us to do: provide service and save Canadian tax dollars at the same time. We believe we are doing that. I, personally, would never put anybody at risk or in jeopardy through efficiencies gained.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence totally dismissed a request from the chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission regarding documents related to the suicide of Corporal Langridge. The corporal's family has a right to answers.

I served in the armed forces as a medical assistant. I saw first-hand how psychological distress can take its toll and how our troops are sometimes left on their own.

The minister loves talking about how much he supports the troops. Now he can prove it by handing over all the documents.

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Military Police Complaints Commission, we are supporting it. We have, in fact, provided additional funding.

I have met with Mrs. Fynes on this very tragic case. What is unfortunate is that the member and members of the opposition continue to argue this case on the floor of the House of Commons rather than letting the Military Police Complaints Commission do its important work. We will continue to support that process.

In the meantime, we will continue to work toward doubling the number of mental health professionals that we have in the employment of the Canadian Forces. We will continue to support joint personal support units and make investments in the care and well-being of the members of the military and their families. However, the member and her caucus will vote against it.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence made quite a statement yesterday when he said that his own desire to keep information secret trumps the Fynes family's need for closure and the truth and the request from the chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission. What Corporal Langridge saw in Afghanistan was so traumatic—

Some hon. members: Telephone.**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's East has the floor.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, what Corporal Langridge saw in Afghanistan was so traumatic that he could not explain it to his family or his therapist. He self-admitted to hospital. He needed to be on suicide watch but he was not given that protection.

What is it about this case that makes the minister want to hold back information?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that was the hon. member's truth calling but he is not answering.

None of what he said is actually true. Again, arguing the facts of this case on the floor of the House of Commons is completely inappropriate.

Last night I heard his seatmate, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, say that Mr. Justice LeSage understands the military justice system. He is one of the experts in the country. Just this past week, I tabled a report from the same Mr. Justice LeSage. What did he say in the report? He upheld the solemnity of solicitor-client privilege.

Why does the hon. member so selectively quote from the Supreme Court and Mr. Justice LeSage?

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that he has the authority to waive it. The chair of the commission is looking for three things: one, the legal reasoning why a suicide watch was not given to Corporal Langridge; two—

Some hon. members: Telephone.**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I will give the floor back to the hon. member for St. John's East and then we will quickly move on.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, two, who decided to deny the next-of-kin status to Corporal Langridge's family and why; and three, the rationale behind DND's flawed investigation.

What is it about those three things that threatens and scares the minister so much? Do we need to wait for a new minister to be appointed before we get this disclosure?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, the member is a lawyer. He understands, I am sure, basic law, which is the solicitor-client privilege, which has been upheld repeatedly by the Supreme Court. He knows this is to protect clients, including Canadian Forces members and military police.

Why does he not want to have military police be able to avail themselves of the same protections that are so important in our legal system? Why does he want to interfere with a public hearing by playing out the facts of the case before the House of Commons before the hearing has reached its conclusions?

Oral Questions

●(1445)

ETHICS

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister is an expert in baseless smears against his opponents. However, when it comes time to take accountability for his own actions, the member disappears.

I will be moving a motion tomorrow at the ethics committee to call the parliamentary secretary so he can respond to these very serious allegations of election fraud. Will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, who sits on the ethics committee, commit here and now to showing up and supporting the motion, or will he step aside while this cloud of Conservative corruption hangs over his head?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know why this member wants to drag his smears before a parliamentary committee. It is because there he will have the same privilege that he has here, which is to make any allegations, however unproven and counterfactual, without ever having to prove them. That is a privilege to which most Canadians are not entitled and one he claimed he would give up late last week when he bragged that he was going to run outside and repeat his allegations, something he failed to do.

* * *

PENSIONS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has launched his OAS pension tax grab, a plan imposing a \$30,000 tax on the poorest of the poor. The Prime Minister says he needs this money more than low-income seniors struggling to make ends meet. He says this while spending \$8 million to advertise the new plan.

Would the Prime Minister please admit that taking \$8 million out of the pockets of low-income soon-to-be seniors to print things like boastful brochures is hurting some of Canada's most vulnerable seniors?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again I will state in this House that there will be no reductions in seniors' pensions. In order to ensure the sustainability of OAS, the age of eligibility will gradually be raised from 65 to 67 from 2023 to 2029. Our government is committed to sustainable social programs and a secure retirement for all Canadians.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservative MPs like the member for Nanaimo—Alberni are openly criticizing their government's decision to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard base and three marine communication centres in B.C. He correctly points out that B.C. is prone to regular earthquakes that can shut down communication stations and that maintenance issues with hovercraft will affect the crowded Vancouver port in English Bay. If the government will not listen to this House or to experts, will

it at least listen to its own members and reverse this dangerous decision—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the changes that were proposed to move the Canadian Coast Guard would not impact on the safety of mariners in any way, shape or form. As I said before, Canadians can be assured that the service that is provided by the Canadian Coast Guard from coast to coast will continue, as it has in the past, in a safe and efficient manner. I will again mention that we have committed a huge amount of money in budget 2012 for the renewal of the Canadian Coast Guard.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government says that the TPP talks are in a preliminary stage. The fact is that there have been 12 rounds of negotiations, and Canada will not be allowed to join the 13th in July.

In contrast, the Conservatives claim that the CIDA negotiations are nearing completion, and that is after only nine rounds. The truth is that the TPP talks are well advanced, and the U.S. trade office says that Canada cannot change anything agreed on to date by the original nine members.

Will the minister explain why it took two years for Canada to be admitted and what exactly we gave up to do so?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government remains focused on the priorities of Canadians, which are economic growth, job creation and long-term prosperity. That member should understand that trade is a key driver of economic growth, which is why we are so focused on expanding trade in the Asia-Pacific economies. I wish that member would join with us in building economic prosperity, rather than shooting from the sidelines.

●(1450)

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we support free trade agreements that benefit Canadians. The Conservatives, on the other hand, are always ready to sacrifice the interests of Canadians without getting anything back in return.

The buy American clause is a perfect example. Now the Conservatives are jeopardizing supply management in order to join the trans-Pacific partnership without any guarantee of economic spinoffs, any veto power or anything at all.

Are the Conservatives prepared to tell us what is on the negotiating table now?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the NDP has it all wrong. As with all of our international trade obligations, our government will vigorously promote Canadian interests across all sectors.

What we seek is a balanced outcome. That has been the case in every single free trade agreement that Canada has ever signed.

Of course, the NDP members are ideologically opposed to trade. In fact, they voted against every single free trade agreement that Canada has ever passed into law. Shame on them.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, six years ago the Conservatives promised to reduce health care wait times, but this promise, like so many others, has been broken. The Wait Time Alliance's report shows that wait times are now on the rise. This comes on top of the Conservatives' unilaterally imposed funding formula, which shortchanges provinces and territories by over \$30 billion.

Can the minister explain why the Conservatives have broken their promises and failed Canadians so miserably on health care?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made progress working with the provinces and the territories on wait times, but there is obviously still room for improvement in the health care system.

To help the provinces and territories make even more improvements, we are increasing the federal health transfer funding to record levels, reaching \$40 billion by the end of the decade. More than that, we are investing significantly in health research and innovation that we hope will help people avoid the hospital altogether.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that our health system is in need of reforms to provide services such as home care and long-term care and to provide cheaper and more accessible medication, all things that her government committed to in the health accords.

Can the minister tell us what she plans on doing now about rising health care wait times, or are her government's commitments made in the health accords not worth the paper they are written on?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated before, we have been working with the provinces.

We have increased the transfers to the provinces, which the Liberal Party cut back in the day. The \$40 billion will be invested in areas of priority by the provinces and territories.

In addition to that, we have made significant investments in areas of health research, aboriginal suicide prevention, physical activity, tobacco reductions, diabetes and much more.

VETERANS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is truly important that we seek to remember and commemorate those who have fought and died in the service of Canada. They made the ultimate sacrifice, and we owe them a debt that cannot be repaid.

I was shocked and dismayed to hear that 11 headstones were vandalized in a war cemetery in Belgium. The vandalized graves included the headstone of Canadian Second World War pilot Joseph Beasley.

Would the minister please comment on this senseless and shameful act of vandalism?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to praise the hard work of the member for Dufferin—Caledon for bringing a private member's bill in this House so that every member can support a bill that will support and protect war memorials and the memory of our brave Canadians.

Regarding what happened in Belgium, acts of heartless vandalism against the graves of our fallen heroes are truly unacceptable. That is why I have instructed my officials to make sure that repairs are and will be made.

[Translation]

We will remember them.

* * *

*[English]***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada Day is coming up, but it will not be a happy one for many refugees who lose their health care coverage on July 1. After that date, some pregnant women who arrive in Canada as refugee claimants will have no prenatal or obstetrical care at all. Where does the minister expect these women to give birth?

Today, on World Refugee Day, will the minister reverse these reckless and short-sighted cuts?

● (1455)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, after these changes, all of the re-established refugees whom we welcome and the vast majority of asylum claimants would receive that kind of care.

Oral Questions

However, it seems to be the NDP's position that even failed and false asylum claimants who have had the benefit of due process, whose claims have been rejected by our fair legal system and who want to stay in Canada illegally for several years should continue receiving federally funded health benefits, including supplementary benefits that are not available to taxpaying Canadians, and we fundamentally disagree.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those comments are so misleading and so callous.

These cuts will harm the most vulnerable. A refugee child suffering from epilepsy in Canada will no longer get medication as of July 1. As a teacher, I can say that when a child has seizures in the classroom, it affects the learning environment of every single child.

What does the minister have to say to the parents of these children? Will the minister deny essential medicine to children in Canada?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, all resettled refugees and the vast majority of asylum claimants will continue to receive comprehensive medically necessary care, the same kind of care that is available to all Canadian residents and citizens through their tax-funded provincial health systems.

We will, however, remove supplementary benefits, such as dental care and glasses, that are not available to Canadians through their taxpayer-funded system, and we will not continue to give federal health insurance to rejected failed asylum claimants who, after all, have lost the privilege of remaining in Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the end of the month, many refugees will lose their access to health care.

How can we tell a woman who is suffering from post traumatic stress disorder that she can no longer get anti-depressants or see a psychiatrist for treatment?

How can we tell a mother who has recently come to Canada to flee danger and war that she and her child are not eligible for care?

Will the Conservatives reverse their decision to cut access to health care for refugees?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all resettled refugees, or the vast majority of asylum seekers, will continue to receive basic medicare for all the services available under the provincial programs. Nonetheless, we are eliminating coverage for some of the supplementary insurance that is not available to Canadian taxpayers. What is more, we are ending medicare for failed asylum claimants who have lost the privilege of staying in Canada.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the past, Canada was often cited as an example of a country with a balanced immigration system offering refuge to those fleeing from war, threats and suffering.

Now, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees is raising concerns about the Conservatives' policy on mandatory detention of refugees.

When will the Conservatives' stop attacking refugees and establish a fair and efficient system?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is always attacking Canada's generosity.

The fact is that our country accepts one out of every ten refugees resettled globally. Canada accepts more resettled refugees per capita than any other developed country in the world.

This government is accepting 20% more resettled refugees and is also increasing funding for the assistance program by 20%. Canada is doing more than any other developed country to help and to protect refugees.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the OECD released a report on Canada's international aid program. The report raised concerns that Canada lacks a clear and consistent vision for development aid. This shows a total lack of leadership and direction from the very top.

The Prime Minister likes to lecture the world on how to handle its finances. When will the Prime Minister admit that he has no strategy for Canada's overseas development assistance and when will he fire the minister, who should have no confidence in the House?

● (1500)

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the report also said that Canada was a more concentrated donor than it was previously and thus a more effective one. It also praises Canada for its international aid programs. It untied its aid, which means there is 30% more food getting to the people who need it. It also recognized that we met our commitments. We doubled our international assistance and we doubled our commitment to Africa.

This means we are getting results. It means that 8,000 farmers are now receiving 3% more income for their families in Africa.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first nations and Métis served honourably during the War of 1812. Their invaluable role in that conflict should receive appropriate gratitude and celebration.

On the Walpole Island First Nation, there is a cairn containing the remains of Chief Tecumseh. The mortar is falling out from between the stones. There is no picture. There is no story of how he fought for Canada and died.

Oral Questions

With all the government is spending to mark the War of 1812, what will it take for it to work with the chief and council to fix this?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I agree with the member opposite that the House and our country are indeed very proud of those who served and fought in the War of 1812. It was the fight for Canada.

We have set aside a substantial amount of money to ensure that these kinds of markers of our past are shown due respect and are recognized. It is unfortunate that opposition parties have attacked our government for doing exactly what the member suggests we ought to be doing.

We are going across the country, looking for projects around the country, like this one, to ensure that those who served and fought in the fight for Canada, the War of 1812, get the respect they are indeed due.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the Conservatives put the finishing on their irresponsible changes to employment insurance, I would like to remind Conservative members across the aisle about our youth, minorities, people with disabilities, temporary foreign workers and seasonal workers. These are all hard-working Canadians who will be hurt this summer by the changes to EI.

My question is simple. As the Conservatives head back to their ridings, how will they justify these harmful changes to their constituents?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the individuals who live in my riding of Simcoe—Grey are delighted with these changes.

Our government's top priority is economic growth and getting Canadians back to work. The government is making improvements to the employment insurance system to ensure a fair system that continues to meet the needs of Canadians and is responsive to local needs and local market demands. As we face unprecedented skills shortages across the country, it is critical that we work directly to help Canadians find the jobs they need.

[Translation]

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only plan they have is to lower all workers' wages. The Conservatives' botched reform of the employment insurance program is unacceptable. The Shefford tourism industry is worried about the consequences of the Conservatives' attacks on seasonal workers. These irresponsible measures will make it difficult to find qualified staff for the tourist season.

Why are the Conservatives attacking the businesses that drive the economic vitality of my region?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Simcoe—Grey, the

people who are running seasonal industries are delighted with these changes, because it means they will have people to work in their local industries.

Our government's top priority is the economy. That is why, through economic action plan 2012 and previous plans, we have created 700,000 net new jobs in the country. We have done a great job creating jobs. I encourage the members opposite to support our plan to create jobs in our country.

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CANADIAN FORCES

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the record of our government is proud and clear. We stand up tall for our troops.

After the decade of darkness when the Liberals were in power, this government has taken unprecedented action at home and abroad to ensure that our troops can serve with dignity. This is especially true with reference to forces members who move to the public sector and their rightful claims to vacation leave entitlement.

Could the President of the Treasury Board outline for the House the changes that have been implemented so prior service of troops is honoured when they move to the public sector?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, let me honour the hon. member who has done such a great job in his advocacy role for the brave women and men in uniform who put their lives on the line for our country.

In recognition of this and following up our budget 2012, our economic action plan commitment, I am pleased to announce that the government has moved ahead with changes to recognize prior years of service of former members of the Canadian Forces who join the Public Service of Canada for the purposes of calculating vacation leave. Details are available at www.tbs-sct.gc.ca.

Our government will always stand by our women and men who have served their country in our military.

* * *

● (1505)

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry has extended the time for reviewing Glencore's foreign takeover of Viterra. This is a \$7 billion deal involving Canada's biggest grain company.

Does the minister's review include an examination of Glencore's controversial past behaviour? Will a bond be posted to guarantee Glencore's promises about a Regina regional headquarters and \$100 million in new investment? How will the government exactly prevent anti-competitive behaviour in the farm input supply business?

Oral Questions

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Glencore takeover was overwhelmingly accepted by the Viterra shareholders. It has gone to industry. The member opposite, spending all those years in government, should know the protocol that is involved. It is exactly the same as it was when he was there.

As it comes to the competition side, it is the Competition Bureau that takes a separate look at it. We are looking forward to those results as well.

* * *

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by increasing the eligibility age for old age security, the Conservatives have launched a direct attack on our society's most vulnerable seniors.

The Conservatives will be stealing food from the mouths of thousands of people who have worked their entire lives, just when they need help the most. It is unacceptable to steal from seniors like this.

Why steal from seniors instead of helping them?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned before in the House, seniors benefits will not be reduced. In order to maintain the sustainability of OAS, the age of eligibility will be gradually increased from 65 to 67, from 2023 to 2029.

We are focused on ensuring that social programs in our country are sustainable, unlike the opposition.

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2012 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to support Canada's athletes and all those who benefit from the Canadian sports system. We have also supported the hosting of national and international sporting events, including the Canada Games and the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics.

Soon our athletes will travel to London to take on the world at the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Could the Minister of State for Sport please tell the House how our government is assisting our athletes as they train for these prestigious events?

Hon. Bal Gosal (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I speak for everyone in the House when I say that Canada's athletes are a source of pride and inspiration for all Canadians across the country.

That is why we are proud to continue our record level support for the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic committees and the national sports organization, Own the Podium, so that our athletes can reach the podium at every opportunity.

I encourage all Canadians to join together this summer to support our athletes as they take on the world's best in London. Let's go, Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in their most recent budget, the Conservatives have abandoned the regions.

My riding has a desperate need for infrastructure, particularly an operational regional airport, to help its economic development, create jobs and maintain existing jobs.

In April, when he visited Sherbrooke for a photo op, the Prime Minister himself acknowledged the importance of this project for our region, yet, the Conservatives have remained silent since that time.

Is the Sherbrooke airport still an important infrastructure project for the Conservative government?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to tour Quebec on regular basis to announce economic development projects supported by this government throughout the province.

Of course, the NDP does not understand what jurisdiction means because they never act within it. The City of Sherbrooke is the owner and developer in this case. The NDP once again wants us to take the place of people in the community and make decisions for them.

Instead, we will support the people of the community. The Prime Minister has said that this is an important file for us and that we are going to monitor it, but since we are not the developers, we are going to wait until we are called upon.

* * *

• (1510)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have once again been sailing under false colours in Quebec.

Even though they promised in 2009 that the old ship dedicated to the Maurice Lamontagne Institute would be replaced by a new ship adapted to the Institute's needs, the Conservatives have now changed their minds. Scientists at this Mont-Joli research centre will no longer be getting the brand new ship they were promised. The ship will instead go to Newfoundland and Labrador, even though it was built to the specifications of the Quebec researchers.

Why is the government giving this ship to Newfoundland and Labrador, when it was destined for Quebec? Did it really think that this decision would not make any waves?

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made major investments in the Canadian Coast Guard and continue to do so. We are renewing our fleet. In part of our budget 2012, it is very clear that we set that as a priority to renew the fleet of the Canadian Coast Guard. We are moving forward and will continue to do so.

The Canadian Coast Guard is an important part of our business, as well as the science boats that are involved through the Coast Guard network.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's electoral system is held in high regard around the world and generally functions well in the service of all Canadians. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the government's response to the 15th report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on recommended changes to the Canada Elections Act, which was tabled in the House of Commons on February 27, 2012.

As parliamentarians, we can and should look at updates we can make to continue to ensure strong, free and fair elections in Canada.

I would like to thank the committee members for their work and recommendations.

NISGA'A FINAL AGREEMENT

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2009-10 Nisga'a Final Agreement annual report.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 28 petitions.

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ENHANCING ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

[Translation]

FASTER REMOVAL OF FOREIGN CRIMINALS ACT

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-43, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

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

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[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly respecting its participation at the economic conference of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Batumi, Georgia May 12 to 14, 2012.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to revert to tabling of documents, I have the pleasure, pursuant to Standing Order 109, to table in both official languages, the government's response to the 6th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on chapter 3—Reserve Force Pension Plan of the Spring 2011 Report of the Auditor General.

• (1515)

HEALTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Health entitled "Focussing on the Brain: An Examination of Neurological Diseases in Canada".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

I would like to thank all committee members for their very hard work, not only on this committee, but on the subcommittee in years previous.

[Translation]

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Pursuant to the order of reference from the Senate on Monday, June 18, 2012, House of Commons Standing Order 111.1(1) and the order of reference from the House of Commons on the same day, the committee has considered the certificate of nomination of Sonia L'Heureux to the position of Parliamentary Librarian and agreed on Tuesday, June 19, 2012 to report to the House that the committee fully endorses her appointment.

[Translation]

I would also like to thank all the members of the committee who met on very short notice and who did an excellent job. Congratulations Ms. L'Heureux.

[English]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 28th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee advises that pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the subcommittee on private members' business met to consider the items added to the order of precedence as a result of the replenishment of Monday, June 4, 2012, and recommends that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2) the report is deemed adopted.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the public safety and national security committee, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to the proposed firearms information regulations, non-restricted firearms.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank our analysts from the Library of Parliament, our clerk, as well as all committee members and wish them a good summer in their constituencies.

It is a pleasure to table this report at this time.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. This report is the result of a study done by our subcommittee on international human rights. It is entitled "The Situation of Human Rights in Venezuela".

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development concerning the current situation in Ukraine. It is entitled "The Rule of Law, Democracy and Prosperity in Ukraine: A Canadian Parliamentary Perspective".

I also want to reiterate that the committee is grateful to the analysts and the clerks for working hard to get this report done in time before we leave.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 35(2) to present the New Democratic Party's supplementary report appended to the foreign affairs committee report on Ukraine.

New Democrats agree with the general direction of the report. We believe that the recommendations in the report that were amended should be included. They are the following: first, that further negotiations in a trade deal between the Government of Canada and the Government of Ukraine be suspended until the completion of legitimate and fair parliamentary elections; second, that the Government of Canada coordinate its actions with the European Union to uphold the rule of law in Ukraine; and finally, that the Government of Canada provide information and advisories on potential risk to investments in Ukraine, particularly for small and medium-sized investors.

I wish to recognize my hon. colleagues from Edmonton—Strathcona and Louis-Saint-Laurent for their hard work.

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study on the process for considering estimates and supply.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of the House the supplementary report submitted with this report on strengthening parliamentary scrutiny of estimates and supply.

While the NDP concurs with the majority report and recommendations, we feel it necessary to qualify our position on one aspect of the report, a widely supported measure recommended by distinguished experts testifying before the committee on how best to achieve improved capacity to clarify and strengthen the role and mandate of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Consequently, consistent with that advice, we recommend that the government take immediate action to make the Parliamentary Budget Officer an officer of Parliament and further, that the Parliamentary Budget Officer be mandated to report to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates with respect to its estimates work.

● (1520)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to refer briefly to the same report from the government.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Markham—Unionville have the unanimous consent of the House to respond to this report?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

*Routine Proceedings***TOBACCO ACT**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-438, An Act to amend the Tobacco Act (smokeless tobacco and little cigars).

She said: Mr. Speaker, two and a half years ago members of this place passed Bill C-32. That bill was intended to ban flavoured cigarillos because the evidence was clear that young Canadians were consuming these products as a stepping stone to using non-flavoured tobacco products. But Bill C-32 contained a giant loophole that has allowed flavoured cigarillos in a modified form to continue to be sold, something the government has been aware of since the summer of 2010 but failed to take action to correct.

Sadly, the government has also not fulfilled its 2010 promise to ban all forms of flavoured smokeless tobacco, like flavoured chew, in recognition that those products are used disproportionately by Canada's youth.

This lack of action means that I am here again to re-table my bill, which would amend the Tobacco Act to correct both of these issues.

I am honoured that the member for Beaches—East York has stepped up to second the bill.

I urge the government to listen to the experts working on the front lines to protect the health of Canada's youth and adopt the bill as soon as possible.

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

* * *

AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.), seconded by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-439, An Act respecting the rights of air passengers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a private member's bill that would protect the rights of air travellers in Canada. The bill would provide compensation for certain unreasonable inconveniences, including overbooked flights, cancelled or delayed flights and lost luggage. This air passenger bill of rights would keep travellers informed about changes in their flight status. It would ensure that passengers are notified of their rights and their ability to apply for compensation. This new legislation would benefit both airlines and passengers, improving service for air travellers and bringing business to Canadian airlines.

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

* * *

FIREARMS ACT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.), seconded by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-440, An Act to amend the Firearms Act (transfer).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce a straightforward act to amend the Firearms Act today. This bill would close the loophole in Canada's existing regulations to ensure that anyone selling or transferring a firearm is obligated to make sure

that the buyer or recipient has a valid possession and acquisition licence, commonly called a PAL.

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

* * *

RAIL CUSTOMER PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-441, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (shippers' protection).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the rail customer protection act would give every rail customer the right to have service agreements with rail companies, including performance standards, consequence for non-performance including penalties, proper notification for service changes and a requirement to use the dispute resolution process in the event of a disagreement.

Rail transport is the backbone of the Canadian economy. More than 70% of all service goods in Canada are shipped by rail, but the service is unreliable, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damages every year. With this rail customer protection act, rail customers would finally get reliable and predictable rail freight services that deliver products on time.

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

* * *

● (1525)

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIAN

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

That pursuant to Standing Order 111.1, this House approve the appointment of Sonia L'Heureux as Parliamentary Librarian for a term of five years.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL PUBLIC TRANSIT STRATEGY ACT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you were to seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion.

[English]

I move:

That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the recorded division on the motion for second reading of Bill C-305, an act to establish a national public transit strategy, be further deferred until Wednesday, September 19, 2012, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Motion agreed to)

* * *

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion in response to an international campaign to stop rape and gender violence in conflict.

I move:

That this House condemns sexual violence and conflict and calls on the government to:

- (a) reaffirm Canada's commitment to implement United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security and Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security;
- (b) play a leadership role in international efforts to end sexual violence and bring about accountability and support survivors of sexual violence in conflict through Canadian diplomacy and development assistance;
- and (c) support the efforts of organizations to draw attention to and denounce sexual violence.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[Translation]

PETITIONS

CANADA PERIODICAL FUND

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by over 3,000 members and supporters of the Franco-Manitoban community.

This petition is addressed to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages and reads as follows: "We, the undersigned, residents of Canada, wish to draw your attention to statements made in the House of Commons on May 3 in which you confirmed that your government has an ongoing, clear and firm commitment to protect periodicals throughout the regions of Canada wherever there are official language minority communities." Unfortunately, we have noted that the new funding formula for the Canada periodical fund does not take into account the situation facing our French-language weekly paper, *La Liberté*, whose funding will be cut by 50% by 2013. This decision will have a severe impact on our [Franco-Manitoban] community and will lead to the slow and inexorable demise of *La Liberté*. *La Liberté* has been Manitoba's only French-language newspaper for 99 years. On May 3, you said, "If it raises concerns, we could look into the regulations for our programming and if these concerns are justified, we could address them." That is

why we are confident that you will take our concerns seriously and reinstate funding for our newspaper.

"Therefore, we the petitioners call on the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages...to reinstate funding and correct the funding formula going forward so that *La Liberté*, Manitoba's only French-language newspaper, can continue in future to offer the high level of service it has been providing for the past 99 years."

[English]

The Speaker: I see many members rising and I am sure that some members have more than one petition to present. I am going to strictly adhere to the rule regarding not making a speech when presenting a petition, so we will have brief summaries of the petitions and then move on very quickly.

The hon. member for Crowfoot.

● (1530)

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today with two petitions from 225 of my constituents from different parts of my riding in Alberta, such as Drumheller, Chestermere, Calgary, Okotoks, Rosebud, Morrin and Hussar.

According to current legislation, a child does not become human until the moment of complete birth. The lack of legislation in this area is a concern to these constituents.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to look into the definition of a human being. They would like to see an amendment to section 223—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to present a petition on behalf of 50 residents of Regina, Saskatchewan who want to save the essential services of their public broadcaster the CBC/Radio-Canada.

The petitioners state that the public consciousness of this country and the dialogue that we have from coast to coast to coast is maintained by the CBC. They want the government to invest—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

DRIVE CHANGE DAY

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of residents and business owners across Canada who ask that August 21 be declared Drive Change Day, a nationally recognized day when people show their support for positive change across Canada.

Inasmuch as Earth Day has become a global phenomenon where individuals come together to plant trees and conduct cleanups, these signatories are asking that August 21 be a day for social change.

Routine Proceedings

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present a petition that was signed by residents of my riding of Newton—North Delta. This petition is signed by 717 individuals who are calling for an amendment of section 223 of our Criminal Code.

I thank these residents for their engagement with the political process. I fully support the rights of all citizens to voice their opinions and to have their voices heard in this chamber through the process of petitions.

Therefore, I am pleased to table—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to present a petition regarding Canada's leading freshwater research station signed by constituents of the riding of Kenora.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of ELA to the Government of Canada's mandate to study, preserve and protect aquatic ecosystems.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from residents in metro Vancouver, including my riding of Vancouver Quadra, who are against the shutting down of funding for Canada's Experimental Lakes Area.

The petitioners call upon the government to recognize the importance of the ELA and to reverse this decision.

ABORTION

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of constituents who present a petition with regard to how Canada is the only nation in the western world, along with China and North Korea, without any laws restricting abortion. They see the Supreme Court as giving Parliament the responsibility to enact legislation. They call upon the House to speedily enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present a petition today from people all over the Golden Horseshoe who are concerned that Canada is abandoning its mandate to study, preserve and protect aquatic ecosystems by closing the Experimental Lakes Area research station.

The petitioners point out that the ELA is a unique world-renowned facility for freshwater research and education. Since 1968, it has been a global leader in conducting whole ecosystem experiments which have been critical in shaping environmental policy and understanding human impacts on lakes and fish.

It is for those reasons that the petitioners call upon the government to continue to staff and provide—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville.

COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from Canadians and some constituents in my riding of Leeds—Grenville who are concerned about the community access program.

The petitioners wish for the government to ensure that there is access to computers, the Internet and the training and support needed to use them effectively for all low-income and marginalized people in Canada.

[*Translation*]

PENSIONS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition concerning the government's decision to raise the age of eligibility for old age security from 65 to 67.

[*English*]

The petitioners are of the view that this is a very bad move, it is undemocratic, it is unfair and it is unnecessary—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House to present a petition signed by 604 residents of Acadie—Bathurst who oppose the changes the government wants to make to employment insurance in Bill C-38. These changes will not make the system more accessible. Instead, they will further penalize seasonal workers and make Canadians poorer.

[*English*]

ABORTION

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my petition is in regard to Motion No. 312 put forward by the member for Kitchener Centre. I present that petition today.

● (1535)

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from hundreds of representatives throughout southern Ontario, Toronto and Hamilton. They are representatives for the 100,000-strong Serbian community in Canada.

The petitioners call upon the Canadian government to join with the European Union and the 25 European states that have waived visa requirements for Serbian visitors. They call upon the Canadian government to do the same thing, to waive the visa requirements for visitors to Canada from Serbia.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

ABORTION

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition signed by nearly 200 people who live in my riding of Wellington—Halton Hills.

[English]

The petitioners are in support of Motion No. 312 and ask Parliament to amend section 223 of the Criminal Code.

FISHERIES ACT

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

My first petition calls upon the House of Commons to keep section 34(1) of the Fisheries Act as it is currently written with its emphasis on habitat protection.

LABELLING OF FUR PRODUCTS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition calls upon the House of Commons to make it mandatory that all fur products being imported or sold in Canada should have labelling.

PENSIONS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my third petition calls upon Parliament to reject changes to the age of eligibility for OAS and to increase OAS and GIS to end senior poverty.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have petitions from hundreds of people all across Canada calling on the government to amend the Criminal Code to criminalize the purchasing of sexual services and provide support to those who desire to leave prostitution.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table two petitions today.

The first petition is on behalf of residents from Kenora, Ontario who want to save the Experimental Lakes Area from being shut down. The petitioners are very concerned that the loss of such a unique research site will be a blow to the Kenora region, the country and the world.

The second petition is also on the ELA but it is from residents of Saskatchewan. There are dozens of residents from Saskatchewan who care about this station far away from them.

AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MUSIC.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present a petition created by a constituent of mine, Michael Dilliot, and signed by almost 100 area residents who call for the support of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music.

Mr. Dilliot recognizes that music is a universal language that can play a wonderful and important part in a child's life. While we take

music training for granted in the west, in Afghanistan an instrument usually costs far beyond what a typical Afghan family can afford.

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition regarding the Kinder Morgan pipeline that runs from Edmonton to my riding of Burnaby—Douglas. The signers to this petition are opposed to the project. Although I am not allowed to comment on the content of the petition and how I feel about it, I know that many residents in my riding are also opposed to this. I would encourage members who are interested to contact my office for more information.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today from concerned citizens in the Wallaceburg area and in the Chatham area who are asking for support for Motion M-312 and that a special subcommittee be appointed to review the declaration in section 223 of the Criminal Code, which states that a child becomes a human being only at the moment of complete birth.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to present these petitions from my constituents who want to save the Experimental Lakes Area in Kenora. They recognize the importance of the ELA to the Government of Canada's mandate to study, preserve and protect aquatic ecosystems and they want the government to reverse its decision to close the ELA station.

ABORTION

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting four petitions today with hundreds of signatures from northern Alberta, from communities such as Lac La Biche, High Prairie, Fort McMurray, Slave Lake and Boyle. The petitioners ask for Parliament to restrict abortion to the greatest extent possible.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition from residents of Toronto who are calling on the Government of Canada to introduce a regulation to mandate the installation of side guards on heavy trucks, as recommended by the Ontario chief coroner's report on cyclist death, as side guards reduce cyclist death by 60% according to a British study.

Routine Proceedings

SRI LANKA

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on behalf of over 400 petitioners in the greater Toronto area. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to urge the United Nations to immediately establish an independent, international and impartial mechanism to ensure truth, accountability and justice in Sri Lanka following the end of the civil war there.

[*Translation*]

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from across this country who are calling on the government to maintain the definition of fish habitat as it currently exists in the Fisheries Act.

They are extremely concerned about the future quality of fish habitat. It is very disturbing.

• (1540)

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in support of the organization Development and Peace. The petitioners remind us that Canada is contributing only 0.34% of its GDP to international aid. They are calling on the government to maintain international aid and increase funding to Development and Peace.

[*English*]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition is from hundreds of petitioners who would like the government to ban the sale and use of shock collars on animals. They point out that the use of electric shocks on any sentient being is inhumane and poses serious risks to an animal's well-being. They point out the SPCA and humane societies and animal experts support that.

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from petitioners all over British Columbia who would like to keep section 35(1) of the Fisheries Act so that we can ensure that fish habitat protection is kept in our legislation to preserve our fish stocks.

[*Translation*]

KATIMAVIK

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to present another petition calling on the government to maintain funding for Katimavik and to recognize all its valuable contributions to the Canadian people.

[*English*]

FISHERIES ACT

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

One is from thousands of petitioners from British Columbia who call on the House to keep subsection 35(1) of the Fisheries Act as it is currently written with its emphasis on habitat protection.

PENSIONS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, the petitioners call on the Parliament of Canada to maintain the funding for old age security and make the requisite investments in the guaranteed income supplement to lift every senior out of poverty in this country.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of more than 2,500 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are calling on the Government of Canada to reinstate the funding necessary to support live music recording at CBC Newfoundland and Labrador so that our regional voice will not be silenced and our music, culture and history will continue to be heard.

[*Translation*]

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by about one hundred Canadians who want to preserve section 35 of the Fisheries Act.

This is an important issue in my riding because it is a land of lakes and rivers.

[*English*]

KATIMAVIK

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan and Ontario who are calling upon the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister to continue to allocate funding to the Katimavik program, as it is an important program that benefits youth, communities and many non-profit organizations across the country.

SRI LANKA

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from Canadian citizens asking the Government of Canada to urge the United Nations to establish an independent inquiry mechanism to ensure truth, accountability and justice in Sri Lanka.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 655 and 656.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 655—**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With regard to social housing, given that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's social housing agreements are about to expire, what is the government's plan to address the expected shortfall of social housing rental stocks?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, affordable and social housing continues to be a priority for the Government of Canada. The federal government has made significant investments in housing and has a multi-pronged approach to facilitate access to safe, quality and affordable housing across the country.

The government works closely with provinces and territories, municipalities, national aboriginal organizations and other housing stakeholders to address housing needs across a broad continuum, from shelter and supports for the homeless and other Canadians at risk to supportive and adapted housing to help seniors or those with disabilities live more independently to affordable housing for low-income households.

The federal government also provides ongoing subsidies for existing social housing in Canada through its long-term operating agreements of 25 to 50 years with provincial and territorial governments and social housing owners/providers. These agreements generally expire as mortgages on the properties are paid off, over the next 25 years.

A significant portion, approximately 80%, of the existing social housing stock receiving federal assistance is under provincial or territorial administration, with the majority being owned and managed by provinces and territories. The remaining 20% of the social housing stock is federally administered.

In 1993, the Government of Canada ceased making new long-term commitments in social housing, except for housing in first nations communities; however, it continues to honour its long-term obligations under existing agreements. Currently, the government invests \$1.7 billion a year in support of almost 605,000 households living in existing social housing, with provinces and territories also contributing funding to this housing stock.

A federal, provincial and territorial working group has been examining the viability of the existing social housing stock.

The Government of Canada has also made other significant investments to increase the supply of safe, affordable and adequate housing in recent years.

As part of Canada's economic action plan, the federal government invested \$2 billion over two years to create new and renovate existing social housing. Furthermore, on July 4, 2011, federal, provincial and territorial governments announced a combined investment of some \$1.4 billion toward reducing the number of Canadians in housing need under the new investment in affordable housing 2011-2014 framework agreement. Under the framework, provinces and territories continue to have responsibility for the design and delivery of social and affordable housing programs and have the flexibility to invest in a range of programs and initiatives that improve access to affordable housing that is sound, suitable and sustainable.

The new investment in affordable housing framework agreement with the provinces and territories continues until 2014.

Question No. 656—**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With regard to government communications: (a) what is the rationale for using the phrase "Harper Government" in press releases issued by government departments and agencies; (b) is there a government-wide policy on the use of the phrase "Harper Government" in press releases issued by government departments and agencies; (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, (i) in what directive, order, memorandum or other document is the policy set out or promulgated, (ii) who issued that policy, (iii) what is the date and file number of any related document; (d) if the answer to (b) is negative, does any individual department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity have a policy on the use of the phrase "Harper Government" in press releases; and (e) for any department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity for which the answer to (d) is affirmative, (i) in what directive, order, memorandum or other document is the policy set out or promulgated, (ii) who issued that policy, (iii) what is the date and file number of any related document?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada does not prohibit or prescribe the phrase "Harper Government" in press releases issued by government departments and agencies. There is no other government-wide policy on communications and no government-wide policy on the use of the phrase "Harper Government" in press releases issued by federal government departments and agencies.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if Questions Nos. 653, 654, 657 and 658 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 653—**Mr. Philip Toone:**

With regard to Canada's Small Craft Harbours (SCH): (a) what was the amount of funding allocated to each harbour authority for SCH by the government between 2000 and 2011 for Quebec and for New Brunswick, broken down by (i) province, (ii) region, (iii) municipality, (iv) harbour authority, (v) SCH; (b) for each harbour authority for SCH in Quebec and in New Brunswick, what portion of the funds allocated was directed to SCH maintenance and what portion was directed to SCH management between 2000 and 2011, broken down by (i) province, (ii) region, (iii) municipality, (iv) harbour authority, (v) SCH; (c) for each harbour authority for SCH in Quebec and in New Brunswick, what is the amount of funding the government plans to allocate between 2012 and 2017, broken down by (i) province, (ii) region, (iii) municipality, (iv) harbour authority, (v) SCH; (d) for each harbour authority for SCH in Quebec and in New Brunswick, what portion of the funds allocated will be directed to SCH maintenance and what portion will be directed to SCH management between 2012 and 2017, broken down by (i) province, (ii) region, (iii) municipality, (iv) harbour authority, (v) SCH; (e) for each harbour authority for SCH in Quebec and in New Brunswick, have the budgetary and administrative requirements, specifically the audits and financial reports required by Fisheries and Oceans Canada of harbour authorities, changed since 2005 and, if so, what were the requirements before and after 2005 and why were they changed, broken down by (i) province, (ii) region, (iii) municipality, (iv) harbour authority; (f) for each SCH in Quebec and in New Brunswick, which ones are considered by the government to be critical to the fishing industry and which ones non-critical to the fishing industry, broken down by (i) province, (ii) region, (iii) municipality, (iv) harbour authority, (v) SCH; (g) what criteria are used by the government to determine whether a SCH is critical or non-critical to the fishing industry; and (h) for each SCH in Quebec and in New Brunswick, what was the percentage of maintenance costs covered by the government and what was the percentage covered by SCH users between 2000 and 2011, broken down by (i) province, (ii) region, (iii) municipality, (iv) harbour authority, (v) SCH?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 654—**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With regard to government communications: (a) what is the (i) headline or subject line, (ii) date, (iii) file or code-number, (iv) subject-matter of each press release which contains the phrase "Harper government" issued by each government department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body since February 6, 2006; (b) for each such press release, was it distributed (i) on the web site of the issuing department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, (ii) on Marketwire, (iii) on Canada Newswire (CNW), (iv) on any other commercial wire or distribution service, specifying which such service; and (c) for each press release distributed by a commercial wire or distribution service mentioned in (b)(ii) through (b)(iv), what was the cost of using that service?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 657—**Ms. Manon Perreault:**

With regard to federal disability programs: (a) what is the amount of spending in the last five fiscal years, broken down by year and province, for the (i) Athlete Assistance Program, (ii) Canadian Deaf Sports Association, (iii) Canadian Paralympic Committee, (iv) federal/provincial/territorial projects related to sports programs for people with disabilities, (v) funding for national sport organizations' Long-Term Athlete Development Model, (vi) Special Olympics sports funding, (vii) disability component of sports participation funding, (viii) Canadian Institutes of Health Research funding related to disabilities, (ix) Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities, (x) Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program – Secondary/Garden Suite, (xi) national transportation accessibility, (xii) Enabling Accessibility Fund, (xiii) disability component of Social Development Partnerships, (xiv) Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, (xv) Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, (xvi) Permanent Disability Benefit, (xvii) Assisted Living Program, (xviii) Special Education Program for First Nations students, (xix) Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program; (b) what is the projected spending for the next three fiscal years, broken down by year and province, for (i) Athlete Assistance Program, (ii) Canadian Deaf Sports Association, (iii) Canadian Paralympic Committee, (iv) federal/provincial/territorial projects related to sports programs for people with disabilities, (v) funding for national sport organizations' Long-Term Athlete Development Model, (vi) Special Olympics sports funding, (vii) disability component of sports participation funding, (viii) Canadian Institutes of Health Research funding related to disabilities, (ix) Residential

Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities, (x) Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program – Secondary/Garden Suite, (xi) national transportation accessibility, (xii) Enabling Accessibility Fund, (xiii) Disability component of Social Development Partnerships, (xiv) Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, (xv) Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, (xvi) Permanent Disability Benefit, (xvii) Assisted Living Program, (xviii) Special Education Program for First Nations students, (xix) Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program; and (c) with respect to successful applications for funding in the last five fiscal years, what was the location and value of each project, broken down by year, province and federal electoral district for the (i) Athlete Assistance Program, (ii) funding for national sport organizations' Long-Term Athlete Development Model, (iii) disability component of sports participation funding, (iv) Enabling Accessibility Fund, (v) disability component of Social Development Partnerships, (vi) Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, (vii) Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 658—**Ms. Manon Perreault:**

With regard to the Initiative for Equitable Library Access: (a) what is the amount of government spending in the past five fiscal years, broken down by year; (b) what strategy did Library and Archives Canada develop to meet the long-term library and information access needs of Canadians with print disabilities; (c) did Library and Archives Canada present the government with a final report on the outcomes and recommendations of the Initiative and, if so, what is its title and date of submission; and (d) when and for what reasons did the government's participation in the Initiative end?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

* * *

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Speaker: The Chair would like to take a moment to provide some information to the House regarding the management of private members' business.

[Translation]

As members know, after the order of precedence is replenished, the Chair reviews the new items so as to alert the House to bills which at first glance appear to impinge on the financial prerogative of the crown. This allows members the opportunity to intervene in a timely fashion to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

Government Orders

[English]

Accordingly, following the June 4, 2012, replenishment of the order of precedence with 15 new items, I wish to inform the House that there is one bill that gives the Chair some concern as to the spending provisions it contemplates. It is Bill C-420, An Act to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young Persons in Canada, standing in the name of the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

I would encourage hon. members who would like to make arguments regarding the need for a royal recommendation for this bill, or any of the other bills now on the order of precedence, to do so at an early opportunity.

● (1545)

[Translation]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED USURPATION OF TITLE

The Speaker: Yesterday the hon. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada raised a question of privilege to object to the continuing presence on the Internet of the website of his predecessor as the member for Labrador.

I took the matter under advisement and undertook to return to the House.

I can now inform the House that the website is no longer available on the Internet.

Accordingly, the Chair considers the matter to be closed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC) moved that Bill C-27, An Act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of First Nations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, good governance is the cornerstone of healthy and progressive societies. It is a prerequisite to achieving both social and economic success, so today I am proud to speak in support of new legislation that will foster strong and accountable first nation governments.

With this proposed legislation, community members will know what their leaders are being paid. As well, they will have clear information about the financial decisions made by their leaders so that they can make informed decisions about the future of their community at community meetings and elections.

This transparency will also provide potential investors with the confidence to enter into economic development investments with first nations. Economic development brings jobs and revenues that the community can then use to invest in activities, programs and infrastructure to improve the well-being of all its members.

Under this proposed legislation, first nation governments will be required to prepare consolidated financial statements and post them on a website each year, along with the salaries and expenses of the chief and councillors. This will provide easy access to important information about the first nation by its members and by entities interested in working, investing or partnering with the first nation.

Before I elaborate on both the necessity and the benefits of the first nations financial transparency act, I would like to assure my hon. colleagues that what we are asking of first nations is nothing more than we ask of ourselves.

Nothing better exemplifies our commitment to openness than the way we disclose salaries of elected officials paid from the public purse, everyone from the Prime Minister and members of cabinet to members of Parliament. All of us as parliamentarians fully disclose our salaries and special allowances to the public. Canadians can easily find all of these facts and figures, since the Federal Accountability Act also increased the public's access to information about government activities.

The Government of Canada posts its financial statements on the Finance Canada website. Individual federal departments and agencies disclose travel and hospitality expenses for executives on their websites as well.

We are not alone in making such information available to the public. Most provinces and territories release such information. Salary levels for members of their legislatures as well as supplementary amounts paid for taking on additional duties are posted on their websites, and in some cases, such as Manitoba and Ontario, public sector compensation in excess of \$50,000 and of \$100,000 respectively is also disclosed to the public.

Many municipalities across Canada post their financial statements and disclose information about compensation to their employees on the Internet as well.

While many first nation governments have put in place sound accountability practices that ensure transparency, there is no legal requirement for them to release this information to community members, and many do not. While many governments in Canada post this information on the Internet, recent research by my department found that as of February 2012, only a limited number of the more than 350 first nations that have their own website have done so.

Clarity about government expenditure and results is vitally important to securing public trust. Visible evidence of effective first nation accounting practices would reassure community members and potential investors that first nation leaders are spending their community funds prudently and appropriately.

Government Orders

Under current funding agreements, first nations councils are already required to provide my department with audited consolidated financial statements and schedules of remuneration for all elected officials, so we are not creating additional paperwork that would add to their reporting burden.

At the moment there are no statutory or regulatory guidelines related to transparency for first nations governments; consequently, community members cannot easily hold their leaders to account. The manifestation of democratic rights that other Canadians take for granted is not in place for many first nation members.

● (1550)

Currently the only recourse for community members who are denied access to a first nations audited consolidated financial statement is to appeal to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. We receive many complaints.

Some first nations do not willingly release such information when requested. In these cases, the only option for complainants at the moment is to bring the issue to my attention. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has sole authority to compel a first nation to release financial information. This puts me in the position of perpetuating a sense of paternalism that both first nations and our government are working to overcome.

As it is now, when first nation members raise concerns about the non-disclosure of financial information, we respond. My officials work with the band governments to have it released, and if these efforts fail, the department then provides the information directly to the individual member who is requesting it.

The current system is unnecessarily complicated and, quite frankly, undemocratic. It is entirely reasonable for first nation members to expect their governments to meet the same basic accountability standards as other governments in Canada.

I have no doubt that most first nations strive to be accountable to their members and to the federal government. Some first nations go to great lengths to inform members and the public about the operations of their governments, displaying the information on their community websites or posting it in band offices. However, others have not developed and adopted accountability practices. This erodes the stability of their governments and communities. It also tends to undermine Canadians' confidence in first nation governments generally.

In addition, such cases give potential investors reason to hesitate when debating whether to enter into business arrangements with first nations. Before signing a partnership, the private sector wants assurance it is dealing with a reliable and reputable government. If there are doubts, a business may well decide against a joint venture, denying communities the possibility of new jobs and increased prosperity.

Our government is committed to putting in place the legislative frameworks that will foster strong, self-sufficient and accountable first nation governments. We also want to provide the information to first nations members that is available to other Canadians. This will help to build stronger relationships and ultimately create a healthier environment for investment and economic development.

We have developed Bill C-27 in fulfilment of our pledge in the 2011 Speech from the Throne. It will fill the current legislative gap and rectify the many shortcomings I have outlined.

The first nations financial transparency act builds on the excellent work of my colleague, the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, whose former private member's bill, Bill C-575, was introduced in the fall of 2010 to enhance the financial transparency of first nation governments. It called for the publication of information regarding chiefs' and councillors' pay.

Bill C-27 goes further. It expands the scope of information to be publicly disclosed to include first nations audited consolidated financial statements. The act would entrench in law a financial accountability framework for first nations consistent with the standards observed by other governments across the country.

A further improvement is the clear requirement that first nations adopt the rules established by professional accounting bodies, such as the Public Sector Accounting Board of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

● (1555)

Effective the first financial year after the act comes into force, first nation governments would be required to prepare audited consolidated financial statements and post them on a website each year along with the salaries and expenses of their chief and councillors.

First nations would have 120 days following the end of the financial year to post this information either on the first nation's website or the website of a tribal council or partner organization.

Audited consolidated financial statements and schedules of remuneration details for more than 600 first nations would also be published on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's website.

Easy access to this important information would ensure fairness and accountability, something community members quite rightfully expect.

Apart from making financial information readily available to community members, it would also simplify the process for potential investors to acquire the information they need to make business decisions. Data collected from first nations would also be posted on our departmental website. This would allow firms to go to a single source to compare one community with another when considering a potential joint venture.

Another new requirement under Bill C-27 would give first nation members better remedies if their governments fail to honour their obligation to open the books to the public.

Government Orders

If a first nation does not post the required financial data as required, anyone would be able to apply to a superior court to compel the first nation to publish the information. Once the information is released, it would also be posted on my department's website. This provision would allow a first nation member to hold the leadership accountable.

First nations governments have long advocated for more flexible funding arrangements. They want greater autonomy in allocating the money received under federal funding transfers. This legislation would build upon and recognize the capacity of first nation governments, enabling them to demonstrate that they are accountable governments that respect the basic principles of financial transparency.

This would be a key factor for my department in determining which communities are the best candidates for more flexible funding options. Building upon a first nation's demonstrated abilities and increased accountability, there would be greater opportunities to move from contribution funding to grants in some areas of programming.

I should point out that these same accountability requirements already apply to first nations that have signed self-government agreements. For example, the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement requires that the first nation develop a financial administration system with standards comparable to those generally accepted for governments in Canada. The Nisga'a Financial Administration Act stipulates that the first nation make its financial statements available for inspection by members, including posting the statements on the Internet.

Because self-governing first nations are already demonstrating this high standard within the context of the self-government agreements, they are exempt from Bill C-27.

When first nation governments manage their finances in line with practices in other jurisdictions, it instills confidence in the business community and can provide economic development opportunities in the community. An open, accountable government is a stable government, removing uncertainty that might discourage investment.

This is being proven repeatedly in communities with settled land claims and self-government agreements. Increasingly, they are entering into joint ventures with the private sector to create jobs and generate economic growth in their communities. We are confident that Bill C-27 would help to make this happen in a broader way.

This proposed act would guarantee to community members as well as other levels of government, the business community and all Canadians that first nation governments are effective and transparent in their business dealings.

• (1600)

Once Bill C-27 becomes law, first nations citizens would be able to participate more fully in the democratic process, receive information they require and have the assurance of redress where required.

In conclusion, I am asking all parties to stand behind this very necessary and overdue legislation.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for presenting the rationale for the bill. I have three questions for him.

First, in section 6.(1) it indicates that any entity that is controlled by the first nations would be required to disclose. The minister made a comment about the importance of economic development and of course many of these entities are businesses. What is the rationale for perhaps undermining the competitive nature of that?

My second question is about section 11. It indicates that any person, including the minister, may apply to a superior court. Why is that any person beyond a first nation; why is it any person?

The third question I have for him is under section 13.(1)(b). It was interesting to hear the minister say that they want to move beyond paternalism and yet 13.(1)(b) talks about the fact that the minister will have the ability to withhold moneys payable as a grant or contribution to a first nation. My question is: How does that change the paternalistic relationship he referred to in his speech?

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we need legislation and regulations is because it is impossible to enforce things when it is just policy. That is the way things operate currently.

On the first question that was posed by the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan about disclosure of band-owned entities, it applies only to the moneys that would accrue to chief and council for salaries. In no way are we attempting through this legislation to have any transparency or disclosure for, let us say, companies or other entities that are owned by the band council. I do know that this has been quite a subject of discussion. There has been some good input received and we will ensure, through the committee process, that the particular clause is given a good airing.

Regarding the other questions, which really relate to the role of the department and the minister, there is an ongoing role for the minister in case things really go sideways, but that is rarely, if ever, used. However, there has to be some ultimate responsibility to the taxpayer.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister's announcement of the bill was done at the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. Chief Darcy Bear provided the aboriginal affairs committee with a list of suggested amendments to the bill when the committee travelled there. Will the minister entertain those amendments and will they be put forward as government amendments?

• (1605)

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is my strong expectation that the Whitecap Dakota chief will appear at committee. It is my anticipation that he will be talking about proposed amendments to the legislation. We will look very seriously at these as progressive amendments, given that this first nation has been transparent and accountable for many years and gives us a good example of why this legislation is so essential.

Government Orders

I cannot give an absolute answer at this point. I do not want to preempt the committee, but we will look very seriously at the proposed amendments.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the minister for his speech and for his leadership in this portfolio. I have had the opportunity to be on the standing committee and am now the parliamentary secretary under his tutelage. I consider it an honour to be able to participate in this debate and to participate in a number of progressive activities we are involved in with first nations communities.

My question deals with a comment the minister made in his speech with respect to this being a derivation of Bill C-575, the private member's bill introduced in the last Parliament. The minister seemed to suggest that this bill is a little farther along the lines of enhanced accountability.

I wonder if he might comment a little more on the proposed legislation in terms of how it will more comprehensively address financial transparency by expanding the scope of information contained in this bill. What is the difference?

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the private member's bill from the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar focused exclusively on the subject of chief and councillor salaries and remuneration.

What we are talking about in this bill expands beyond that into the area of the consolidated revenue statements for the more than 600 first nations in the country.

We are not creating additional paperwork. Those statements are already prepared. As stated in an announcement in the past few days, we have a standard reporting format that will actually simplify that paperwork even more. It fits quite well with this legislation.

We are broadening, because we are talking about all of the financial disclosures for first nations. I think this is going to lead us into a much better place for economic development and for the health of communities.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very disturbed by the process that surrounds this legislation. I have seen, in media commentary, that the Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo first learned of this legislation by Twitter.

When we think about the magnificent apology the Prime Minister offered to first nations over the residential school issue on the floor of this very chamber, in that apology there was a promise to behave better and differently in the future. I think all parties agree that we want to see accountability and transparency in our own operations as government and in first nations governments. However, we cannot get to that by dictating in ways that suggest unilateralism and a lack of respect.

With the first nations themselves moving toward accountability in promises in their own self-government areas, I think it would have been much better, and I still believe it would be better, to have a

partnership moving forward, not dictating to first nations as this bill does.

• (1610)

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we do have support for this legislation from first nations.

I would also remind the member that there was a motion at the Assembly of First Nations in December 2010, which was passed. I cannot remember if it was passed unanimously, but it was strongly supported, that they would voluntarily move into this era of accountability by voluntary measures.

It has now been a significant period of time since December 2010. It appears that there has been very little movement in this direction. We think this legislation is essential to move things where they need to be. It is a very simple exercise in that regard.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-27, an act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of First Nations. I will declare at the outset that New Democrats will be opposing the legislation.

I will read from the legislative summary and I want to thank the analysts for the very good work they did in providing a good background on this bill.

The summary states:

The proposed legislation...applies to over 600 first nations communities defined as "Indian bands" under the Indian Act, provides a legislative basis for the preparation and disclosure of First Nations' audited consolidated financial statements and of remuneration, including salaries and expenses, that a First Nation or any entity that it controls pays to its elected officials.

I will come back to the entity because it is an important reason for us to oppose the legislation.

I want to start, though, by reminding the House and people who may be listening about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the government indicated it would support and take some steps in implementing it in Canada. Of course, we have seen no action on that.

Article 4 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says that indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions. This is an important aspect in that this is about the right to autonomy and self-determination. This bill was not developed in consultation with first nations and it certainly does not reflect that right to autonomy and self-determination.

I will provide a bit of background. When we listen to the Conservatives, sometimes we think that first nations do not do any reporting. I have to point out that first nations governments currently do all kinds of reporting and audited statements.

I want to refer to a couple of pieces out of the legislative summary. It states:

First Nations and the federal government are both subject to various policy-based and legal requirements regarding the management and expenditure of federal public funds...

Through various federal reporting requirements, First Nations are also accountable to AANDC for the federal public funds they receive.

Government Orders

In turn, through the annual audit cycle and program reports, AANDC is answerable to Parliament and the Canadian public.

AANDC's expenditures are listed in the Public Accounts of Canada, as are contribution agreements signed with First Nations.

The summary goes on to talk about current legal requirements and states:

—the Indian Bands Revenue Moneys Regulations require, in part, that a band's financial statements be audited annually, and that the auditor's report be posted “in conspicuous places on the Band Reserve for examination by members of the Band.

There have been some questions about the whole issue around access to information, and there is an analysis. I want to touch on one point on the Access to Information Act. This is an important piece of what first nations are being asked to disclose versus what other non-public sector organizations are being asked to disclose.

The summary goes on to state:

Section 20(1)(b) of the Access to Information Act prohibits a government institution from disclosing financial information provided to it by a third party who consistently treats this information as confidential. In *Montana Band of Indians v. Canada*...the Federal Court held that First Nations' financial statements are confidential information within the meaning of section 20(1)(b) of the Access to Information Act, and therefore are not subject to public disclosure. However, in *Sawridge Band v. Canada*...the Federal Court of Appeal held that these financial statements are not confidential vis-à-vis the members of the First Nations band, since band members may review their own band's financial statements under the Indian Bands Revenue Moneys Regulations.

This is important because these court cases indicate that first nations have a right to have this information disclosed to them, but it is not the right of the general public to have access to what could be confidential information.

Under the section titled “Current Policy-Based Requirements”, it states:

Under the *Year-End Financial Reporting Handbook*, First Nations must submit to AANDC annual audited consolidated financial statements for the public funds provided to them. These include salaries, honoraria and travel expenses for all elected, appointed and senior unelected band officials. The latter includes unelected positions such as those of the executive director, band manager, senior program director and manager. First Nations are also required to release these statements to their membership.

● (1615)

We already have rules in place that govern the release of this information. We heard the minister say that this was policy but now the government needed legislation. I would argue that the minister already has the authority, and in fact the minister admitted he has the authority, to request this information when it is not being submitted.

In December 2006, we had a report commissioned by the Conservatives called “From Red Tape to Clear Results: the Report of the Independent Blue Ribbon Panel on Grant and Contribution Programs”. This report recommended a couple of general principles around grants and contributions, which included:

1) Respect the recipients—they are partners in a shared public purpose. Grant and contribution programs should be citizen-focussed. The programs should be made accessible, understandable and usable.

The key thing in that is “Respect the recipients”.

The second guiding principle states:

2) Dramatically simplify the reporting and accountability regime—it should reflect the circumstances and capacities of recipients and the real needs of the government and Parliament.

Further in the report, the authors specifically dealt with first nations, Inuit, Métis and other aboriginal organizations by saying:

Fiscal arrangements with First Nations governments are complex, reflecting not only the varied circumstances of the 630 First Nations in Canada but also the fact that payments to First Nations governments are (or ought to be) more like intergovernmental transfers than typical grants and contributions.

Intergovernmental transfers would actually respect that nation-to-nation status that I believe Canada has agreed to through the negotiation of treaties.

The report goes on to say:

The panel is of the view that mechanisms other than grants or contributions for the funding of essential services such as health, education and social assistance in reserve communities are needed...

Then it went on to say that it was outside of its mandate.

The report did say:

Nevertheless, in all our consultations...we were reminded that the current practice of treating these kinds of transfers to First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Aboriginal organizations as more or less standard contribution arrangements is fraught with problems and leads to a costly and often unnecessary reporting burden on recipients.

I come back to the fact that an auditor general looked at the kind of reporting that was required from first nations communities and, over and over again, the auditor general continued to talk about the fact that first nations were required to do all kinds of reports.

The minister spoke about the Whitecap First Nation, and I will refer to that for one second. It came up in a question. The aboriginal affairs committee was fortunate enough to visit with the Whitecap Dakota First Nation and look at the economic enterprises. The minister has argued that part of this would lead to better economic development. The Whitecap Dakota has a very different take on that, and it has raised concerns with the other entity that I referred to in section 6(1) of the act. There are many first nations like this, but Whitecap is an example of a first nation that has in place stellar reporting requirements.

The letter states:

—that ensure the members of Whitecap are fully apprised of Whitecap's financial position. In this regard, Whitecap has approved 20 unqualified audits and has implemented a system of public review of the audits. In addition, as you are aware, Whitecap has also created the Whitecap Council Compensation Commission that has the specific mandate of ensuring that the compensation received by the Whitecap Council is fair, equitable and accountable.

The letter goes on to say that there are some concerns about the fact that salaries or expenses are lumped into a definition of remuneration which would have the potential to mislead people as to what his salary actually was. Of course members in the House have salaries and expenses reported quite separately.

It further states:

Bill C-27 on the other hand goes beyond the reporting related to funds received from the Federal Government. It would also appear to extend beyond the requirement for public sector reporting under generally accepted accounting principles as consolidated reporting of remuneration would include any business entities controlled by a First Nation.

Government Orders

The minister said that would only be salaries paid by these entities, but why would the federal government be interfering in a business project where a band member would be receiving remuneration from that business entity? If the Conservatives were truly concerned about economic development, they would focus on providing first nations the tools and resources they need to do that economic development, rather than looking at what a chief or council member was paid from another business entity. I am not clear why the minister is thinking that enhances economic development.

● (1620)

Many of the first nations that we visited, these were business partnerships. A private sector company works with a first nations company in a business partnership relationship, and some of these businesses may not want some of this information published for competitive reasons. Therefore, I would urge the government to take a hard look at this.

It was also interesting to hear the minister talk about openness and accountability. In his speech he said, “open accountable government is a stable government”. The Conservatives are setting up a double standards. On the one hand, they are saying that first nations have to do more, report more, be more open and accountable, despite the fact that they file almost 200 reports every year to the federal government. The Auditor General has identified that. On the other hand, they will not come clean when it comes to releasing their own facts and figures about the budget implementation act, Bill C-38, its costs and what the impact will be on that. In fact, in an article dated June 19, the PBO said that the Conservative government was fighting him on access to information. He said that government-wide budget cuts would impact federal agencies.

If open and accountable government leads to stable government, why is this government not willing to cough up the facts and figures itself? Why does it have two different standards?.

Further on in this article, Mr. Page said, “What does this even mean? Someone has to explain that to me. Does he mean”, referring to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, “we’re having too much impact?” He goes on to say:

Well I ain't apologizing for that. I'm not apologizing for the work we did on the F-35s, on crime bills, or on the fiscal sustainability reports. Those are all papers the government has not produced, that I produced with help from a group of people you could fit around two dinner tables.

For months, Page has been asking for detailed information on the Conservatives' plans for implementing \$5.2 billion in government-wide cuts. Although the overall figure was revealed in the March budget, Canadians remain in the dark in terms of how the cuts will affect programs and services they use.

Page published a legal opinion this week, solicited from a leading constitutional lawyer, that concluded that 64 agencies were withholding information and breaking the law by denying the information.

Later in this article, “Following Page's initial request for information, only 18 of 82 federal organizations came through”.

Surely anybody who is looking at this information would recognize that we have an inequality and an injustice here. On the one hand, the federal government refuses to tell Canadians about the taxpayer money it is using. It is refusing to give that information through the Parliamentary Budget officer. On the other hand, the government is saying that first nations have to be subject to a

different set of rules that the government itself does not respect. Why would they ask anybody in the House to support that bill?

There are a couple of other points I want to raise on this issue. I refer back to the Auditor General's report of 2002, entitled “Streamlining First Nations Reporting to Federal Organizations”. According to the legislative summary for this bill, this 2002 Auditor General's report:

...described existing federal reporting requirements as a “significant burden” on First Nations communities. It estimated that an average of 168 reports—200 in some communities—are required annually by the principal federal bodies that provide funding to First Nations for the delivery of various programs and services. The report suggested, among other things, that federal departments and agencies better coordinate their reporting requirements by streamlining their program authorities, thereby reducing the number of audits and reports required of First Nations.

The legislative summary goes on to say:

In a December 2006 status report on the management of programs for First Nations, the Auditor General found that meaningful action by the federal government was still needed to “reduce the unnecessary reporting burden placed on First Nations communities.” Noting that AANDC alone obtains more than 60,000 reports a year from over 600 First Nations, the report concluded that the resources devoted to the current reporting system could be better used to provide direct support to communities.

Surely, with 60,000 reports and the authority that already resides with the minister, there is sufficient reporting going on. I would refer back to the report from the independent blue ribbon panel as well, which also highlighted the excess reporting required from first nations, Métis, Inuit and other aboriginal organizations.

Again, nothing has happened with this 2006 blue ribbon report. Nothing has happened in terms of looking at the nation-to-nation relationship. Nothing has happened in moving toward intergovernmental transfers instead of the grants and contributions process that is in place.

There is no doubt that at times community members have difficulty in getting the information they need, but the minister has already acknowledged that he does have the authority to get bands to release that information. The question again becomes one of why the minister does not exercise his authority.

In his speech, of course, the minister indicated that exercising that authority is paternalistic. However, it is a bit odd that on the one hand he is saying it would be too paternalistic for the minister to require the reports that are already in the policies under AANDC, while on the other hand the Conservatives have included an administrative measure in Bill C-27 under proposed paragraph 13(1) (b) that the government could:

withhold moneys payable as a grant or contribution to the First Nation under an agreement that is in force on the day on which the breach occurs and that is entered into by the First Nation and Her Majesty in right of Canada as represented by the Minister, solely or in combination with other ministers of the Crown, until the First Nation has complied with its duty

If that is not paternalistic, I do not know what is.

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It sounds to me that on the one hand the minister is saying that he does not want to interfere, but on the other hand, he is making sure that he could interfere with proposed paragraph 13(1)(b).

Another question I asked the minister was on proposed subsection 6(1), which says:

The First Nation must annually prepare a document entitled “schedule of remuneration” that details the remuneration paid by the First Nation or by any entity that it controls, as the case may be, to its chief and each of its councillors, acting in their capacity as such and in any other capacity, including their personal capacity.

The minister indicated that this was just about whatever this entity may pay a chief and councillors. However, that is not as clear as it could be, and it still does not solve the issues around the impact this may have on business relationships.

In sum, there are a couple of very key points in this piece of legislation that certainly raise concerns.

The minister mentioned the Assembly of First Nations in one of his responses. Back in January 2006, the Assembly of First Nations put together an “Accountability for Results” position paper. It outlined a number of principles that, working in conjunction with the federal government, would have helped bolster the accountability and transparency piece.

Part of that was based upon work that the Auditor General had done, which set out five principles: clear roles and responsibilities, clear performance expectations, balanced expectations and capacities, credible reporting, and reasonable review and adjustment.

● (1625)

The Assembly of First Nations and chiefs across this country have indicated a willingness to work with the government on accountability measures, but again, how were first nations included in the drafting of this piece of legislation?

In conclusion, on June 15 there was a press release from the minister saying that the government was strengthening fiscal management and accountability. This press release would indicate that the government already has the power to do many of the things that are included in this legislation, so the big question then becomes why the legislation is needed at this point in time.

It sounds to me as though it is continuing to play a game, saying first nations are not responsible and are not accountable. That is just simply not true.

Rather than bringing forward this piece of legislation that does not address some of the underlying problems with lack of adequate funding and lack of ability to develop some of that capacity, the government brings forward a bill that continues to play to a stereotype in this country.

I urge all members in this House to oppose the legislation.

● (1630)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. colleague across the way knows as well as I do that this is not a paternalistic bill. It is not a bill that has been brought forward with stereotypes in mind.

In fact, in my riding, and I am sure in her riding as well, it is actually first nation community members who are calling for

legislation like this to be in place so that they would be able to access information relative to those people who are in leadership roles within their communities.

I know the hon. member would note that there are currently no statutes or regulations or other mechanisms that would require first nations to give out the information that is being requested by the membership.

There are some communities, certainly, that are being accountable by proactively putting this information onto websites or making it available to their community members.

However, I wonder if the hon. member, having stated that first nations are performing a number of different functions in terms of putting forward reports to the government, agrees that there should be an obligation to bring some of that information to the people who are actually being affected on a day-to-day basis, those people who are members of the community who are desperate for this type of information.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Again, Mr. Speaker, that is just misleading. First Nation chiefs and councils already are required to provide that information. Under the *Year-end Financial Reporting Handbook*, first nations must submit annual audited consolidated financial statements for the public funds provided to them, and that includes salaries, honoraria and so on.

Section 6.4.1 requires first nations to disclose, both to their members and to AANDC, compensation earned or accrued by elected or appointed officials and by unelected senior officials.

Section 6.4.2 stipulates that the amounts of remuneration paid, earned or accrued by elected or appointed officials to be disclosed must be from all sources within the recipient's financial reporting entity, including...some other things.

Clearly there are mechanisms already in place, and the minister himself indicated that he has the authority to require bands to release this information. I know that many band members do have access to those audited financial statements, and they do include salaries, honoraria and expenses that are paid to their chiefs and councils. The mechanism is already in place.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her contribution to this debate and for her excellent work on first nation issues.

Certainly the Algonquins of my riding have not been consulted on this issue and are very concerned about the burden that this would create. I think of Kitigan Zibi, which is an example of transparency. I think what this really is about is the blame game: blame first nations. As well, it is blind. It is a blind because there is a lack of funding and capacity-building for these matters within first nations.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague this: what could we have done or what could we do in order to create this kind of capacity?

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Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, in 2006 the Assembly of First Nations put together a detailed position paper that outlined some of the key principles—principles that were actually developed by the Auditor General—that would have set the table for a respectful relationship and dialogue. The Crown-First Nations Gathering in January would have been an opportunity to kick off a committee of representatives from the Assembly of First Nations and the government to look at implementing some of the principles in that 2006 position paper.

We know that many times the government has switched to terms of “engagement” rather than “consultation” because consultation includes the notion of free, prior and informed consent. Without those elements of free, prior and informed consent, there is not true consultation, and there has not been true consultation on Bill C-27.

• (1635)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her speech. I enjoy working with her on the standing committee. We look forward to not only considering the witnesses and proposed amendments, as the minister said, but we also have had a great working relationship, and it will play itself out with respect to this piece of legislation.

I appreciate the member raising, by way of example, the Whitecap first nation. As a committee, we had a chance to visit them. We saw a tremendous economic success there. It is true that in many instances its members have gone well above and beyond any sense of accountability on so many different levels, and that has been, in no small way, the key to their success.

On a more narrow question of economic development, since we know that all first nations communities are not on that particular level—not in terms of economic success or accountability and transparency per se—would the member then concede or at least agree or acknowledge that this has the potential to put the community in an overall better position and to provide those who do not have some of the benefits that Whitecap has with the potential to have stronger relationships with various private sector stakeholders?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I fail to see how simply requiring first nations—who, by the way, already do all this reporting—to continue to do this reporting is going to contribute to an enhanced capacity for economic development.

If the government was serious about developing capacity, it would have gone back to the AFN paper, which recommended the development of tools needed by both the Government of Canada and first nations to be able to apply the Auditor General's five principles fully and effectively to all policies, programs and services aimed at first nations. This would include the tools needed by first nations governments to provide responsible and accountable government for their constituents. If the government was truly interested in economic development, what it would have actually done is help develop the tools to build capacity.

I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's comments about the committee. Its members do work very effectively together. At committee we have been hearing witnesses involved in economic development say that leadership and first nations' ability to have those tools and develop that capacity is very important. That would have been a better focus for us: to work with first nations in developing those tools and that capacity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question I would like to ask the hon. member is relatively simple.

Over the past few months, we have heard rather urgent reports—that were never contradicted—that first nations communities are having difficulty accessing drinking water, education, health care and decent housing.

Why are we coming back to this discussion of good management? Clearly management is not the issue since there is no budget to manage to meet these essential needs.

Is the government's request regarding this legislation not simply a way to divert attention away from the fact that the government is not doing its duty?

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, over the past year we have had a report on first nations education commissioned by the government in conjunction with the Assembly of First Nations that highlighted the desperate straits of many schools on reserve. It was no surprise to anybody.

There was the crisis in Attawapiskat around housing.

A national survey was just released on the state of health and the social determinants of health in many first nations communities. It talks about drinking water, education and food insecurity.

We have amazing documentation showing what the problems are but we lack the political will to move forward in addressing these serious issues.

First nations, Métis and Inuit are the youngest and fastest growing population in Canada. They are the workforce of the future. It is incumbent upon all of us in the House to invest in them. It is an investment in the future and an investment to ensure we have the skilled labour force that Canada needs to take itself forward on the international stage.

• (1640)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, transparency and proactive disclosure are important goals for all governments, including first nations governments, and these are goals that the Liberal opposition supports.

The Conservatives have a duty to work with first nations to improve mutual accountability, not just impose made in Ottawa legislation.

First nations are willing partners on issues of governance but the government must stop treating them as adversaries. The Conservative government's recent decision to cut the National Centre for First Nations Governance is hardly a promising start.

Despite the Prime Minister's rhetoric at the recent Crown-First Nations Gathering about resetting the relationship, the Conservative government has shown a total disregard for the rights of indigenous people.

The Supreme Court of Canada established that both federal and provincial governments have a duty to consult aboriginal peoples before making decisions that might adversely affect their aboriginal rights and, in some circumstances, accommodate aboriginal peoples concerns.

Further, we must not forget that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada signed, obliges Canada to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples for matters affecting rights, territories and resources.

The government now defends its lack of progress toward implementing the declaration by claiming that it is merely aspirational in nature.

Now the Conservative government is imposing major changes to first nations financial reporting requirements with no significant prior consultation with those who will have to implement these changes.

[*Translation*]

The government has used the same flawed approach on drinking water and on matrimonial real property.

The government did not hold any discussions on the specifics of these bills with stakeholders, never mind the opposition, before tabling them.

[*English*]

We have seen the Conservative government explicitly exclude aboriginal participation from their government's hunting and angling advisory panel despite the fact that they are the only Canadians with constitutionally protected hunting and fishing rights.

The Conservative government is a government that seems to have a pathological aversion to consultation with those impacted by their decisions.

When major changes to employment insurance and health care were recently introduced, it was done without any prior consultation with provincial governments, leaving them to sort out major structural changes in their jurisdictions with no federal-provincial dialogue.

When the Prime Minister announced major changes to our pensions, he did so to a foreign audience without having raised it during the federal election only months before or discussing the proposals with experts, stakeholders or Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The government's approach violates the crown's constitutional duty to consult with first nations before changing laws or policies that affect first nations people, institutions and rights.

[*English*]

The previous Liberal government worked with first nations to develop a broad-based and comprehensive mutual accountability

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framework. This framework was included in the Kelowna accord, which the Conservatives tore up in 2006. The accord established a first nations auditor general, an independent body funded to oversee the accountability framework. This was broadly supported by aboriginal people. It was creative. It was the way forward in terms of building accountability and transparency. The Conservatives cancelled this initiative in 2006.

First nations funding arrangements are currently subject to annual allocations, changing program parameters and reporting obligations, as well as unilateral realignment, reductions and adjustments. We lack a legislative framework for predictable federal fiscal transfers based on the actual cost of delivery of services.

This will require transforming the fiscal relationship with the federal government to respect first nations rights and appropriately align responsibilities. Any effort to improve accountability and transparency must be mutual and should include both enabling provisions for a first nations auditor general and a commitment by the federal government to be accountable for its spending on first nations programs.

● (1645)

[*Translation*]

Bill C-27 does nothing to streamline the current overwhelming reporting burden, especially for small first nations with limited administrative capacity.

[*English*]

The Auditor General has repeatedly called for meaningful action to reduce unnecessary first nations reporting requirements that shift limited capacity from community programs.

In her 2002 report, the Auditor General recommended that the federal government should consult with first nations to review reporting requirements on a regular basis and to determine reporting needs when new programs are set up. Unnecessary or duplicative reporting requirements should be dropped.

As recently as June 2011, the Auditor General reported government progress toward achieving this needed rationalization as unsatisfactory. The government has failed to make meaningful progress on this issue.

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First nations provide a minimum of 168 different financial reports to the 4 major funding departments: INAC, Health Canada, HRSDC and CMHC. That is three per week. The majority of these communities have less than 500 people. AANDC alone receives 60,000 reports from first nations annually as a requirement under existing funding agreements. Legislation that adds additional reporting requirements for first nations must also deal with this overwhelming and often outdated and unnecessary burden of existing reporting requirements.

As I have indicated, the Liberals fully support the principle of proactive disclosure of financial information for first nations chiefs and council to band members. Clearly, cases of first nation citizens being denied access to this information are unacceptable and it may be that existing legislation provisions should require proactive disclosure.

However, as the courts have ruled, this right of access to information does not extend to the general public. Therefore, the proactive disclosure provisions in this legislation must be changed so they provide proactive disclosure to first nations citizens alone.

There are existing models from first nations that already have strong governance models which can be adopted. There are examples of bands that are already proactively disclosing financial statements on password protected websites. These are the types of creative solutions that result from thorough two-way consultations when the government does not just speak but listens and internalizes what stakeholders have to say.

Bill C-27 would force first nations to disclose financial information related to band-owned businesses to all Canadians, not simply remuneration paid out of federal grants and contributions. This is inconsistent with the principles of first nations self-government and contravenes the Privacy Act, as well as a ruling by the Federal Court.

[*Translation*]

This measure could potentially make band-owned businesses vulnerable to predatory practices, and put them at a competitive disadvantage.

[*English*]

I am very concerned about the double standard that would be applied under this legislation. Non-aboriginal private corporations are not forced to publicly disclose consolidated financial statements. This could very well defeat the government's stated goal of stimulating economic development on reserves, as my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan has said.

I will also point out that paternalistic lectures about accountability are a little rich coming from the Conservative government. It is a government that has decided to rule by ideology, blind to facts, blind to the reality of everyday Canadians and free from accountability offered by access to reliable statistics. To facilitate this, it has muzzled scientists, bullied non-governmental organizations and slashed programs focused on gathering and analyzing evidence-based data.

In the 2006 election, the Conservative Party of Canada was fined by Elections Canada for overspending its campaign limit by \$1.3

million and to have tried to inappropriately collect \$800,000 from taxpayers in rebates.

In 2011, Conservative senators, Doug Finley and Irving Gerstein, as well as senior campaign officials, Michael Donison and Susan Kehoe reached a plea deal for misleading Elections Canada. It also seems increasing likely that there was a coordinated effort to keep Canadians from the polls last year. Elections Canada is currently investigating these allegations.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister is now facing a serious investigation by Canada's independent election authority for spending irregularities. The same individual is shockingly the government's spokesperson on election fraud. So much for accountability.

What about transparency? Canada's Information and Privacy Commissioners have publicly stated that while other nations are moving toward more open and accountable federal governments, our government remains one of the most unaccountable and secretive in Canada's history.

Bill C-38, the recently passed 425-page budget implementation bill, amends over 70 different acts and could end over 50 years of environmental oversight in Canada. Not only were these changes put forward without proper consultation, they were pushed through Parliament in a way to circumvent democratic scrutiny.

First nations have little to learn about accountability and transparency from the government.

As I have stated, the Liberals support the underlying goals of the legislation but are very concerned about how it was brought to the House.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

The bill, as written, is inconsistent with the principle of first nations self-government.

It is inconsistent with the new approach to relations between the Government of Canada and first nations which was supposed to have resulted from the residential schools apology in 2008.

[*English*]

It is inconsistent with the Conservatives' belated and half-hearted support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Prime Minister's commitment at the Crown-First Nations Gathering to reset this relationship.

We also have deep concerns about some of the unintended consequences of the impact on local capacity and first nations owned businesses. This legislation will need significant improvements and much further consultation with first nations.

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Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated certain parts of the member's speech because it sounds to me like there is an opportunity here to get this to committee and have some further discussions and consultations.

We have heard from first nations community members who are asking for this kind of transparency. It seems to me that there are already things in place that can facilitate that, and the committee will do great work on that.

The other part of the speech, the bit rich and paternalistic part, is very interesting to me as someone who spent eight years living and working in isolated first nations communities throughout the 1990s. I saw some massive deficits in infrastructure with schools, water and waste water treatment. We are now moving forward on those. We are not drafting documents, like the famous white paper of that party in its past.

We have a great opportunity here to work on legislation that would bring as many, if not all, first nations communities at par with some level of transparency and accountability to their membership and transfer that power to the community level where it belongs.

Does the member not think that it is vital to get this legislation to committee to hear some of the best practices from communities that have exceeded what this legislation currently contains, to make those considerations, hear those testimonies and move forward with this legislation, which her party appears to support?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, we feel this is very sad at a time when it was to be possible to reset the relationship in a true government-to-government way.

We Liberals are very proud of the process that went into the Kelowna accord. That meant 18 months of bottom-up conversations among the aboriginal leaders in this country, first nations, Inuit, Métis, provinces and territories as well as the federal government, choosing the five areas of education, health, housing, economic development as well as accountability.

Through that 18 months there was a consensus of how to go forward and how much it would cost in terms of the \$5 billion that was assigned.

I must say that I come from a place where the motto was *Non quo sed quomodo*, "it is not only what you do, but how", and I am afraid the bill remains as paternalistic as it was when it was tabled.

•(1655)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member for St. Paul's to comment on a couple of things.

She mentioned in her speech about the volume of reporting that is already in place that requires chiefs and councils to reveal their salaries, honorary expenses and audited financial statements. I wonder if she could comment, first, on the reporting that is already in place and why it is not sufficient.

Second, the government claims that somehow or other Bill C-27 would enhance economic development. I wonder if she can see any way this would enhance economic development.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, as we crossed the country with the committee, we heard serious concerns about the bill and what could happen if again that proprietary information in a band-owned enterprise—how much they pay an engineer, how much this person makes—would open it up to predatory practices from competitors and actually put the first nations' business at a complete disadvantage.

I think everything we have heard speaks to the fact that this is not a good idea. The bill goes way further than the private member's bill before. Also, as we know, if any band members are having trouble getting information on the salaries of the chief and council, the minister already has the ability to get that information for those band members.

This is just worryingly extinguishing of economic opportunity for first nations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I took note of the statement by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs when he said that it is time to take action.

If he is taking such quick and strong action, then why is there is no affordable housing or decent water and schools? Instead there are more demands for reports and more paperwork.

This government used to boast about wanting to reduce bureaucracy, but now it is adding another layer of it.

Can the hon. member from the Liberal Party of Canada tell us why the government is asking first nations people for more reports, when the information is already available, and why it is asking for fewer reports from private companies, which quite often make off with Canadians' wealth.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

This government really enjoys making laws and giving speeches, but the resources for first nations are not found there. The legislation on drinking water is not enough.

The first nations need resources and budgets to build infrastructure for drinking water, affordable housing, health care and everything else that should concern this government.

An avalanche of laws will not address the current situation. It is totally unacceptable for all Canadians.

•(1700)

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I just have a follow-up question.

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The parliamentary secretary talked about getting the bill to committee where we would have an opportunity to examine best practices on accountability and how different first nations governments had set up their practices around reporting expenses and salaries. I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that we could do this without legislation. The committee could undertake a study to look at best practices.

As I mentioned earlier in, 2006 the Assembly of First Nations put out a position paper around some of the proposed principles and practices. I wonder if the member could comment on that aspect of it.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Assembly of First Nations did pass the resolution in December 2010. If any member wants to look today at the audited statements of chief and council of Attawapiskat, they are online. It is up to the individual first nation as to whether it chooses to make this public or password-protected to its own band.

The creativity, innovation and the real desire for accountability and transparency is there among first nations. We hear it everywhere we go. The reset means the accountability of chief and council needs to be to their members and their community, not to the Indian agent, not to big brother.

If the government really wants to reset the relationship, it is extraordinarily important that it understand that tabling paternalistic legislation after paternalistic legislation goes in exactly the opposite direction.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has its own challenges with accountability and transparency. The latest incident in a long string of incidents has to do with the PBO speaking truth to power and about the hiding of information from Parliament.

Accountability and transparency is a two-way street. Bill C-27 would apparently call first nations to account. How would the bill help with the other side of the street, which is calling the government to account for its handling of what is quite a significant amount of money?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, the member is repeating exactly the concerns of the Auditor General.

Why, over all the years, have the conditions not become any better? How much of the money is in a department? How much of the money is not getting to where it needs to go?

On housing, on so many of these issues, the Auditor General has had serious concerns about the lack of transparency and the results-based management that ought to be present within the minister's department, as opposed to the only accountability and transparency being in first nations.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill C-27.

I would like to thank the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for his support of my private member's Bill C-575 in the last Parliament and for his continued interest and leadership in the area of first nations financial transparency and

accountability. When I introduced Bill C-575 in the last Parliament, I received overwhelming support for my private member's bill from both first nations community members and Canadians across the country.

If there has been a consistent theme running through our policies and programs with regard to aboriginal affairs since forming government, it is to support aboriginal people in achieving economic success so they can maximize the benefits of self-sufficiency and prosperity.

Since 2006, this goal has been emphasized in every throne speech, as was powerfully reinforced most recently in the 2011 Speech from the Throne. It committed the Government of Canada to support transparency for first nations communities by requiring chiefs and councillors to publish their salaries and expenses.

Being certain that a first nation government upholds standard accounting procedures and sound business practices is vitally important to potential investors in first nations communities. In fact, one of the most compelling reasons to support this legislation is its potential to have a positive impact on first nations economic development.

Transparency builds trust, and trust is integral to building strong relationships. Once it is clear how a community manages its money and how it accounts for expenditures, businesses interested in pursuing joint ventures will have greater confidence that they can count on a first nation to be a reliable and responsible partner.

The requirements under Bill C-27 would enable first nations to demonstrate best practices in their financial operations. This is crucial to create an environment conducive to investment. Chief Darcy Bear of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation also agrees with this concept, and said:

Transparent and accountable First Nation governments support a strong environment for investment leading to greater economic development.

If a first nation can inspire confidence among prospective investors, it can attract economic development, leading to greater self-reliance and a better standard of living for its members. That is the ultimate goal of Bill C-27.

However, the immediate objective of first nation members is simply to find out how their leaders spend the first nation's money and how much money chiefs and councillors are receiving for their services.

As other speakers have already explained, there have been repeated calls for greater transparency and accountability when it comes to the remuneration of chiefs and councillors. Accountability is a fundamental principle of Canadian political life.

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Certainly some first nations governments already make this financial information readily available to their community members, but current practice related to disclosure is inconsistent. In some cases, first nation governments only make available information on spending and reimbursement of expenses when requested to do so. Others refuse their members access to financial information, forcing people to turn to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada to have this information released.

First nations band members should not have to ask to find out what their elected representatives are earning. It should be publicly available information, just as it is for all other elected officials across the country. Other Canadians are not asked to tolerate such a situation, and first nation members should not be asked to do so either.

First nations are already obligated to produce audited consolidated financial statements and details about chief and councillors' pay, as has already been noted, and submit them to the federal government as a condition of their funding agreements.

● (1705)

However, at the moment, there is nothing in law requiring first nations governments to provide this information to their members or when and how it should be disclosed. This uncertainty, coupled with the sheer unavailability of information in so many cases, is unfair to first nations members. It is patently undemocratic. Equally worrisome, it can be a major deterrent in attracting potential private sector investment opportunities.

The first nations financial transparency act would enhance transparency and certainty, making reporting requirements mandatory. It would open up a first nation's books so its members could see how funds were used by their government. Following the passage of this proposed legislation, there will be a consistent, reliable, predictable and transparent approach to disclosing such information. The bill clearly places the accountability on first nations governments to release information about financial compensation to elected representatives in a manner similar to that of other governments across Canada.

Under Bill C-27, band councils would be required to prepare audited, consolidated financial statements each year. These documents would be accompanied by a schedule of remuneration paid to chiefs and councillors, would make this information available to members of their community and would publish these documents on a website.

The proposed act also requires the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to publish the same information on the department's website so it can be easily accessed in one location for the information of all Canadians, including potential investors.

Making audited, consolidated financial statements and schedules of remuneration widely available will also help to promote investment on reserves. Anyone looking for strong first nation partners for financial ventures will be able to access basic financial information from a single source. Strong, capable and accountable first nations governments will be in a position to attract business investments that will lead to increased economic development and job creation in first nations communities.

It is hard to imagine how anyone could argue with that. Anyone taking an objective look at the facts can only conclude that Bill C-27 is equally good for first nations members, their local governments and Canada's business community.

Therefore, I call on all members of the House to get behind this very necessary and beneficial act. Not only first nations members but all Canadians are counting on parliamentarians to do exactly that.

I move therefore:

That this question be now put.

● (1710)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to listen to the member say that we could not object to the facts. There is a fact I want to put before the member. She talks about how all this could be accessed on websites. According to the First Nations Regional Health Survey, only 51% of first nations have Internet access and that drops to 36% in homes where the income is under \$25,000. Therefore, effectively, a significant portion of first nations will be unable to access the information via the Internet anyway.

It is also interesting that she says the Conservatives do not want to force people to go to the minister to get the information, but they have no problem with forcing people to go to the courts to get the information, which is far more expensive and time consuming.

The member mentioned the Whitecap Dakota. She was quoting some support for the bill, but I wonder if she could comment specifically on Whitecap Dakota's two concerns.

One is with the entity, which is under clause 6(1) in the act. That entity is defined as a business, corporation or whatever. Chiefs and councils would have to report under this legislation, and Whitecap Dakota specifically had serious problems with that. It said that public sector reporting should be different from business reporting.

The second concern Whitecap Dakota raised was with regard to treating expenses as lumped in under salary. It asked that those expenses and salary be treated separately.

Could she comment on entities and expenses?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I know the question was posed for the minister and I believe he answered it very well when he said that this legislation would require that band-owned entities publicly disclose only those moneys that accrued to salaries and benefits of chiefs and councillors.

I would remind the member that the immediate objective of the legislation and other initiatives introduced in prior Parliaments is to ensure that first nations community members receive information from their leaders when they ask for it. That is the immediate objective of this legislation.

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I would encourage that member to stand up for first nations community members in having access to that kind of information that they rightly deserve.

• (1715)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I hear a lot of, whether it is from first nations, the municipal government or provincial government, are complaints about more paperwork and what they will do with it all.

Could the member tell us what additional paperwork there will be, if any?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, this question was posed to me time and time again by opposition members when I introduced my private member's bill. I want to assure my colleague and all members of the House that the reports that are required to be submitted to the department already have been. There will be no more burden on first nations under this legislation than what is already required of them. What it will require, which was the purpose for introducing my private member's bill, and I am pleased to see it is the immediate objective of this legislation, is that first nations communities have access to this information when they ask for it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague some questions. I would like to quote the Prime Minister, who gave a speech at the Crown—First Nations Gathering in January 2012. He said:

For our goal is self sufficient citizens and self-governing communities. Our goal is to promote improved governance. Our goal is much increased aboriginal participation in the economy and in the country's prosperity, and we have no illusion about the enormous work that lies ahead of us.

A little later, he said:

So that will be our approach, to replace elements of the Indian Act with more modern legislation and procedures, in partnership with provinces and first nations.

The Prime Minister seemed to want to promote a partnership with first nations. And yet, there has been no working together with the first nations on this bill. They were not consulted about the drafting of this bill.

Does she not think that this contradicts what the Prime Minister seemed to emphasize in his speech?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, throughout the year and a half after I introduced my private member's bill, many first nations community members said that the legislation was needed. It was exactly what they had asked for and it addressed their concerns. In fact, I introduced my bill as a result of hearing concerns from first nations community members.

We know this act would help to ensure that first nations would have democratic, accountable and transparent governments by requiring that first nations prepare these annual audited financial statements and a schedule of salaries and make them public to their members. This legislation is about that.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague who is again supporting this bill. She brought it forward as a private member's bill and now we see it as a government bill.

I know the hon. member's constituency is similar to mine in that she represents many first nations communities. Like her riding, many people in my riding from first nations communities have asked me if I might be able to assist them in getting some of the information that is prescribed in this bill. I am happy to supply the list to hon. colleagues across the way who are looking for people who absolutely want to see this information. People are contacting my office on a weekly basis looking for assistance with this.

The member for Nanaimo—Cowichan suggested that there were already existing authorities in place to allow first nations members to access this information. Does my colleague from Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar know whether those authorities have been able to provide the information for her first nations members? I certainly have been unable to get the information for the folks in my riding.

• (1720)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the very good work that he does chairing the aboriginal affairs committee and for the work the committee does. I had an opportunity to present to that committee and I was very appreciative of the very thoughtful questions.

There are 74 first nations in Saskatchewan. Since the last election, I continue to receive many calls, emails and letters from first nation community members who continue to have difficulty accessing this information, either because they cannot find it or they have asked for it but have simply been refused.

As was mentioned earlier by our minister, the process to get this information is a very cumbersome one. However, the requests continue to come to my office and we continue to advise those members who call that we are very hopeful that this legislation will be passed in due course and that they will be able to get this information directly from their leaders.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my distinguished colleague, the member for Manicouagan.

It gives me great pleasure to speak to the bill so that the government can hear again how wrong-headed its approach is, not just for Bill C-27, but for much of what it has been hanging its hat on lately.

At the outset, the bill is unnecessary in that it ignores some simple ways to address the problems it seeks to solve. Bill C-27 is overly punitive and amounts to a real waste of valuable and much needed funds by duplicating efforts and increasing the bureaucratic burden on those first nations that do not already have self-governing regimes. It sets the course for costly legal battles and ignores the advice of the Auditor General to reduce the reporting burden placed on first nations. Worst of all, the bill was created without the consultation or involvement of first nations.

Government Orders

Bill C-27 is similar to a private member's bill the government is championing these days. The member just spoke to that. Bill C-377 is similar in that it seeks to force other bodies and organizations to do what the Conservative government is so thoroughly incapable of doing, which is to behave in a publicly accountable and transparent fashion. It is nothing short of ironic that we are debating the bill in the shadow of the ominous Trojan Horse budget bill, a budget that amounts to a leap of faith when put to the same test that Bill C-27 would force on to first nations.

We have just witnessed the government throttle the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer by refusing to provide the information needed for that office to report to parliamentarians in the manner that we have asked of him, in the manner that the Conservatives supported as opposition members and so thoroughly frustrate now that they are in government. We all welcomed how accountability and transparency were to be the hallmarks of the government and yet those principles are more notable by their absence than anything else when it comes to its actions.

The Accountability Act was the Conservatives' first piece of legislation after replacing the tired and corrupt Liberal Party in government. Only six years later, it is nothing more than a shell of broken ideals crushed under the weight of parliamentary bullying, influence peddling, lobbyists and allegations of electoral fraud.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: That is the NDP.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: The member from the other side is chastizing me. Obviously, we can see that those members know full well that we are talking about them and how awful they have been.

The Conservatives are setting out to force first nations to do what they themselves refuse to do. They are seeking to impose standards that are greater than those applied to politicians in many other elected jurisdictions in a way that creates more bureaucracy without really increasing accountability of first nations governments to their communities.

These standards and the costs associated with them are even more unrealistic when one considers the entirety of the circumstances, especially the recent budget cuts to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

We also cannot ignore the narrow scope of talking points that are the driving force behind this legislation. The maxim that worse case scenarios make bad legislation should be considered as we debate Bill C-27. Time and again we hear about a handful of overpaid first nations politicians, which leads to assumptions that are based far more on opinion than fact. Those scenarios, while unfortunate, are in no way among the most pressing the government faces with respect to our first nations communities. However, we are debating an unnecessary piece of legislation instead of working on ways to address more pressing needs, and that is a shame.

From the outset we know there is a problem because the intention of the bill is to duplicate something that already exists. To hear proponents of the bill speak, one would think that first nations report nothing about the funding they receive or the salaries and compensation provided to their leadership, when we know the opposite is true.

● (1725)

First nations produce year-end reports that include annual audited consolidated financial statements for the public funds provided to them. These reports include salaries, honoraria and travel expenses for all elected, appointed and senior unelected band officials.

First nations are also required to release statements to their membership about compensation earned or accrued by elected, appointed and unelected senior officials, and the amount of remuneration paid, earned or accrued by elected and appointed officials, which must be from all sources within the recipient's financial reporting entity, including amounts from economic development and other types of business corporations.

That is not being made widely known or acknowledged by the government. Instead, it is imposing a bill that goes out of its way to force a different method of financial reporting and the costs associated with that onto first nations.

The New Democrats do not share the government's view on the urgency of this issue. We believe that Bill C-27 must be considered in the context of the June 2011 findings of the Auditor General, which stated that despite repeated audits recommending numerous reforms over the last decade, the federal government had failed abysmally to address the worsening conditions for first nations.

That report tells us that the money just is not flowing to the problems but that it is not for lack of audits or reporting processes.

The Auditor General pointed out that the reporting burden on first nations had actually worsened in recent years despite that office's repeated calls to reduce the reporting burden. Worst of all, the findings showed how many of the reports were not even used by federal government departments and were not serving anything but bureaucratic processes. They are white elephants and the government is eagerly seeking to increase them.

This is a non-turn in the road for a government that has said that it is so dead set against red tape. Perhaps it is only red tape when it frustrates the goals of its main lobbyist friends and not so much when it comes to frustrating the efforts of people it does not spend as much time with.

However, the New Democrats are convinced that changes to how audited statements are presented to first nations do not need heavy-handed legislation. Any changes deemed necessary could be a requirement of funding arrangements that the department has each first nation government sign. We are concerned that this bill not only ignores the simple solution but is overly punitive as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking will have two and a half minutes remaining for her remarks and five minutes for questions and comments when the House next returns to debate on the motion.

Government Orders

● (1730)

[Translation]

PROTECTING CANADA'S SENIORS ACT

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (elder abuse), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division at second reading of Bill C-36.

Call in the members.

● (1810)

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

*(Division No. 448)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams	Gallant	Garneau
Adler	Aglukkaq	Garrison	Genest
Albas	Albrecht	Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Gill	Glover
Allison	Ambler	Godin	Goguen
Ambrose	Anders	Goldring	Goodale
Anderson	Andrews	Goodyear	Gosal
Angus	Armstrong	Gourde	Gravelle
Ashfield	Ashton	Grewal	Groguhé
Atamanenko	Aubin	Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Ayala	Baird	Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Bateman	Bélangier	Hawn	Hayes
Bellavance	Bennett	Hiebert	Hillyer
Benoit	Benskin	Hoback	Holder
Bernier	Bevington	Hsu	Hughes
Bezan	Blanchette	Hyer	Jacob
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney	James	Jean
Block	Boivin	Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Borg	Boughen	Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet	Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Brahmi	Braid	Kerr	Komarnicki
Breitkreuz	Brisson	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Brosseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)	Larose	Latendresse
Bruinooge	Butt	Lauzon	Laverdière
Byrne	Calandra	Lebel	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Calkins	Cannan	Leaf	Leitch
Carmichael	Caron	Lemieux	Leslie
Carrie	Casey	Leung	Liu
Cash	Charlton	Lizon	Lobb
Chicoine	Chisholm	Lukiwski	Lunney
Chisu	Chong	MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
Choquette	Chow	MacKenzie	Mai
Christopherson	Clarke	Marston	Martin
Cleary	Clement	Masse	Mathysen
Coderre	Comartin	May	Mayes
Côté	Crowder	McCallum	McColeman
Cullen	Cuzner	McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Daniel	Davidson	McLeod	Menegakis
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)	Menzies	Merrifield
Day	Dechert	Michaud	Miller
Del Mastro	Devolin	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Dewar	Dion	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeschen	Mourani	Mulcair
Dubé	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Murray	Nantel
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Nash	Nicholls
Dusseault	Dykstra	Nicholson	Norlock
Easter	Eyking	Nunez-Melo	O'Connor
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	O'Neill Gordon	Oda
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty	Oliver	Opitz
Fletcher	Footo	Pacetti	Papillon
Fortin	Freeman	Paradis	Patry
Fry	Galipeau	Payne	Pécelet
		Penashue	Perreault
		Pilon	Plamondon
		Poileuvre	Preston
		Rae	Rafferty
		Raitt	Rajotte
		Rathgeber	Ravignat
		Raynault	Regan
		Reid	Rempel
		Richards	Rickford
		Ritz	Rousseau
		Saganash	Sandhu
		Saxton	Schellenberger
		Scott	Seeback
		Sellah	Sgro
		Shea	Shipley
		Shory	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
		sor)	
		Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
		Smith	Sopuck
		Sorenson	St-Denis
		Stanton	Stewart
		Stoffer	Storseth
		Strahl	Sullivan
		Sweet	Thibeault
		Tilson	Toet
		Toone	Tremblay
		Trost	Trudeau
		Truppe	Turnel
		Tweed	Uppal
		Valeriotte	Van Kesteren

Government Orders

Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 289

Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Hoback
Hyer
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
May
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)

Holder
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller

Nil

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Consequently, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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

* * *

FINANCIAL LITERACY LEADER ACT

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, An Act to amend the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at the second reading of Bill C-28.

• (1815)

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

(Division No. 449)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Baird
Bellavance
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Fortin
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Bateman
Benoit
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hayes
Hillyer

Mourani
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Opitz
Payne
Plamondon
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oliver
Paradis
Penashue
Poilievre
Raii
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rieckford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Truppe
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 158

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau
Eyking
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)

Government Orders

Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hughes
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Rae
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turmel
Valeriotte — 131	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the results of the previous motion to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Turmel: Madam Speaker, we agree with proceeding in this fashion, and the NDP will vote no.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, the Liberals agree and will be voting against.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, Thunder Bay—Superior North will be voting yes.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I will be voting yes.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Madam Speaker, I will be voting yes.

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, I was not in attendance at the last vote, but I want to clarify for the record that I will be voting with the Conservative Party on this very important bill.

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 450*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Baird	Bateman
Bellavance	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Fortin	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hyer	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
May	Mayer
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Mourani	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Oda	Oliver
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Plamondon	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Truppe	Tweed

Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 159

Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriotte— 131

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Rae
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scott
Sgro
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel

Private Members' Business

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-394, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (criminal organization recruitment), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading of Bill C-394 under private members' business.

• (1830)

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

(Division No. 451)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Benskin
Bevington
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin
Boughen
Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brosseau
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chisu
Choquette
Christopherson
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Del Mastro
Dewar
Donnelly
Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Block
Borg
Boulerice
Brahmi
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Charlton
Chisholm
Chong
Chow
Clarke
Clement
Côté
Cullen
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Devolin
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)

Private Members' Business

Dusseault	Dykstra
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Freeman
Galipeau	Gallant
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Gill	Glover
Godin	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Groguhé	Harper
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hughes
Jacob	James
Jean	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Lauzon
Laverdière	Lebel
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leslie	Leung
Liu	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Michaud	Miller
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nicholson	Norlock
Nunez-Melo	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Papillon	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Péclet	Penashue
Perreault	Pilon
Poillievre	Preston
Rafferty	Raït
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Schellenberger
Scott	Seeback
Sellah	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Stewart	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Truppe
Turnel	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich

Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 253

Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Bellavance
Brisson
Casey
Cuzner
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eyking
Fortin
Gameau
Hsu
Karygiannis
MacAulay
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Murray
Plamondon
Regan
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
St-Denis
Trudeau

Bélanger
Bennett
Byrne
Coderre
Dion
Easter
Foote
Fry
Goodale
Hyer
Lamoureux
May
McGuinity
Mourani
Pacetti
Rae
Sgro
Valeriote — 38

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[*English*]

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY ACT

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion that Bill S-206, An Act respecting World Autism Awareness Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill S-206, under private members' business.

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 452*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Bélanger
Bennett
Benskin

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Andrews
Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Bellavance
Benoit
Bernier

Government Orders

Bevington	Bezan	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe	Mulcair	Murray
Blaney	Block	Nantel	Nash
Boivin	Borg	Nicholls	Nicholson
Boughen	Boulerice	Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi	O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Braid	Breitkreuz	Oda	Oliver
Brison	Brosseau	Opitz	Pacetti
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Papillon	Paradis
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge	Patry	Payne
Butt	Byrne	Péclét	Penashue
Calandra	Calkins	Perreault	Pilon
Cannan	Carmichael	Plamondon	Poilievre
Caron	Carrie	Preston	Rae
Casey	Cash	Rafferty	Raitt
Charlton	Chicoine	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Chisholm	Chisu	Ravignat	Raynault
Chong	Choquette	Regan	Reid
Chow	Christopherson	Rempel	Richards
Clarke	Cleary	Rickford	Ritz
Clement	Coderre	Rousseau	Saganash
Comartin	Côté	Sandhu	Saxton
Crowder	Cullen	Schellenberger	Scott
Cuzner	Daniel	Seeback	Sellah
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Sgro	Shea
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day	Shipley	Shory
Dechert	Del Mastro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Devolin	Dewar	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Dion	Dionne Labelle	Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre	Sopuck	Sorenson
Dreeshen	Dubé	St-Denis	Stanton
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Stewart	Stoffer
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault	Storseth	Strahl
Dykstra	Easter	Sullivan	Sweet
Eyking	Fast	Thibeault	Tilson
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Toet	Toews
Flaherty	Fletcher	Toone	Tremblay
Foote	Fortin	Trost	Trudeau
Freeman	Fry	Truppe	Turmel
Galipeau	Gallant	Tweed	Uppal
Garneau	Garrison	Valeriot	Van Kesteren
Genest	Genest-Jourdain	Van Loan	Vellacott
Giguère	Gill	Wallace	Warkentin
Glover	Godin	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Goguen	Goldring	Sky Country)	
Goodale	Goodyear	Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Gosal	Gourde	Williamson	Wong
Gravelle	Grewal	Woodworth	Yelich
Groguhé	Harper	Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)	Zimmer — 291	
Hassainia	Hawn		
Hayes	Hiebert		
Hillyer	Hoback		
Holder	Hsu	Nil	
Hughes	Hyer		
Jacob	James		
Jean	Julian	Nil	
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karygiannis		
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kellway		
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr		
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)		
Lake	Lamoureux		
Lapointe	Larose		
Latendresse	Lauzon		
Laverdière	Lebel		
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leef		
Leitch	Lemieux		
Leslie	Leung		
Liu	Lizon		
Lobb	Lukiwski		
Lunney	MacAulay		
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie		
Mai	Marston		
Martin	Masse		
Mathysen	May		
Mayes	McCallum		
McColeman	McGuinly		
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod		
Menegakis	Menzies		
Merrifield	Michaud		
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)		
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)			
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)			
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)		

NAYS

PAIRED

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CANADA-PANAMA ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Panama, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at the second reading stage of Bill C-24.

• (1845)

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

*(Division No. 453)***YEAS**

Members

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

Tweed
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 153

Uppal
Van Loan
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Gameau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Rac
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	St-Denis
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stoffer
Sitsabaiesan	Thibeault
Stewart	Tremblay
Sullivan	Turmel
Toone	
Trudeau	

Government Orders

Valeriote — 137

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Madam Speaker, if you seek it I believe you would find agreement to apply the results of the previous vote to the current vote, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Turmel: Madam Speaker, the NDP agrees with proceeding in this fashion and we will vote no.

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, the Liberals agree and are voting yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois will vote no.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, Thunder Bay—Superior North will be voting no.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May: The Green Party will vote no.

[English]

Mr. Peter Goldring: Madam Speaker, I will be voting yes.

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 454)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Andrews
Ashfield
Baird
Bélangier
Benoit
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brison
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Calkins
Carmichael
Casey
Chong
Clement

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bennett
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chisu
Clarke
Coderre

Cuzner
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dion
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Foote
Galipeau
Garneau
Glover
Goldring
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Murray
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Opitz
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Raitt
Rathgeber
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Sgro
Shipley
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Smith
Sopuck
St-Denis
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 185

Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Dreeshen
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Fry
Gallant
Gill
Goguen
Goodale
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Hsu
Jean
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
McCallum
McGuinty
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oliver
Pacetti
Payne
Poilievre
Rae
Rajotte
Regan
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shea
Shory
Sorenson
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trudeau
Tweed
Valeriote
Van Loan
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton
Aubin
Bellavance
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin

Private Members' Business

Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brousseau	Caron
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Gravelle
Grogué	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Pécelet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynauld	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turmel— 105	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade.

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

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:50, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1850)

[*English*]

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

The House resumed from May 11 consideration of the motion.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of this motion but I must say that I do so very reluctantly.

On the surface, it seems like a good motion as it deals with taking steps to bring down the high levels of obesity, especially childhood obesity, in this country, but it does not do anything new. The motion just reiterates everything that is currently in the government's obesity framework but nothing in that obesity framework has been implemented. Nothing in that obesity framework has been done in spite of the fact that the putative efforts at the very beginning have been shown not to work and in spite of the government receiving advice to strengthen those efforts nothing has been done.

However, if we do not support the motion then we are in danger of not supporting apple pie, motherhood, sunshine, sweetness and life. As always, we have to stand here and support what on paper sounds like a good thing but in reality has absolutely no teeth.

Why is it a good thing to deal with the issue of childhood obesity? It is because we know that children today will not live as long as their parents will or did. Children aged 2 to 17 have an obesity rate of up to 26%, which is up from 15% 20 years ago. Youth aged 12 to 17 have a higher rate at 29%. First nations children and youth off-reserve have a combined obesity rate of 41%.

With obesity comes high incidence of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, Type II diabetes, sleep apnea and joint problems. The economic costs of doing nothing about obesity leads us to another generation of lost productivity and increased costs to our health care system.

The sad thing about this is that obesity is preventable. We can do something about obesity. Other countries, especially European countries, have taken strong steps. They have set measurable goals and objectives for bringing down obesity in their populations, and they are talking about tiny amounts of obesity which they think are acceptable. However, those countries have put teeth in what they are doing.

Even the United States is doing things. It is making strong legislation and it is taking powerful aim at industry. It is mandating industry to take certain steps to deal with the percentage of trans fats, to label products and to ensure its products have lower sugar levels.

We do not see that happening here in spite of the minister receiving advice from not only advisory committees set up to look at this from a purely scientific perspective, but advice from the Department of Health itself.

In 2007, the government brought in, to its credit, a voluntary industrial initiative asking industry to bring down trans fats, the levels of salt and sugar and to look at carbonated beverages. However, that was voluntary and the Department of Health and all of the data has shown that it does not work. It has not brought the obesity rate down. Obesity keeps rising. Here we have a motion that says this is all wonderful. It repeats exactly what the government is doing. The motion would not put any teeth or any strength or any spine into what is happening.

We will vote for the motion and it will obviously pass. Government backbenchers will say that they are keen on fighting obesity and that they have done a great job dealing with it. They will tell Canadians to look at the private member's bill that everybody in the House voted for. However, the sad thing about it is that nothing will change and we will still have increasing rates of obesity.

Private Members' Business

We are all prepared to support a bill from a member who is prepared to take this issue on in a real way. We really want to do something about it.

• (1855)

We have talked about the federal and provincial ministers coming together with the federal government to create a pan-Canadian strategy. Part of it means not just advertising that people should be exercising, but talking about building infrastructure, creating coaches, creating places where the young people can play safely and do the maximum amount of exercises, both cardio and weight, that will bring down their obesity.

There is an ability for that to happen. Ministers agreed about 10 years ago that they would create this infrastructure of sport, not just saying that young people should exercise, but providing the tools they need. The ministers of education have talked about this. The ministers of sport have talked about this.

Many provinces have had to go off on their own and take strong measures, as strong as they can take under provincial jurisdiction, to bring down the rate of obesity. I know my province of British Columbia is determined that we will fight this. It has put forward all sorts of infrastructure for play, for sport and for encouraging physical activity. However, we are not doing it here.

The minister has never once stood to put up the necessary funding or the leadership behind the strategy for helping young people across the country to exercise, thus preventing young people from doing the physical activity they need and allowing for the continuation of low levels of physical activity among Canadian youth.

Let us take an inactive person. An inactive person will spend 38% more days in hospital, have 5.5 more family physician visits, use 13% more specialists' services and use 12% more nurse visits.

Physical activity brings down rates of chronic disease, coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, breast cancer, colon cancer, type 2 diabetes and, later on in life, osteoporosis.

Obesity, to be very honest, costs the country \$7.1 billion a year. One would think this is a cost benefit to put in place the mandatory requirements for industry to bring down the levels of trans fat, fat and sugar in our products. Other countries are doing it with no problems. One would think it is a no-brainer. The motion supports the government saying that it is a good thing, but it does not add a single tooth toward making it happen.

We also note that we could save \$76 billion over the next 10 years by tackling risk factors for heart disease, such as smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, et cetera. Yet in the government's last budget it cut the smoking cessation strategies by 34%.

I stand here and reluctantly admit that the Liberal Party will have to support the motion. Not to support it would be untenable. However, to support it means that are saying that we think we have done wonderfully well, that we have supported bringing down of obesity. However, another 10 years from now, someone will be sitting here arguing the same thing, talking about the rates of obesity, what it is costing in terms of productivity, lives lost and longevity and what going to be done about.

That is what bothers me a great deal in the House. We talk about a lot of things. I think the intent may be good. I am not impugning the intent, but nothing happens. We do not put in place measurable goals to achieve what we want to achieve, look at best practices in other countries and do what we need to do to deal with the issues and we problems can prevent.

Sixty per cent of all diseases that we suffer from today are preventable. We are talking about preventing a major one here. Sadly, I will support the motion, but it has very little to do with anything. We have the federal-provincial-territorial framework that has all these criteria that have been set, all the action that must be done. However, nothing has happened and it will not happen with this motion.

• (1900)

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my sincere pleasure to stand today in support of Motion No. 319. The motion by the member for Ottawa—Orléans focuses on the promotion and maintenance of healthy weights for youth and children.

This issue is very important to me and all Canadians. I know that society as a whole benefits from children and youth maintaining healthy weights and practising healthy behaviours. The World Health Organization declared in 2011 that obesity was a global epidemic that facing us now.

More than one quarter of Canadian children are overweight or obese, with rates even higher among aboriginal people. Of even greater concern, these rates are increasing.

We also know that in addition to significant personal and human costs, obesity is an important driver of health care costs, accounting for over \$7 billion in direct and indirect costs.

Last fall the United Nations high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases highlighted that obesity was a global health problem, and many countries had put a high priority on tackling this issue. The Minister of Health attended this important meeting, showing Canada's commitment to work with others in finding solutions.

Reversing the trend in childhood obesity is very important. Childhood obesity not only causes a number of health issues in childhood, but can also lead to long-term health problems later in life. Addressing the cause of obesity requires a society-wide shift to change the social and physical environment that influences the eating habits and activity levels of children and families.

Obesity is a complex issue and all Canadians have a role to play in monitoring and maintaining healthy weights for children and youth. We did not get here overnight and there is no quick fix. To achieve change, we will have to work together. This includes involvement at all levels of government, communities, researchers and the non-profit and private sectors. This government is facilitating, convening and actively contributing to the partnerships focused on making an impact on childhood obesity.

Private Members' Business

The motion highlights the need to continue to work on childhood obesity in this manner, and by engaging and coordinating with other colleagues. We are working with our provincial, territorial and international colleagues on childhood obesity. The motion asks that we continue the dialogue with provinces, territories, health stakeholders, industry and all Canadians to promote and maintain healthy weights for children and youth. Together with the provinces and territories, we have agreed upon a direction that we need to take to work on addressing obesity.

This shared vision to guide efforts to promote healthy living across Canada is elaborated upon in the September 2010 federal, provincial and territorial declaration on prevention and health promotion. Through this declaration, governments have agreed to work together and with other sectors to make the promotion of health and the prevention of disease, disability and injury a priority for action.

As a first step, governments endorsed “Curbing Childhood Obesity: A Federal, Provincial and Territorial Framework for Action to Promote Healthy Weights”, which makes childhood overweight and obesity the collective priority for action. Through these initiatives we are working to identify joint and complementary actions.

In March 2011, we launched “Our Health Our Future”, a national dialogue. This dialogue provided federal, provincial and territorial governments with input from Canadian stakeholders, including individual citizens, communities and industry.

The dialogue gave Canadians across the country the chance to connect with each other and to share their ideas about how to promote healthy weights for children and youth. Building on this dialogue, last month, the Minister of Health co-hosted a summit on healthy weights. The summit brought together a diverse group of people who showed great leadership in working together toward a common goal, reducing childhood obesity.

The summit, like this motion, is an important step in highlighting the conditions that will help children, youth and their families achieve healthy weights.

We are working hard to bring many sectors to the table because we know that governments alone cannot solve this problem. Each sector brings a unique viewpoint, strength and focus to the discussion of childhood obesity.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell the House about some of the groups we are already working with on this issue, including some of Canada's leading non-governmental organizations. These groups include the Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada, Physical Health and Education Canada, Participaction and the Canadian Obesity Network. These organizations, along with others, are catalysts for addressing obesity.

● (1905)

We also acknowledge the great potential for private industry to make an impact on childhood obesity. Discussions with groups like Food and Consumer Products of Canada and the Retail Council of Canada are helping us understand the possible actions we can take together.

Other organizations are also making key contributions to the broader dialogue on food policy, which will ultimately have an impact on child obesity. This includes groups like the Conference Board of Canada and the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute. Both of these groups are providing important insight into future direction and outlining ways to approach issues linked to childhood obesity.

We are also working with Canada's research community. Through the Canadian Institute of Health Research, the government is funding research on obesity.

From 2010 to 2011, the institutes funded \$34 million in obesity-related research. These funds help place obesity on the national health research agenda, generating new knowledge that will help us assess and identify the most effective mechanisms to address obesity in Canada and to improve the health of Canadians.

Working in a collaborative fashion to address childhood obesity helps us capitalize on each other's strengths for the greatest possible effect.

The motion calls for actions related to the promotion of access to healthy foods, support for making healthy food choices and physical activity. In concert with key partners, we are promoting accessibility and availability of nutritious food.

For Canadians living in isolated northern communities, Nutrition North Canada is helping make nutritious perishable foods more accessible.

Another initiative, the Canada prenatal nutrition program, is helping communities provide support to prenatal and postpartum women facing challenging life circumstances by including nutritional information and breastfeeding support.

The community action program for children supports the healthy living of vulnerable young children and their families through the promotion of physical activity and nutrition.

Finally, Aboriginal Head Start includes meals, snacks and nutritious advice to address the development needs of our first nations children.

The government is also providing Canadians with information to help them make healthy food choices. This includes “Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide” and its culturally-tailored companion guide “Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide - First Nations, Inuit and Métis”. These guides provide evidence-based information about how much food Canadians need, what types of foods are better for Canadians and the importance of physical activity.

Canada's Food Guide is a resource for individuals, as well as health educators and professionals. The food guide also underpins nutrition and health policies, as well as educational programs across the country.

Moreover, the healthy eating awareness and education initiative was launched in October 2010 with the nutrition facts education campaign. The campaign focuses on consumers understanding how to use the nutrition facts table to help them make healthy food choices, with a focus on understanding the use of the daily value percentage.

Private Members' Business

At the summit on healthy weights, we announced a further investment of \$4 million for the initiative to continue to provide Canadians with the information needed to make healthy food choices.

We will do this by promoting healthy eating, using Canada's Food Guide, through outreach, partnerships, social media engagement and web tools.

While nutrition is a significant component of this motion, we are also promoting physical activity through programs like the children's fitness tax credit and the healthy living fund and providing information on how to get active. We are also using evidence to help develop effective programs and policies on childhood obesity.

Federal, provincial and territorial health ministers will report to Canadians every two years on childhood obesity trends and on progress being made across the country to tackle this challenge. This will help us to ensure the best value for our investment, while also allowing us to learn from the successful initiatives and to modify approaches as appropriate.

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion today. I still have a valid health care practitioner's licence, so I am always happy to talk about health-related issues, especially issues that have to do with children and youth.

This motion calls on the House to work with the provinces and territories, as well as with health stakeholders, to teach young people about obesity and problems associated with obesity. It also calls on the House to take measures to curb childhood obesity. Although I agree with this motion, I would like to say that I do not think it will do very much.

No one can disagree that obesity is a major problem in our society, but unfortunately, the wording of the motion does not add anything useful and will not achieve much on this issue.

I would like to point out that obesity is a serious health problem, especially when it begins in childhood. Obesity has a variety of effects on health. It can affect both physical and psychological health. We know that young people can be more isolated, have fewer opportunities to speak, have problems with their friends and have self-esteem problems.

In addition to physical health problems, there can be mental health problems. They can affect one's quality of life. Obese individuals cannot participate in the same activities. An obese individual might be unable to go out with friends because he cannot take part in the activity they are doing. There may also be an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Ultimately, obesity can affect life expectancy.

As we have seen, obesity can lead to many problems. For example, it can significantly increase the risk of many chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease, liver and gall bladder disease, stroke, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.

I want to point out that type 2 diabetes used to affect older people. The greater the demand on the pancreas, the more it deteriorates, and the more likely a person is to require medication. This type of

diabetes usually develops later in life, among people over 40. Now, however, we are seeing teenagers with type 2 diabetes. Our teenagers are suffering from old-age diabetes. This is a big problem.

Obese people also have a greater risk of developing cancer, particularly endometrial, breast and colon cancer. Obesity can also cause sleep apnea, which can even lead to death, since sufferers stop breathing in their sleep. It is very disturbing. It causes other respiratory problems, too.

In Canada, 26% of children aged 2 to 17 are overweight or obese. Twenty-six percent. That is a lot. That is one in every four kids.

Obesity rates are even higher in aboriginal populations. Approximately 20% of aboriginal children aged 6 to 14 who live off reserve are obese. Some 26.4% of aboriginal children aged 9 to 14 living on reserve are obese.

In light of all these facts, I think the government really needs to take a leadership role when it comes to promoting health and healthy lifestyles. The incidence of obesity and the problems it causes for Canadian families and on our health care system is truly significant. It is important to understand just how much obesity is weighing down our health care system.

According to recent estimates concerning the economic burden of obesity, it is costing the Canadian health care system somewhere between \$4.6 billion and \$7.1 billion a year.

The Conservatives have had those figures for years now, but have failed to show any leadership on a host of important health issues, including on regulating unhealthy foods, on offering solutions to provide full treatment for people with obesity and on funding physical activity programs.

Although the motion deals with obesity, it does not call for concrete measures to be adopted to deal directly with the problem of obesity.

● (1915)

In 2007—many of my colleagues were members of Parliament at the time—the Standing Committee on Health published a report entitled, "Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids". The report contained 13 key recommendations, the main one being that the government establish support programs and set targets for reducing childhood obesity rates, including a 10% reduction by 2020.

In this report, the committee also recommended immediately adopting measures to address childhood obesity among aboriginals. It listed various progressive and concrete strategies to reduce childhood obesity.

Private Members' Business

This committee report provides a real plan of action. It has concrete measures and the data to move forward. I think it is a shame that this motion does not take the recommendations in the report into account, in order to try to find something that will allow us to truly make progress in the fight against obesity.

The motion also calls for dialogue with industry. I agree that it is important to engage all stakeholders. However, at this point, we have had enough discussions with industry. That has been done, and it may be time to take a harder stance with industry about health-related matters. We want processed foods that are bad for our health to be regulated. The government has not dared do this. These are things the government could do, and it knows it.

Furthermore, this motion fails to consider an important aspect of the problem: the socio-economic factors of obesity. It is not by chance that aboriginal children are most affected. We know that they are deeply affected by poverty.

A family that has trouble making ends meet will find it much more difficult to provide a healthy and balanced diet for the children. That has to be taken into consideration. In Canada, two litres of milk cost approximately \$2.35 at the grocery store, while two litres of Coca-Cola cost 59¢. Then we wonder why Canadian families cannot make healthy choices when they have no money. It makes no sense that products that are good for health are more expensive and that Canadian families cannot afford them. We have to eliminate poverty if we want people to be healthier one day, and if we really want to fight obesity.

I would also like to point out that the NDP has always pushed for regulations governing trans fats in food in order to reduce the impact of poor food on obesity. Trans fats have various effects on health.

For example, in 2004, my colleague from Winnipeg Centre introduced a private member's motion to regulate the trans fat content in foods. The motion was adopted unanimously, but since then, the government has not followed up with any concrete measures. My colleague also introduced Bill C-303, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (trans fatty acids) to limit trans fatty acids to two grams per 100 grams.

The Conservative government is continuing to avoid taking concrete measures to address the problem of childhood obesity. Rather than simply talking about this issue, the government should be establishing health targets to reduce obesity rates, taking measures to regulate processed foods, and providing funding for physical fitness and nutrition programs. If the government does not immediately attack this problem and its underlying causes, the rising obesity rates will continue to have a serious impact on the health of Canadians and will continue to be a major burden on our health care system.

There have been enough studies of the issue of childhood obesity. There have been enough recommendations, and we have enough information to take much more concrete action on this issue. It is possible to have a much more proactive action plan that would allow us to take concrete action to combat obesity. The health of Canadian children depends on it.

● (1920)

[English]

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand in the House today to address a critical issue, childhood obesity, and to talk about how sectors of society, including government, are tackling this public health issue.

Helping children maintain healthy weights results in healthier living down the road and benefits Canada as a whole. To help support such efforts, I would like to speak in favour of Motion No. 319, introduced by my colleague, the hard-working member for Ottawa—Orléans. The motion before us builds on the momentum of recent federal actions and growing public awareness of the importance of promoting healthy weights, physical activity and healthy food choices for children and youth.

I have 10 grandchildren who are all very healthy. Not one of them is having a problem with obesity, but that has a lot to do with their parents' awareness of making sure their children have healthy foods and an active lifestyle. However, not all parents are doing that for their children, so we need to make sure there is awareness for parents of how they can better address this issue and ensure their children live healthy lifestyles.

The basis of the motion is the federal, provincial and territorial framework for action to promote healthy weights entitled, "Curbing Childhood Obesity". Through this framework, governments have agreed to make childhood obesity a collective priority to help create the conditions for healthy weights. The framework also encourages the federal government to continue multi-sector dialogue on creating the social and physical environments that support healthy eating and physical activity.

Before describing the elements of this motion, I would like to take a moment to outline the childhood obesity situation in Canada. Obesity rates have never been higher in Canada. It is particularly concerning that today children face obesity rates that are three times higher than they were 25 years ago. This comes with clear human and economic costs. Reducing childhood obesity levels and promoting healthy weights is critical to the prevention of illness.

Increasingly, obese children are being diagnosed with a range of health conditions seen almost exclusively among adults, including type 2 diabetes and even high blood pressure. Estimates of the direct health care costs of obesity go as high as \$6 billion a year. Therefore efforts to promote health, and thereby reduce chronic disease, make good sense.

Private Members' Business

If we do not address the issue of obesity in young Canadians now, we risk seeing the first generation of children who will have a lower life expectancy than that of their parents. Addressing the challenges posed by obesity is not a simple task. In order to make an impact, it will require the involvement of multiple levels of government and numerous sectors of society. As we go about reducing obesity rates, it is important that we examine many factors, including those that are biological, behavioural, psychological, technological, environmental, social, economic and cultural. All Canadians have a role to play in making sure our children are provided with the best opportunities to make healthy choices for maintaining healthy weights. It will not be a quick fix, and it will require a sustained effort.

That is why I am here today encouraging support for this motion, so that we can build on the momentum of current efforts to address obesity. Motion No. 319 contains four elements. Each element builds on agreed-upon directions that encourage a collaborative approach to promoting healthy choices. This motion encourages the federal government to continue its dialogue with the provinces, territories, industry, numerous health-related stakeholders and Canadians to promote and maintain healthy weights for children and youth.

Last year, for example, the federal government, along with the provinces and territories, launched a national dialogue about healthy weights, known as “Our Health, Our Future”. The dialogue was a basis for public engagement across the country with a diverse group of Canadians and organizations who collaborated to identify areas for action.

● (1925)

Through this dialogue we have heard from youth, non-governmental organizations, aboriginal organizations, health professionals, the provinces and territories, industry and Canadians. Approximately 1,000 individuals and organizations were engaged in this dialogue. Online consultations and social media were a key part of public engagement, which helped to increase participation. What Canadians told us will help guide further action in this area.

Another significant milestone was the summit on healthy weights, which took place this past February. The summit was a collaborative effort of federal, provincial and territorial governments, co-hosted by our federal health minister. It was an opportunity for representatives across many sectors to put their heads together and focus on healthy eating, active living, creating supportive environments and promoting multi-sectoral partnerships.

The summit also brought together a diverse range of individuals and organizations, resulting in a unique forum for open discussion. It inspired new ideas and forged new relationships, paving the way for collaborative action to promote and maintain healthy weights in children and youth.

Such collaborative discussions are what this motion proposes to continue. The motion calls for the federal government to further encourage discussions to address the factors that lead to obesity. These factors include social and physical environments, physical activity and promotion of and access to nutritious food.

In the curbing childhood obesity framework, federal, provincial and territorial governments agreed to identify and address the risk factors that can lead to obesity in children and youth. An example

would be focusing on making the environments where children live, learn and play more supportive of physical activity and healthy eating. Schools, for example, like other places where children live, learn and play, are an important setting to promote healthy eating and physical activity.

As members know, for most Canadians responsibility for school health lies with the provincial and territorial governments and school boards. Many provinces and territories have developed school nutrition policies and programs as part of more comprehensive school health programs.

We also know that the various levels of governments can do even more when we all work together. A good example of this is the Joint Consortium for School Health. The consortium is a federal, provincial and territorial partnership that brings the health and education sectors together to promote the health of children and youth in school settings. This type of national collaboration and co-operation facilitates the sharing of knowledge, the leveraging of resources and stronger alignment between sectors.

In addition, making healthy food choices available and accessible, particularly nutritious foods, remains important to Canadians.

The federal government supports healthier eating through the nutrition north Canada program. This program provides a subsidy to lower the cost of transporting perishable healthy foods to isolated northern communities.

As well, the aboriginal head start program helps address the developmental needs of first nations children by supporting efforts to improve access to the availability of healthy meals, snacks and nutritional advice.

The Canada prenatal nutrition program is another example of a collaborative program that recognizes the importance of early intervention. This program assists communities in providing nutritional information and breastfeeding support to prenatal and postpartum women facing challenging life circumstances.

Collective community-based supports are also available to Canadians through the community action program for children, which promotes the healthy development of vulnerable young children and their families.

The motion calls for the federal government to encourage individuals and organizations to commit to participating in the promotion of healthy weights. This is why I feel that this motion is worthy of support from all members of this House.

● (1930)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rising in the House today to support the motion of the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans. Motion M-319 seeks to find solutions to a serious problem: childhood obesity. The NDP strongly supports this initiative. Obesity rates are skyrocketing and are having a serious impact on the health of Canadian families and on our health care system.

Private Members' Business

The hon. member has four main points. First, he suggests that the government continue its dialogue with the provinces, territories, health stakeholders, industry and Canadians to promote and maintain healthy weight for children and youth. In short, he is proposing that we continue to talk about childhood obesity.

Second, he recommends that the government encourage discussions to address the factors that lead to obesity, such as social and physical environments, physical activity, as well as the promotion of and access to nutritious food. Once again, he is suggesting that we talk some more.

Third, he recommends that the government encourage individuals and organizations to commit to participating in the promotion of a healthy weight, but he does not suggest any concrete ways of doing this.

Lastly, the motion urges the government to consider the framework for action entitled "Curbing Childhood Obesity" that resulted from the endorsement of the Declaration on Prevention and Promotion by the federal, provincial and territorial health ministers. It calls on all stakeholders to take action to address obesity, particularly in children, promote physical activity and make healthy food choices.

The motion would help increase awareness of this issue among Canadians and would create a dialogue with a view to addressing obesity rates in Canada. This objective is important, but the NDP thinks that we must go further than that.

Furthermore, the NDP has always called for regulations on trans fats in foods, in order to reduce the impact that poor food choices can have on childhood obesity.

In 2004, my colleague from Winnipeg Centre moved a private member's motion to regulate trans fat content in foods. The motion was adopted unanimously, but since then, the government has not followed up with any action. My colleague also introduced Bill C-303, which would limit trans fatty acids. The government has not taken any action since then.

It is critical that we take swift and early action to curb childhood obesity. An obese child is 20% more likely to struggle with weight problems in adulthood. Obese teens are an alarming 80% more likely, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. These numbers are extremely disturbing.

Healthy lifestyle habits must be acquired early on because they are not innate. The best example is enjoyment of physical activity. A child who has active parents and who is encouraged to participate in sports at school will be more likely to maintain those good habits throughout his lifetime.

With all of that in mind, I am worried about how little physical activity kids get in school.

Meaningful steps should be taken to make our environments more conducive to physical activity, to curtail marketing of foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and to increase the availability of nutritious foods at reasonable prices.

Childhood obesity affects physical health as well as a child's emotional health and social life. Children with poor self-esteem can

be in for a lifelong struggle. We all know how some kids bully others who are different, which can have serious short- and long-term repercussions.

That is why I support my colleague's motion. However, we must go further by calling for meaningful action as soon as possible.

• (1935)

Several reports have made clear recommendations. In 2007, the Standing Committee on Health examined the issue of childhood obesity. I was surprised to see that the recommendations made by that committee were not included in Motion M-319. For instance, in its report entitled "Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids", the committee recommends that the federal government establish clear targets to reduce the rate of childhood obesity, suggesting a 2% reduction by 2020.

The report also suggests that the government should present an annual report to Parliament on overall efforts to attain healthy weights for children and on the results achieved. These recommendations were based on evidence from experts in the field, but the member for Ottawa—Orléans chose not to follow their advice.

The provinces have shown that it is possible to take action and really reduce childhood obesity rates. In Alberta, for instance, a program called "Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It!" has really helped reduce children's body mass index and body fat percentages. It has also improved their eating habits, increased their physical activity and improved their confidence and self-esteem.

Nova Scotia has also taken measures to eliminate childhood obesity by establishing a food and nutrition policy for the province's public schools that teaches the students to make healthy food choices and only allows food service in schools that meet specific nutrition criteria.

In Quebec, the organization "Québec en Forme" is working to promote the adoption and maintenance of healthy eating habits and a physically active lifestyle for Quebec youth from birth to 17 as essential elements of their full development and educational success. To do this, Québec en Forme is present throughout Quebec, to support communities and organizations that promote projects that establish all the necessary conditions to make it fun and easy for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to move more and eat better on a daily basis.

It is time for the Conservative government to follow the provinces' example and show some leadership. With national standards, such as the Standing Committee on Health report called for, obesity rates could drop across Canada. The motion also calls for dialogue with the industry, but so far the government just bows to industry on matters of health, allowing unhealthy processed foods to go unregulated.

Therefore, I will be supporting the hon. member's initiative, and I hope that the government will follow up with real action soon. It is not enough to talk about the rising rate of childhood obesity; we must do something about it. The time has come. I call on the rest of the Conservative caucus to follow the example of the member for Ottawa—Orléans and address this important issue by introducing a bill that will turn words into action.

Private Members' Business

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP caucus has decided to vote in favour of Motion M-319, introduced by the member for Ottawa—Orléans, because obesity rates are skyrocketing and they will have a considerable impact on the health of Canadian families and on our health system.

It is important to raise Canadians' awareness of this issue and to create a dialogue that will attack obesity rates in Canada. This is a good initiative and I would like to thank the member for Ottawa—Orléans bringing it forward.

I support the principle of the motion. That being said, and although it is important to make people aware of the impact of childhood obesity, the Conservative government continues to avoid implementing concrete measures that will really attack the problem.

Even worse, some of its new policies, contained in the mammoth Bill C-38, are contrary to this motion. It seems that the government does not have a truly coherent policy to fight childhood obesity. I will come back to that.

As I indicated earlier, I support the principle of this bill because this is a worrisome problem. Obesity is defined as an abnormal or excessive accumulation of body fat, which can be harmful to health. Over 60% of adults age 18 and over—14.1 million Canadians—are overweight or obese. Overall, 26% of Canadian children between the ages of 2 and 17 are overweight or obese. So, it makes sense that this could result in significant costs.

Recent estimates of the economic burden of obesity in Canada range from \$4.6 billion to \$7.1 billion a year—and I did say “billion”.

The causes of obesity are complex. They can be social, cultural, environmental or behavioural, to name a few. However, two major risk factors for obesity are physical inactivity and poor nutrition. Obesity dramatically increases the risk of many chronic illnesses, including cardiovascular disease, liver and gallbladder diseases, stroke, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cancer, sleep apnea, respiratory problems and more.

In light of these facts, the Conservatives are content to merely table a motion that invites the government to continue its dialogue with the provinces, territories and health stakeholders and encourage discussions to address the factors that lead to obesity. However, everyone knows what these factors are. Instead, the government needs to take active measures to combat obesity.

Instead of simply encouraging dialogue, the government must take real, concrete action, such as establishing obesity rate reduction targets, funding physical activity programs for everyone and regulating processed foods. The government is not taking an active role in fighting rising obesity rates. It simply produces documents entitled, “Declaration on Prevention and Promotion” and “Curbing Childhood Obesity: A Federal, Provincial and Territorial Framework for Action to Promote Healthy Weights”. These documents have to do with health promotion strategies and focus especially on healthy living awareness campaigns.

In 2007, however, the Standing Committee on Health released a report entitled, “Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids”. Announced by many progressive—

● (1940)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ryan Leef): I am sorry to interrupt, we now have to move to the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans for his five-minute right of reply. My apologies for having to interrupt you at this point.

● (1945)

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again today to speak to my motion, Motion No. 319 regarding childhood nutrition. This motion is important to me, and I realize it is important to members from all corners of the House.

I want to thank the members who have participated in this debate, including the hon. members for Mississauga South, Don Valley East, Okanagan—Shuswap, Beauharnois—Salaberry, Halifax West, Beaches—East York, Etobicoke North.

[*Translation*]

The member for Berthier—Maskinongé made a particularly eloquent speech. I also thank the members for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert and Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*English*]

The member for Vancouver Centre had a bit of an angry tinge in her speech and blamed the government for doing nothing. I thought that was pretty rich coming from a member who has been here for nearly 20 years. She had good statistics on the increase in childhood obesity. Unfortunately, she did not mention that the increase in childhood obesity happened mostly on her watch, especially as she is a physician.

[*Translation*]

Canada is facing this problem, which, over time, has become an epidemic. We can no longer turn a blind eye to it, but instead we must begin an open discussion on childhood obesity.

Over the past 25 years, rates of obesity and overweight have nearly tripled.

[*English*]

The reality is startling. Today, over one in four children in Canada is overweight or obese.

[*Translation*]

Children who are obese are at increased risk of being overweight or obese as adults.

Childhood obesity is now a challenge to the health of Canadians and the Canadian economy.

[*English*]

We know that childhood obesity increases the risk of chronic conditions, such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and certain types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer. We are seeing more and more of these chronic conditions in Canada and worldwide. Chronic disease has a devastating impact on individuals and families.

Government Orders

[Translation]

In addition, it is estimated that health care costs directly related to obesity are as high as \$6 billion per year.

Reversing the trend is a complex challenge.

[English]

Several factors are at play and may be contributing to the increasing rate of overweight and obesity. For example, biological, behavioural, social, psychological, technical, environmental, economic and cultural factors may tip the balance toward obesity.

[Translation]

That is why many sectors of society have a role to play in promoting healthy weight.

[English]

As members can see, Motion No. 319 is about encouraging the promotion and maintenance of healthy weights for children and youth, building on Curbing Childhood Obesity, the federal-provincial-territorial framework for action to promote healthy weights. It encourages dialogue across sectors and also among individuals and organizations to address the factors that lead to obesity.

[Translation]

Engagement and collaboration are essential to mobilizing action to promote healthy weight, so they are fundamental to this motion.

[English]

It encourages the federal government to continue to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles as well as engagement and collaboration in the promotion of healthy weights. Our children need to live, learn and play in health-promoting and supportive environments where healthy choices are the easy choice. The federal government is on the right path. It has undertaken a number of significant initiatives in collaboration with others to promote and maintain healthy weights among children and youth.

[Translation]

I encourage all members to support this motion so that our children can live in a world where good health and good lifestyle habits are a priority.

I thank the hon. members on both sides of the House for supporting this motion.

[English]

The Speaker: The time provided for debate has expired.

● (1950)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 19, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-27, An Act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of First Nations, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that the question be now put.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing has two and a half minutes left to conclude her remarks.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we are extremely concerned that this bill not only ignores a simple solution, but is overly punitive as well. The punishments spelled out in Bill C-27 are extreme and as bitter as the prescription itself. Consider that bands which do not comply with the demands could have their funding withheld or have a funding agreement terminated by the minister. How would that improve education, housing or the infrastructure challenges that many of these communities face? New Democrats do not see the need to divert more money to a new level of bureaucracy to reproduce much of what has already been done in a new format.

One of those demands is that information be made available online on a website. As someone who represents a northern rural constituency, I can tell members that this is not always possible. People in my riding know that it is enough of a challenge to get service to relatively accessible areas like Manitoulin Island and can see that website reporting could become a hurdle that some bands might not pass.

As we already know, non-compliance could see a funding agreement terminated or funds withheld. We see this as an overly harsh punishment that would do nothing to help those first nations who depend on these funding arrangements to provide safe water, keep their schools operating and pay social assistance for individuals who need it. When viewed that way, the punishment is far too extreme.

Government Orders

Again, New Democrats believe that there are already sufficient reporting processes in place and funding agreements could be modified to address the handful of worst-case scenarios the government seems to be intent on basing this heavy-handed, red-tape-filled legislation on. The government would do well to go back to the drawing board with Bill C-27, beginning with the full consultation of first nations, which is the biggest and most glaring omission in the entire process to date. The government should consult, reflect on the advice of the Auditor General and remember the more pressing needs of Canada's first nations communities.

We have heard over and over again on this side of the House that this is a piece of legislation that should not be implemented. There are already safeguards in place to address this issue and this is just duplication.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member's comments, one could easily jump to the conclusion that the NDP will be voting against this piece of legislation. Is that a fair assessment at this point?

• (1955)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, of course we will be voting against this. This bill is actually a duplication of what is already there. It would put in a level of accountability never seen with other organizations. This was all because the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, which is a friend of the Conservatives, said that, in its opinion, some first nations chiefs were making too much money. We should look at the average salary for chiefs. It is actually \$60,000 and the average salary for councillors is about \$31,000. Therefore, 50% of the chiefs earn less than \$60,000 and only 5% earn more than \$100,000.

When we look at that, it is quite evident that because there are perhaps special circumstances out there, the government feels it needs to change the whole thing instead of really addressing the critical issues that impact first nations, like housing, drinking water and education.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple.

Concerning first nations, it seems to me that there should be a nation-to-nation consultation process to clarify this situation and implement a process that works for both parties.

Can my colleague expand on that? From what I can tell, this is yet another interventionist measure by the Conservatives, relying more on punishment than on finding a mutually agreeable solution.

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. I indicated, as did my colleagues, that this is a punitive measure. The government should be addressing the critical issues that are really impacting first nations and it should have done proper consultations before tabling such a bill.

We should not forget that a similar bill was tabled in the previous Parliament and major concerns were raised on it. For a government that says that it was looking at building a better relationship with first nations through its apology to the residential schools survivors and through the Crowns-First Nations Gathering, meeting, we are seeing

again that they are just being thrown other aspects of what the government feels is not accountable.

At the end of the day, we have a government that is undemocratic, unaccountable and not transparent. Over and over we have seen it, whether it is with the F-35s, the hotels or expensive orange juice, the government has refused to provide proper information so parliamentarians can do their work. Instead it chooses to attack our first nations people who are some of the most accountable people in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her excellent speech.

Does she not think it would have been better to focus directly on the Indian Act—as all groups, including the first nations, are calling for—instead of creating a bill like this that will only bog down the administrative system even more? That is not what the first nations need.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question.

If we want to make changes, if we need to fix some problems with the first nations, we absolutely must hold consultations. The first nations are the ones that can tell us what will work best in their communities. Consultation is very important.

However, as I said about this government and transparency, it will just react to one or two situations instead of really looking at the overall picture of how to better help people in our communities.

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very excited to start my speech on the financial transparency of first nations.

From the various speeches I have been regularly putting online, my constituents will be aware that I tend towards lifting the veil of darkness surrounding a number of issues specific to the first nations of Canada. These issues must be made public. After 500 years of a shared existence, the entire Canadian population is ready and able to learn about these realities that are too often ignored and forgotten.

There is a growing anti-establishment movement around the world. I am talking about international politics, but this is also evident at the local level. Just look at Quebec, where the public has been mobilizing. Of course, it is an international movement, since we are also seeing an anti-establishment movement in Europe, where people are questioning their government's actions and measures. What I will try to show here is that, of course, this increased assertiveness is universal, and that aboriginal communities are also experiencing the same problems and the same type of public mobilization.

Over the past year, we have discussed many topics related to my riding. My riding even received media coverage, which has rarely happened in the past, other than once, about 10 years ago, when the community mobilized and became more assertive.

Government Orders

A few months ago, the newspapers covered a specific situation involving a protest and the presence of the riot squad in my community. A roadblock had been set up on Highway 138. The situation did not last long, but it required police intervention.

People were protesting a hydroelectric development project promoted by the provincial authorities and supported by the community's management organization, the band council. And so, the people took action. Their actions at that time showed that they were rejecting certain policies and decisions made at the local level. The members of a first nations community were making a new socio-economic and political statement and questioning the action taken by government and local authorities with regard to decisions made locally.

When we analyze the changes and the political turmoil happening in the communities we can infer that there is a socio-political awakening and a mobilization among aboriginal people. This wave of assertiveness is invariably accompanied by internal pressure on community administrative bodies and demands for accountability in the management of the community's shared heritage. When I talk about shared heritage for the Innu people, I am talking about the land and the fisheries and wildlife resources.

As I have said many times, my riding covers over 200,000 km² and is the traditional territory of the Innu and Naskapi people. I make special mention of this because it is important to understand that the band councils, the community management organizations, are a creation of the Indian Act. Under this act, the authority and jurisdiction of aboriginal people extends only to reserve lands. For example, my reserve is perhaps only 2 km in diameter, which is not very big.

The reason people are protesting more and joining forces has to do with land and resource management. Band councils, community management organizations, are also concerned about traditional territory and they are acting as interlocutors with both federal and provincial governments with respect to resource development initiatives. What we are seeing now is that the people, as individuals, as aboriginals, as Innu and Naskapi, are taking a stand and making their point.

The problem is that Aboriginal Affairs has imposed a cookie-cutter approach that requires every community across Canada to have a band council with a chief and councillors.

● (2000)

The same model exists in the United States and other colonies. This blanket approach has been applied across Canada. My ancestors were a fundamentally nomadic people who migrated across the land for several months of the year—as many as six months a year—in small family groups of about 10 individuals. Five or six hundred years ago, my community's culture made for minimal contact with other groups.

Within those groups, there were elders, and decisions were made within each separate group. There were no chiefs or counsellors per se other than the fact that, come summer, the Innu regularly met at the river's edge to take advantage of the wind that chased away mosquitoes. It is likely that consensus decisions were made then,

when many Innu got together, but most of the time, people lived in isolated groups.

That is why we have this problem now and why people are no longer supporting some of the decisions made by band councils made up of chiefs and councillors. This model is not necessarily applicable to all communities.

Based on that observation, it is possible to consider that the circumstances favouring a healthy questioning of the ruling power, combined with the current political zeitgeist in the communities in my riding and across the province, can only be a sign of innovative ideas laying the foundation for a new social contract to benefit the masses, rather than just special interest groups.

And now I will get to the heart of the matter.

Although the stated purpose of Bill C-27 is to enhance the transparency of first nations people, it is up to the people, as individuals, to take the necessary action to ensure transparency and accountability at all levels of governance in their respective nations.

What I am trying to emphasize here is that this is a contentious issue that must be addressed internally, from within these communities, concerning the management of both financial and natural resources. These decisions must be made within the communities themselves. In the past, Innu communities had a process we call “émulatoire”; it was a consensus process. When a problem arose within the clan, you simply confronted your adversary, the person with whom you had a conflict, and told that person the simple truth.

This is how things are still resolved today, and that is why the people of my community—and I will speak for all communities in Manicouagan, including Uashat, Unamen Shipu and Kawawachikamach—are able to confront their leaders and ultimately discover the truth about how resources are managed within the community.

The Conservatives are hardly in any position to demand accountability right now, since they have a very hard time sharing financial information themselves, concerning the management of this country.

I submit this respectfully.

● (2005)

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member tell us, in his view, how aboriginals on the reserves in his riding might react to such a bill?

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her question.

I can already guarantee that this bill will not be received warmly since Canada's aboriginal communities are rather inclined to rise up against any interventionist initiative that interferes with their governance.

Government Orders

We are in a period of assertion and self-determination, and that is our ultimate goal. The communities are putting these strategies forward. This measure is paternalistic, which is nothing new really, but this time the government has gone too far. Believe me, the communities are not going to look very kindly on this.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments.

The government says that the bill has to be referred to committee, where the necessary changes will be made for the passage of this bill. I do not know whether my colleague agrees with me or not, but in the case of the Trojan Horse budget bill that was introduced, we tried to make improvements that would have softened the blow for some people and minimized the most serious repercussions.

What does he think? Does he truly believe that the Conservatives will adopt amendments in committee and be open to the opposition parties' amendments?

• (2010)

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. After spending one year in this place, I humbly believe that measures concerning aboriginal affairs put forward by the Conservatives are just window dressing, as was somewhat the case for the meeting they organized, which was supposed to be historic and inclusive. It was just a photo op, an opportunity to get good press and look good.

When we take a closer look and even look back at what has actually been done, it is easy to see that it was window dressing and that the measures were proposed simply to score political points.

I highly doubt that the Conservatives will show any particular interest in the recommendations that may ultimately be made by the communities with respect to this bill which, by the way, is quite problematic.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Mr. Speaker, are the various communities going to support one another?

The Attikamekw live in my riding. Are the people from the hon. member's riding, for example, going to enter into agreements with other reserves to work together?

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

There is a kind of unity among various communities. However, there are differences across Canada, including linguistic differences, that are problematic. I have looked into it. People in my community are able to understand the Cree, the Algonquin and the Attikamekw peoples. There are linguistic differences, but everyone shares a common understanding.

I think that older people are better able to understand each other. This has been observed in the past. After 25,000 years of territorial occupation, I think there have been contacts and exchanges. There are also economic, political and social interests that vary from one community to the next. There is a kind of unity right now, particularly between the Innu and the Naskapi. Looking at my community and neighbouring communities, that is what I see now.

Of course, there is the AFNQL and the national Assembly of First Nations, but people often express differing opinions. That is fine. We cannot expect to achieve consensus in every area and on every issue.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I stand to speak to what I believe is a very important bill. In fact, I thought what was most interesting was the title, an act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of first nations.

When I think of financial accountability and transparency, I must admit that one of the first things that comes to my mind is the Minister of International Cooperation. Members will recall the \$16 cup of orange juice. I think it was orange juice from concentrate. Canadians were quite upset about that issue. Then we found out about the limousine services. This minister, after getting caught, seemed to admit that maybe she did do something wrong and would repay the taxpayer as a result. Therefore, it is with a little bit of irony that I approach the bill and I see across the way on a daily basis that particular minister who has incurred some fairly outrageous expenditures. I think the \$16 glass of orange juice is one of them.

I say this because there is no doubt that there are issues with tax dollars being used in one form or another. With Bill C-27, we are talking about public tax dollars that go toward our first nation community in the sense of wanting more accountability and transparency. I do not question the importance of that. However, equally, it is important for us to highlight that, through different forms of sensationalism, an issue can be brought to the public's attention with fairly significant repercussions.

One of those repercussions, which I made reference to, was from the \$16 glass of orange juice. That does not necessarily mean that every minister is out there buying a glass of orange juice at \$16, at least I suspect not. I have not asked through freedom of information or with an order paper question, but I am going to assume that the vast majority of cabinet ministers are not ordering \$16 cups of orange juice and then billing the taxpayer.

However, with Bill C-27, the government is trying to paint with a very wide brush many individuals, leaderships and others within our first nations. The government is trying to give the message as if the whole group of them are in need of some sense of being held accountable and ensuring there is more transparency.

The reality is quite different. We find that in many cases our first nations have a higher sense of accountability than we would find in the government. First nations do that in good part by their own will by using the Internet and the public meetings that they have on the reserves as an example.

This is where we really need to be concerned. It is the approach in which the government tries to address issues of this nature that has to cause a great deal of concern. The government does have a choice: working with our aboriginal community, or trying to force things onto our aboriginal community. If it does the latter, one would expect the stakeholders to be quite offended, and justifiably so.

To what degree has the Conservative government made any genuine attempt to sit down with the stakeholders before even presenting this piece of legislation?

Government Orders

I challenge the government members to stand in their place and tell us exactly what form of consultation they had with the stakeholders on this particular issue before drafting the legislation and bringing it into the House of Commons.

● (2015)

I would argue that is the difference, in essence, between the Liberal Party and the Conservative/Reform Party: there is a great deal more respect toward our first nations, toward our aboriginal people, coming from the Liberal Party than we will see from the Conservative Party.

We look for the type of actions the government takes in order to be able to show it is taking an issue seriously. The best example, an example that I think speaks volumes and one of the most significant actions that has been taken in the last 10, 15, 20 years was when Paul Martin was the Prime Minister and he was able to bring the stakeholders together. The stakeholders came together and came up with what was known as the Kelowna accord. The Kelowna accord addressed a wide variety of issues. What I like the most about the Kelowna accord is that it was an accord that was achieved by working with the different stakeholders. That is what made the Kelowna accord an agreement that was worthy of the support of the House of Commons.

Imagine the disappointment back in 2006, when the Conservatives ultimately got rid of the Kelowna accord. It is one of the sad stories of the House of Commons, when the New Democrats and the Conservatives voted against the Paul Martin government and ultimately ended a lot of progressive ideas and actions that were being taken at that time.

There are many of us who will not forget that. Whether it was child care, health care reforms that ensured more health care dollars going into the system, or the Kelowna accord, we valued these programs and felt they were worthy of support. We were quite disappointed when the government, in its wisdom, made the decision to get rid of the Kelowna accord, at a great cost.

Last year we had the incident out in Attawapiskat, which garnered a great deal of attention nationwide. The types of issues that were being discussed in the media, in the one-on-one discussions with those individuals who went to the reserve, and in many discussions having taken place here in Ottawa, were in fact a part of the Kelowna accord.

The Kelowna accord was not just an agreement; it was an agreement that brought in cash resources and good will, not only from the Government of Canada but from the other stakeholders. It had in place, within that accord, issues dealing with accountability. It included a mutual accountability framework, which would have addressed many of the issues this bill is trying to deal with.

Upon reflection, I look at this issue and recognize it as a very important issue. I can recall a former colleague of mine from the Manitoba legislature who came to Ottawa and ultimately became head of the Treasury Board, Reg Alcock. Reg had a very strong passion for the aboriginal people and believed we needed to do more.

I made reference to Paul Martin and his efforts. We could talk about the interim leader. When the interim leader was the premier of

Ontario and there were concerns related to water, our current interim leader made the decision that this is an issue that has to be dealt with. He was not prepared to wait for Ottawa to try to resolve it. He felt this was something we needed to get directly involved in, even though many would argue it was a federal responsibility.

● (2020)

We need to recognize that, in order to deal with the many different aboriginal issues, there needs to be a high sense of co-operation from all of the different stakeholders. We need to recognize that the tribal chiefs and councils have an important role to play in this and that it cannot work without their support going forward. In fact, they need to provide, and have provided in many ways, the leadership on the issue. We need to recognize that it goes beyond that in the sense that the federal government needs to treat the issue and the leadership from within the first nations community more seriously, provide more respect and start working with people on how we can facilitate what needs to get done in order to improve opportunities for all people.

If the stakeholders do not get directly involved, the chances of success are greatly diminished. When that is diminished, we are really saying that we are prepared to sacrifice the lives of many children. That is why the Liberal Party looks at this issue and says that we are losing time by not being more aggressive on this file. We need the Reg Alcocks, the Paul Martins, the Phil Fontaines and the many other leaders from within the first nations community to feel that there is a high sense of willingness to move forward on these important issues, to get engaged, to start talking about it and to have the dialogue.

The bill itself is all about financial accountability. What is the message the government is trying to convey to Canadians, in particular first nations, about how it feels on this particular issue? Given its lack of consultation and willingness to work with the first nations leadership, I am drawn to the conclusion that it wants to send a political message that is of a very negative nature, which causes a great deal of concern.

Members should be very much aware, as I cited earlier, that a \$16 glass of orange juice got a fair number of Canadians upset. If every minister were as abusive in terms of buying orange juice, I believe the public would be exceptionally upset with the government. That is the reason that I believe the message it is trying to send is that of a negative nature. It is saying that there is not enough transparency and accountability on reserves and that is the reason it is bringing forward this legislation. Then, no doubt, the government provides stories in the background about why it is justified.

There were alternatives. The primary alternative would have been to work with the stakeholders to see how this legislation could have been brought in with the support of all members of the House of Commons.

● (2025)

I ask members to imagine that the Conservatives had the support of the NDP and the Liberals on Bill C-27 and that they were able to garner that support because they went to the stakeholders with their primary concern being the children living on and off our reserves.

Government Orders

A vast majority of the first nations leadership want accountability. They are not fearful of accountability or transparency. I know my constituents want accountability and transparency but that applies to the government and what the government is doing, such as the \$16 orange juice. They want the Government of Canada to be accountable. They want accountability at the provincial level and the city level. They want accountability of all tax dollars that are being spent. They want to ensure there is transparency.

I can assure members of the House that there is a willingness, even, I suspect, from some of the backbench Conservatives, to see more transparency within the federal government. If there were a free or maybe a secret ballot vote we might see some of them saying yes to it.

I can assure members there are many individuals who are part of the stakeholders I am referring to who support accountability and transparency. I believe they would not object to a bill that affirms those beliefs but it should have been done in co-operation. Instead, we have a bill that has been brought forward to score some political points. I do not agree with the political points they are attempting to score here, but I believe that is the reason they are bringing the bill forward.

What will happen as a direct result? The legislation does have some serious problems with it. Our critic for aboriginal affairs is a lady who has been exceptionally passionate about a wide variety of aboriginal issues and has consistently been there and listened to what individuals on or off reserve have had to say about it. She has consistently, on behalf of the Liberal Party, raised issues that are impacting our first nations to the floor of the House of Commons. These are the types of issues we have been raising. Bill C-27 is no different. Nothing will change. We will bring forward amendments to try to make the bill more sellable and more fair.

Some of it is almost a no-brainer. For example, why would we obligate a business that is on a reserve to open its books when it might be competing with other businesses outside the reserve, or even if it is a business that is located outside. The point is that there are many issues within the bill that need to be addressed.

At the end of the day, we are hoping that the government will be open to amendments. Ideally, from the Liberal Party's perspective, how wonderful it would be if the committee itself actually made the decision to go out to a reserve and listen to a reserve first-hand on the bill. Why not identify half a dozen reserves, sit down as a committee and listen to what the reserves have to say about the bill, if a bill of whatever nature is something that would be acceptable? It would be a bold move by the government but I would suggest—

• (2030)

The Speaker: Questions and comments. The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member recognized and took note of the supreme irony of introducing a bill on the very day that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has to sue the government in order to get basic information on which all of us rely in order to make informed decisions in this place. Is it not hugely ironic that a bill that is designed for transparency and accountability for some people does not apply to the government?

We have the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, created and given a mandate by the Conservative government in the first bill that it came in on, and when the Parliamentary Budget Officer asks for basic information from 80-some departments and agencies, which is their spending plans going forward, more than 70 of them just blow him off on the instructions of the Prime Minister. It appears that there is accountability for some but not for the Conservative government. How ironic is that?

I just wonder whether the hon. member would consider moving an amendment and that the amendment might be that the accountability in this bill be paralleled by accountability by the Government of Canada, and that we have the same transparency in the Government of Canada that is expected in this bill.

• (2035)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague was talking about the issue, the word that popped into my mind was “hypocrisy”. That might be an applicable term in the particular situation as he described, which I thought was a fair assessment. When we have the Parliamentary Budget Officer asking for more transparency and accountability and the government saying no, there are some problems with consistency.

There are many examples we could use but I will use the \$16 orange juice example, which is a relatively inexpensive one. However, we could go to the other extreme. How many of us are familiar with the F-35? We are talking about billions of dollars in this case and the government does not provide any information that is credible or legitimate to the public. We still do not know how much or how many F-35s we are talking about. Those are basic questions and yet the government has failed to be accountable on that issue and has failed to be transparent in terms of what has been done on that particular file where we are talking about billions of dollars.

I think there is a lot room for improvement with this bill, especially if the government wants to be consistent in what it would oblige our first nations to do.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's speech has brought to my mind the discussion that took place in 2004-2005 that ultimately led to the historic Kelowna accord with aboriginal people in this country. It involved 18 months of detailed consultations with five national aboriginal organizations, 30 different departments of the federal government, 10 provinces and three territories. It was a very successful and cordial effort at bringing people together to find common solutions.

Kelowna touched upon housing, water, education, health, economic development and, most critically apropos the subject tonight, it talked about governance, accountability and transparency. Work plans were put together in all of these areas for the Government of Canada, the provinces, the territories and aboriginal organizations to move forward together, and those work plans were fully funded.

Government Orders

The point is that under the area of governance, accountability and transparency, the idea had emerged from the former chief of the Assembly of First Nations for a first nations auditor general to pursue this notion of accountability, transparency and good governance in terms of the operations of all first nations across the country.

I wonder what the hon. member thinks of the idea of a first nations auditor general, who would be trained and developed by the Auditor General of Canada. What about that idea to improve the transparency among first nations in this country?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the question illustrates something I was attempting to emphasize earlier, the fact that many different leaders within the first nations and aboriginal communities have fantastic ideas that would really make a difference. The idea of a first nations auditor general came from that leadership and was supported by the Liberal Party of Canada. That idea would be of great benefit, and I understand that is going to be one of the amendments. That is why I say the government needs to have an open mind on this issue. Such an amendment would really make a positive difference.

With regard to the Kelowna accord, I cannot help but think about how massive a project it was to bring all the stakeholders together to develop that plan. The Paul Martin government ultimately pulled it all together. I am sure it saddens many individuals, even many of my colleagues, to see that plan flushed down the toilet by an insensitive, uncaring Conservative government that did not see the value of working with our first nations people and aboriginal leadership, because we would have answers to many of today's problems if the Kelowna accord was still with us.

• (2040)

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member touched on the theme that a failure to lead by example is a failure to lead. He touched on several instances of the government failing to lead by example and, therefore, failing to lead. For example, he touched on the notion that while the Conservatives espouse accountability for others, they seldom impose accountability on themselves. Several instances were mentioned, but I would like to point out some others.

For example, the Prime Minister's Office itself refuses to divulge key pieces of information on decision-making. In fact, the chief of staff to the Prime Minister has to exempt himself, and we are not really sure exactly what he is exempt from and what he is allowed to participate in, because of a very convoluted tree—well, a shrub—of conflict that exists within the Prime Minister's Office.

I would ask the hon. member this: does he feel as though the government is leading by example or not leading at all?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe the government is very lacking in the area of leadership on the whole aboriginal file and that the member is right in his assertion that government does need to give more attention to the file.

I cite Attawapiskat as an example. When it came to the floor of the House as an issue, the leader of the Liberal Party or the Liberal Party

critic went out to check it out first-hand and to meet with individuals. Where was the government?

There could be other issues around it and so forth, but what I believe Canadians want to see, generally speaking, is a government that cares. I do not believe the government has been successful in demonstrating that it genuinely cares about the aboriginal community by taking the actions necessary to—

The Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was reading through the legislative summary for Bill C-27, an act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of first nations. I want to thank Tonina Simeone and Shauna Troniak at the political affairs division for doing this superb legislative summary. Sometimes we do not give enough credit to our people at the Library of Parliament, and they deserve it.

For the sake of a bit of history, let us take a look at the legislative summary and its discussion of this particular piece of legislation. At one point it states:

First nations bands are subject to certain financial disclosure requirements under the Indian Act and related statutes and regulations. In particular, section 69 of the Indian Act provides that the Governor in Council may, by order, permit a First Nations band to “control, manage, and expend” its revenue, and may issue regulations giving effect to that permission. Accordingly, the Indian Bands Revenue Moneys Regulations require, in part, that a band's financial statements be audited annually, and that the auditor's report be posted “in conspicuous places on the Band Reserve for examination by members of the Band”.

The preface here from some of the debate seems to be that there is not enough accountability, or practically no accountability, when it comes to this, but as the legislative summary points out, there is a degree of transparency here that we must acknowledge before we advance into this debate.

It also talks about federal access to information and privacy legislation setting additional statutory rules respecting disclosure of first nations bands financial information. I mention two sections in particular, section 19 of the Access to Information Act and paragraph 20(1)(b) of the Access to Information Act.

With respect to the current policy-based requirements, the summary states:

The majority of funding arrangements between Canada and First Nations are in the form of fixed-term contribution agreements, under which First Nations must satisfy certain conditions to ensure the continued payment of federal funds. Requirements for financial reporting are also set out in AANDC's *Year-end Financial Reporting Handbook*.

Once again we see a layer of transparency involved here that must be acknowledged before we advance into this debate.

I will now talk about some of the criticisms that I have with this bill and how the bill can be fixed.

In the spirit of things, let us face it, we all want transparency in the House. This is sometimes followed, and as my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North pointed out, sometimes it is not, or at least it is talked about but is just not followed to the letter of the law.

The summary continues:

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Under the *Year-End Financial Reporting Handbook*, First Nations must submit to AANDC annual audited consolidated financial statements for the public funds provided to them. These include salaries, honoraria and travel expenses for all elected, appointed and senior unelected band officials. The latter includes unelected positions such as those of executive director, band manager, senior program director and manager. First Nations are also required to release these statements to their membership. In particular,

Section 6.4.1 requires First Nations to disclose, both to their members and to AANDC, compensation earned or accrued by elected, appointed and unelected senior officials; and

Section 6.4.2 stipulates that the amounts of remuneration paid, earned or accrued by elected and appointed officials to be disclosed “must be from all sources within the recipient’s financial reporting entity including amounts from, but not limited to, economic development and other types of business corporations”

● (2045)

The summary continues:

Reporting and disclosure requirements are further set out in various provisions of First Nations funding agreements, which must be read in conjunction with the *Year-End Financial Reporting Handbook*.

It states:

Section 2.4.3 provides that Council must prepare consolidated financial statements, to be audited by an independent auditor, and delivered to the Minister within 120 days of the Council’s fiscal year end.

Section 3.1 provides that Council must make available the consolidated audited financial statements, including the auditor’s report, to First Nations members upon their request.

Section 2.2.3 provides that the Minister may withhold funds otherwise payable under the agreement if the Council fails to provide to the Minister the audited financial statements required under the agreement.

Once again, there we find a situation where there is a layer of transparency that does exist, perhaps, in many cases—a level of transparency that the government can aspire to in certain instances, as the member for Winnipeg North—

Hon. John McKay: Dream on.

Mr. Scott Simms: Dream on I shall, as we all do. If there were not a certain degree of dreamers, then we would not be here.

The summary continues:

In 2008, AANDC advised funding recipients that, effective 1 July 2008, funding arrangements would be amended to include audit clauses.

It goes on to say:

When a First Nation community is unable to meet the terms and conditions set out in funding agreements, AANDC may intervene to address this deficiency

Therein lies some power for the department for this situation.

I have some more background information regarding Bill C-27.

While First Nations receive funding from several federal organizations, the majority of federal funding is administered by AANDC. In 2011–2012, Parliament approved approximately \$7.4 billion in appropriations to AANDC to support the provision of such services to First Nations communities as education, housing, social support and community infrastructure.

This certainly was the focal point of a debate that took place in the House, given the situation in Attawapiskat. The situation and argument were degraded to the point where there were many false claims. Many people were using it for political purposes from all corners of the House, and some of it was just blatantly false. That is the unfortunate part of it, because if we get into that part of debate within the House, then we lose sight of coming up with the best solution.

First Nations and the federal government are both subject to various policy-based and legal requirements....

Through decisions of the band council, management of council affairs, delivery of programs and services, and disclosure of annual financial statements, First Nations generally are accountable to their community membership for the use of public resources.

Again, this is from the legislative summary put out by the Library of Parliament.

Through various federal reporting requirements, First Nations are also accountable to AANDC for the federal public funds they receive.

In turn, through the annual audit cycle and program reports, AANDC is answerable to Parliament and the Canadian public.

We get ourselves into this situation. When we had a private member’s bill the last time, the principles that surrounded the bill were certainly those accountability and transparency. Therefore, in principle, of course we support that.

Whether the government is practising what it preached many years ago, such as the Federal Accountability Act, remains to be seen. We will leave that to the electorate to decide.

However, in that debate on the private member’s legislation, falsehoods were put out there that there was a degree of unaccountability that really did not exist. In other words, the impression was given to us that there was no accountability whatsoever. That is not the case.

If we are going to enact legislation here, Bill C-27 would go further than what that private member’s legislation was about to do, to the point that it would put many bands and their money, in the sense of the corporations, in a bad place. It would put them at a disadvantage in many cases.

What is dispersed to the public could be used against them, but not in a political way, such as by calling a talk show or downgrading a particular community.

However, let us say that a band wants to invest. It is incorporated and it pays salaries. It invests in its people and in infrastructure to help develop its young people to become entrepreneurs, or lawyers, or doctors, all surrounded by an idea within a band that it will invest in something for its future. There are business plans, audited reports.

● (2050)

However, if all that is dispersed to the public, even members of the government have to admit that it would put first nations at a disadvantage. Therefore, without particular amendments, the legislation would become something that could be used against their future ability to improve their communities and their bands, to improve and educate their young, to be a part of global commerce and to identify themselves as world players on the stage, and they certainly can be.

Let us take a look at the communities in northern Quebec that protested against major hydro projects. They went down the Hudson River to make their point, and they made a very good point. Since then, protests have been followed by action, action followed by investment and investment followed by smart, educated young people in aboriginal communities. The average age is very low in aboriginal communities, to the point where we have lots of young people who would benefit greatly from the investments of some of these band communities.

Government Orders

The proposed legislation's desire to be more accountable and transparent is wonderful. It is what every organization, whether government, NGOs, or business corporations should aspire to. These great ideals of what we consider to be transparent are what any company should aspire to so that others are not held at a disadvantage. However, with Bill C-27, let us be careful with what it would do.

If we go after the ideal of transparency, we may overreach to the point where it becomes a disadvantage and would work against the future plans of a band or community that wanted to better itself and invest in its social structures, not just business investments, but in the infrastructure of the community.

We are sent here to do the mature, decent examination and analysis of policy within the House. Following the House, the bill would go to committee where it would face more scrutiny, and that is where the amendments would come into play. We hope in this situation, despite the fact that there is a majority government, the Conservatives will practice what they used to preach and do this in a reasonable way.

There are certain elements of governance that the Conservative government feels should not be as transparent, whether that is for national security or in certain interests of our nation. In many cases I agree, but in many cases I do not. We agree that there are certain amounts of information that should not be disclosed to the public. Therefore, would the Conservatives not agree that amendments should be considered honestly and openly to attain the best legislation?

We can have the best legislation that would do two things. First, and most important, it would provide that transparency, which, in principle, I support. Second, with amendments, it would create responsible legislation so communities would be able to invest in their future and their children.

There are many aspects of the bill that we could speak about that go beyond what was debated in the last session of the House on the private member's legislation. A private member's bill usually does not go in-depth like government legislation does. When there is a full department behind it, that makes the legislation larger. However, Bill C-27 overreaches in many areas.

Let us take a look at the consultation process, which is also involved in this situation, and another problem that the government has put forward. This is not just about legislation from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. I will use Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the copyright legislation as examples to illustrate my point about consultation.

• (2055)

When consultation is done, it has to be done both ways. It goes there and it comes back. The message is there and the message has to come back. In many situations that message did not come back from the base degrees by which we set legislation.

Therefore, what the consultation process brought forward was not one that I would consider to be beneficial to the debate within the House. Despite what the Prime Minister has said about recent Crown-First Nations Gathering resetting the relationship, the

Conservative government has shown a total disregard for the rights of indigenous people.

The Supreme Court of Canada established that both federal and provincial governments had a duty to consult aboriginal people before making decisions that might adversely affect their aboriginal rights and, in some circumstances, accommodate aboriginal people's concerns.

Further, let us not forget what the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada signed, obliges Canada to obtain "free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples" for matters affecting rights, territories and resources.

Let us go back to the resources aspect again. Coming from Newfoundland and Labrador, I can honestly say an investment in a resource certainly provides employment and more money in the coffers for provincial governments and therefore a better ability and more capacity to deliver social assistance programs when needed, as well as health care spending and education spending, the primary spending goals.

Looking at this in a particular way, we can see that the consultation process, when it comes to the resources aspect, did not bear fruit in the sense that if a particular band or community, or in other situations a province, invests in these resources, it has to be able to partake in the world of global commerce. As members know, when investing in larger resources, the world is where the market is. It is no smaller than that. Whether it is minerals or gas and oil, the world is certainly the ballpark we play in when it comes to investing in our resources.

This legislation will put some of these investments at a disadvantage because some of this information has to be dispersed to the public.

The expenditures and the direct subsidies into particular communities is a principle which we can agree on, but in this situation the government needs to take a second look at some of the changes that are necessary within this bill.

The Conservative government is imposing major changes to first nations financial reporting requirements, with no significant prior consultation with those who will have to implement these changes. Again, we go back to the idea of the consultation process. Certainly, we do not live up to that standard.

Let me repeat what is said in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, "free, prior and informed consent". That does not mean they have to put out a press release to say what they are doing. It means consent, meaning that there is a two-way flow of information, communication. I think it went one way, but the way it came back was not satisfactory to this debate. It is certainly not germane to this debate.

We have seen the same flawed approach on drinking water and matrimonial real property, with no discussions on the specifics of the bills with stakeholders before that legislation was tabled.

When the Prime Minister announced major changes to our pensions, he did so to a foreign audience. It was never discussed in the campaign itself. There was no consultation process.

Government Orders

On the existing reporting burden, Bill C-27 would do nothing to streamline the current overwhelming reporting burden, especially for small first nations with limited administrative capacity.

Coming from a riding that has over 200 small communities, the burden for administrative purposes weighs heavy. For those who live in a town of only 20 or 30 people and who are required to do report after report, it gets tiring after a while. I am not saying they should not do it, but at least the government could provide the capacity to help these people fill out these reports in a timely manner, in a way that is efficient and accurate.

In her 2002 report, the Auditor General recommended that, “The federal government should consult with First Nations to review reporting requirements on a regular basis”. That is sadly not within this legislation.

• (2100)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question.

We are talking about transparency, but above all, about good governance. At least I hope the government's intention was to improve governance. We know that the Conservatives eliminated the funding allocated to several institutions that had been helping first nations improve their governance. Two examples are the First Nations Statistical Institute and the National Centre for First Nations Governance. Perhaps the government now realizes that it made a serious mistake by eliminating funding to these institutions, and now it is trying to fix those mistakes. On the other hand, I have a feeling that what the government really wants is simply to control everyone and everything around it.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on the elimination of funding to first nations groups.

• (2105)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought up a point I did not get to in my speech. I am glad she did. I almost feel like she read my speech beforehand.

I want to talk about the statistical aspect. It is a good illustration of what I talked about earlier in my speech, the lack of information and the two-way flow of communication. Again, I go back to that UN declaration which called for informed opinion, decisions made for first nations that are informed. “Informed” and “consent” require two-way communication. If we cancel programs, such as the statistics that are gathered and acquired for fundamental decision making, then we are not that informed.

For example, we go to a foreign body, such as the United Nations Assembly, we sign agreements, then we come back and cancel the statistics program that gives us all that vital information on which we are basing these decisions. Ergo, we could go somewhere else, preach, come back and practise something entirely different.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the point the hon. member was making that a lot of these smaller nations, aboriginal groups, have a limited capacity to fill yet again another report. We hear this not only

from aboriginal communities, but also from NGOs. Even among NGOs, there is layer after layer of reporting, even when applying for a simple grant, to the point where they simply give up and walk away.

People would be interested to know that 60,000 reports are already being filed. I do not know how many reports we need after 60,000 reports. If we add yet another layer, and we are already going under water with the limitation of our capacity to file the original 60,000 reports, how effective would the so-called bill on transparency and accountability be?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a valid point. I remember dealing with an organization in my riding. One of the gentlemen there called it “regulation creep”. Basically, he was tired of being regulated to the point where he was constantly filling out these forms that in many cases he felt he has done before. Sixty thousand reports is an illustration of just what kind of a burden is being put on these smaller communities. The administrative capacity for many of these places just cannot keep up.

However, let us look at the example of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The government recently cut core funding to regional economic development boards. Our opinion of the boards may vary, but their function was a good one. Full-time employees on the boards used to help out smaller communities with administrative capacity. They would help them file applications or audit reports, and help them fill out activities reports that were required of them.

That is certainly what is needed here. Imagine the extra amount of capacity that is needed just to provide the information required of the smallest bands and communities with the passage of this bill. It is a situation where I suspect that they would be forced into doing something because the outcry is just way too much. The reason why there is an outcry is because the people who are complaining about it are saying that, had they come to them before the legislation was introduced, they might have been able to do something about it or had an answer.

• (2110)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my hon. colleague from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor a question. Earlier today I put the question about the existing level of commitment by first nations to transparency and accountability to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. He directed me to a resolution. However, it was the very resolution the minister mentioned that I was basing my question on, which is Resolution No. 50/2010 of December 2010, endorsed at the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly. The Assembly of First Nations special chiefs themselves are fully committed to transparency and accountability in their financial reporting.

This piece of legislation is described by first nations chiefs as heavy-handed, paternalistic, and some of the commentary has described it as racist. They are asking why Ottawa is imposing this law at this time instead of working with first nations.

Government Orders

My hon. friend is right that we have an obligation in law to work with first nations through consultation and not through the imposition of top-down rule making. I would like his view on why first nations chiefs are caught by surprise by this legislation, when they themselves have already made a commitment to transparency and accountability in their financial dealings.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands brought up that which is germane to this debate, the preaching of one thing and the practising of another.

By way of illustration, my colleague who sits in front of me here from (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte and I voted in the last session of Parliament. There was a minority. The majority of the House voted to reject the idea of signing onto a NAFO agreement, the international body that governs fisheries in the Northwest Atlantic. The majority of this House said no by way of votes. The very next day the Conservative government signed on to it. Prior to that, in the campaign, the Conservatives said that they would bring international agreements to the House. What was the point of that? The very next day they turned around and did the exact opposite of what they said they would do. At what point have they practised what they used to preach?

Going back to my friend's illustration, she brings up the point of the UN declaration. Every indicator in the language within this declaration said that transparency would be there and, certainly when it comes to communication, informed opinion. We get the statistics. It is a cut. We also get the level of transparency that they talk about here going way beyond—to use the term, they have been gobsmacked in this particular situation because they were absolutely surprised because they went counter to what they said.

Here is another illustration. The government stood up in the middle of the Alps of Switzerland and said that it may want to change the age of eligibility for old age security. It was said in a way that led people to believe that it was already known. I do not remember the Conservatives ever talking about that in the campaign. I remember hearing about the extra money they wanted to put in the guaranteed income supplement that was only one-third of the way to alleviating poverty.

Let us go back to that declaration once again. The indicators were definitely there. It was preached about. Back home it was practised in the opposite direction.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again on this issue. Today I want to say that aside from the absolutely appalling example the government set in not giving the Parliamentary Budget Officer the information he requires, there was another way. The First Nations Governance Institute was helping nation after nation, hundreds of nations that have come, as it says on its website, to restore their nations. It is helping first nations bottom up that is going to be the only way forward.

As Nellie Cournoyea said in 1975 in the Status of Women document entitled "Speaking Together", "Paternalism has been a total disaster". It is just not right that instead of helping first nations help themselves with institutions like the First Nations Governance Institute, the minister has chosen to cut all of the funding to that amazing organization that was doing all the work, building capacity first nation by first nation. Instead, he has decided to impose this

thoughtless bill with untoward consequences in the House based on, as we all know, a Canadian Taxpayers Federation report that was then thought to be a good idea for a private member's bill to feed its base and continue this idea of shame and blame as opposed to truly building capacity bottom up by allowing first nations to help themselves.

We know what happens in these communities. The fact is that the government yet again has not thought it through. It never thinks it through. It has no experience on the ground with what life is really like in practically anything, from the health minister refusing to visit any community during H1N1 to now imposing this bill without really understanding what first nations are about.

Most first nations in this country consist of about 500 people. About half of those people are under 25 years of age. In those first nations there is some natural leadership. Those natural leaders become chiefs and council members, but they also sometimes become the people who run the small businesses, get a little entrepreneurial spirit and get the snow removal contract or are able to start a business. This bill would mean, as it says, "each of its councillors, acting in their capacity as such and in any other capacity, including their personal capacity".

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, if you were a member of the council, would you want to start and own a business that then other businesses could prey upon the details of your business plan and how much you pay certain people in your business? Why would anybody who is running a business on a reserve, who is setting an example for his or her community and is the head of an organization, want to run for the council or chief if it then meant that his or her business could be devastated by predatory practices of non-aboriginal companies coming on to the reserve to do the kind of work that was being properly done by first nations entrepreneurs?

This fun and games with numbers stuff is unbelievably sad, from the Prime Minister blaming Attawapiskat and throwing the number of \$80 million around when we know that the investment in the education system of \$7,000 per student per year is \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 less than children off reserve. It sounds over five years like a lot of money, but it is not enough money. Then the government's friends in the Fraser Institute compare Attawapiskat with Atikokan, saying the budgets are the same and they are about the same size. They ask why one community is doing well and the other community is doing terribly, purposely leaving out the fact that in Atikokan the health and education budgets are paid for by the province of Ontario, whereas in Attawapiskat those budgets come out of the community's budget.

Government Orders

• (2115)

I am a bit fed up with this in terms of how again first nations get blamed, how again legislation like this just builds on the stereotype and does not actually listen. One of my big heroes in life, Jane Jacobs, used to say that good policy comes when the decision makers can see in their mind's eye the people affected. We actually have to listen to the people on the ground wherever we have been across this country. Even the most successful first nations are saying this bill goes too far. It is not something they can live with in its present form because, again, it would actually undermine their ability to be successful and have sound economic development.

Today is a day when we are all a bit irritated. Who do these Conservatives think they are, that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has to go to court to get information from them, while they are presently trying to legislate this kind of undermining of economic development and success for first nations?

My hero, Ursula Franklin, has always said about good governance that it must be fair, must be transparent and must take people seriously. On most of the first nations that I have visited, that is the way they operate. The chief and council would not dream of going forward on any project of any magnitude without having their community with them. I hear Chief Robert Louie at Westbank say that when they have had difficult decisions to make, sometimes there are four community meetings in a month to be able to have the community with them as they go.

The minister had the audacity to announce this bill on the Whitecap Dakota Nation and Chief Darcy Bear has to bring his amendments to our committee to say the Conservatives had not thought it through. Even though the minister accepted the hospitality of the Whitecap Dakota, the government has not had the decency to make a commitment to fix this bill in the way that Chief Darcy Bear has asked.

I am saying it is about dignity, respect and free, prior and informed consent that the government signed onto with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is about stopping the paternalism. As we look at the great work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and as we look at its recommendations about aboriginal education for non-aboriginals, I am concerned that this kind of simplistic approach does nothing but interfere with that kind of relationship and mutual understanding that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is trying to do.

We know that an apology from a Prime Minister means absolutely nothing if Canadians do not know the history and do not know what the apology was about. On a daily basis, I am now saying this about that Prime Minister's apology in this House: Who would have known it would have not only been for the past but would have been for the future, with the kind of underfunding and disrespect the first nations are having to put up with in this country?

The first nations want to lead now, and they are leading in all kinds of ways: their approach to governance, which is asking not telling, making sure the community is with them as they go; their leadership in fleeing the medical modelling and helping the rest of us as physicians, nurses and health care providers to understand the importance of the medicine wheel in keeping everybody well,

mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. We have to allow first nations in this country, and Inuit and Métis as well, to lead in terms of the things that the colonizers have made terribly wrong.

When we think of the pedagogy of first nations, which is learning by doing, that is the only way we as adults or we in our schools can go forward.

• (2120)

We need to listen to first nations, who say that children are not little empty vessels to have information poured into the top of and sit in tidy rows. Learning by doing is something first nations have taught us.

First nations call their senior citizens elders, while we in the south and in non-aboriginal communities call them elderly. The first nations knew about sustainability of natural resources. They knew we cannot clear cut, we cannot fish out the stock and we actually have to be sustainable.

The beautiful ceremony of the Prime Minister reversing that wampum belt was supposed to be a reset of the relationship. Instead we get a raining down of legislation telling first nations what to do and how to do it. We have a water act that has only "thou shalt" and no resources attached to it. I wrote to the minister last August to say that we as Liberals would not in any way be able to support a bill about water that did not include the resources to go with it.

It has been an extraordinarily frustrating time as we are trying to turn the page, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is trying to do its work and as the government cuts so many institutions that are really important to first nations. Where is the first nations governance institute? Where is NAHO, which was sorting out the best practices on health? The government destroyed the statistical institute and anything that was about to help first nations measure and do evidence-based and results-based management, and then imposed some simplistic bill like this.

We know on this side of the House that complex problems require complex solutions. As H.L. Mencken said, for every complex human problem, there is a neat, simple solution; it is just that it is wrong. The government continues to get it wrong, thinking there could be some sort of simple solution for something that is absolutely so complex and so difficult. These people do not even have the respect to go and visit, listen and talk to people.

As we learned, slowly, through the Kelowna accord, the real solutions come from the bottom up. They take time. The Kelowna accord took 18 months of consulting, listening and having first nations in with the Métis leaders, helping us choose the priorities. In that accord there were real targets and real markers for how we would measure success and how we would know that the money was being spent wisely. As well, and we have said this before in the House, there is the idea of a first nations auditor general that actually came from the bottom up, from the people participating in that process.

Government Orders

It is sad that the government members just continue to refuse to listen and to allow first nations to actually work with them to find the complex solutions for the complex problems. These kinds of simplistic bills have got to stop.

We know they have the arithmetic to get this bill through. We know of their track record of just barging through with anything they want because they have the numbers. They refused to listen on the budget bill. Out of all the so-called debate in the House, all of the witnesses heard at committee, they could not come up with one amendment, because they think they know best and they do not listen.

The government is asking us to send this to committee. What on earth kind of respect do we have for its reputation for what happens to these bills in committee? Therefore, I am asking that the minister give us some sort of promise that the kinds of amendments put forward by Chief Darcy Bear of the Whitecap Dakota will be entertained and enshrined in the bill, so that it cannot do any more damage than this attitude is already doing to the entrepreneurial spirit and the economic development in each of our first nations.

• (2125)

I hope the House has had a chance to look at the motion I put on the order paper to create a fund that would create the kind of education that aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people in Canada need. It is the only way we will go forward. In New Zealand, as we learned, Maori studies were taught in kindergarten to grade 8 and the whole thing turned around.

I hope I can seek and find all-party and unanimous consent to approve my motion before the TRC meets tomorrow night.

• (2130)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Excuse me. I thought the hon. member had put forward a rhetorical question not a specific question, but if that is incorrect—

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, I would like unanimous consent for the approval of my motion as on the order paper.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member for St. Paul's have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I notice the member went on at some length about the terrible water situation on reserves. I would just like to remind the member that when her government was in power it allowed an atrocious situation to develop on reserves. Since the current government has been in position, we have spent an extended amount of time doing an audit of water resources and water quality systems on reserves. In the last several budgets we have put millions of dollars into improving water systems on reserve.

Why will the member not take responsibility for the situation we received from her government, when water systems on reserves were allowed to develop into such a terrible state?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, the member ought to know that within the Kelowna accord and in the package on housing, \$5 billion was to be assigned to those.

The Conservative government has been in power for six years. That report was ready in April of last year and the government refused to table it because it did not want the devastating results to be available before the election.

It is absolutely appalling that the report was released in July and there has been no really significant approach. Some 20% of the homes in Wasagamack and 50% of those in Garden Hill have no running water at all, let alone water that has to be boiled. There is no running water at all. It is astounding. The Minister of Health refused to visit them in the middle of the H1N1 outbreak. I have no shame. You should. The government should.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I would remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair rather than to their colleagues.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the comments from my colleague from St. Paul's. I think her passion is very evident whenever she speaks in this House. I would like to ask her the following question.

[*English*]

Does my colleague think there is any chance that this transparently paternalistic bill would have any real effect on poverty conditions in our first nations communities?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, the average salary of chief and council is \$37,000 per year, a very small amount of the budget of any first nation. What we want is to work with first nations to deal with the economic development they want to be able to do. This legislation is so broad that it extinguishes that entrepreneurial spirit.

The bill would do absolutely nothing to deal with poverty on first nations. It is unacceptable.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by noting a contradiction in the government's attitude. If we look at the non-aboriginal population, the government keeps trying to improve efficiencies and to cut red tape with its red tape commission. It is trying to reduce expenditures and make environmental processes more efficient, everything in the direction of greater efficiency and less red tape when it comes to the non-aboriginal world.

However, when it comes to the aboriginal world, as was reported, there are no less than 60,000 reports per year that first nations have to make to the government. That is about 100 reports per year for every first nation. It is 100 to 200 reports every day of the year. It is not as if the Auditor General has not told the government to fix this, to reduce the red tape and the number of reports, and yet there is nothing in the bill.

Government Orders

Could my hon. colleague tell me why the government has this double standard? Why is it pushing in one direction for non-aboriginal Canadians and leaving aboriginal Canadians in a morass of red tape created by the government which the government refuses to do anything about?

• (2135)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, the member has made an excellent point. The Auditor General also spoke to the lack of accountability within the department itself for results-based management, and how we do not really know what works.

What we do know is that third party management and co-management do not work and yet, when the government is in trouble, it puts in a failed policy that the former minister, Chuck Strahl, had said that he would not do. We know that itself is too costly, does not get results and does not build capacity. The government just keep trying to put these Band-Aids on things because it needs to blame first nations communities when it is in trouble.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my distinguished colleagues for their input. The problem with this bill is that it imposes on first nations communities something that the government does not impose on itself. In other words, the communities are being asked to publish documents that the department already has.

If the minister truly wants to make these documents public, then he should just create a website and send the documents to everyone. He has the information. He also has information on all the contract workers working for him and all the service contracts he signs with private companies.

Ironically, when the government does not want to share this information, even the Parliamentary Budget Officer does not have access to it.

How can the minister impose information disclosure requirements on the first nations—when that information is already available—and yet refuse to give the Parliamentary Budget Officer access to the information on the management of his own department?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the hon. member. We have learned that the morass of information at the department is totally ridiculous.

[*English*]

Additions to reserves cannot be tracked, which is a problem the government has, not first nations.

As we have said before, if the members of the community have a complaint about not being able to get a piece of information from their chief or council, the minister already has the power to provide it to the members of that community.

We have no idea why the government is insisting on blaming first nations.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member a few questions about the pathological aversion to consultation that seems to be endemic in the government.

About a year ago we had the biggest consultation that Canadians actually have with their potential government but, to my recollection, there was not any actual conversation about jumping older folks for OAS increases. I must have missed that in the Conservative Party platform. I did look at it but I could not find that. However, apparently as of last night, everybody who is under 54 years of age will now be down about \$30,000 in the course of their lifetime in the event they have to draw OAS.

Similarly, I do not ever recollect any consultation about the changes to EI. That did not seem to be part of the platform when we did this.

Here we have a bill, apparently on transparency and accountability, and, as far as I know, there has been absolutely no consultation with aboriginal communities on this matter, and it certainly did not form any part of the platform of the Conservative Party. So EI, OAS and aboriginal consultations, nothing, zero, nil.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, the member makes a very good point. An election is supposed to be where the parties put their cards on the table and then the people of Canada get to choose.

The people of Canada were not told that the age for receiving a pension would go up by two years. They were not told about the changes to seasonal workers. They were not told about the changes to Parks Canada. They were not told about all of the devastating cuts that were rammed through in that ridiculous omnibus bill that the Prime Minister, about to be former prime minister, has so eloquently spoken against in the past.

It is an attitudinal thing. If the government really wants to consult, if it thinks it will get ideas and that they could come from anywhere, that used to be the beauty of Parliament. That used to be the beauty of parliamentary committees, where smart people could be heard and members would say, "There is a good idea."

The idea that the government could not even consult on this budget and find one thing to be amended just shows the travesty of the democracy and the weakness of the Conservative members of Parliament on the other side.

• (2140)

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on some of the comments that were expressed by my colleague regarding the reduction of red tape and how this particular initiative either feeds into or from the government's propensity to institute red tape. Specifically, I want to talk about the impact this legislation may have on aboriginal businesses.

Bill C-27 would force aboriginal businesses on first nations to disclose financial information related to those businesses to the public, including to the competitors of those aboriginal businesses. I am not simply talking about remuneration paid for out of federal supply, but all activities of those businesses would have to be reported to the public. That is a burden that does not exist for other businesses.

Government Orders

This measure could potentially make band-owned businesses extremely vulnerable to predatory practices and put them at an obvious competitive disadvantage. Non-aboriginal private corporations, for example, are not forced to publicly disclose consolidated financial statements. However, aboriginal businesses, whether attached to the federal government or not, would. Any band-owned business would have to disclose information that would-be or potential competitors in the private sector will not.

It is very interesting, not only because it would be extremely inconsistent with the principle of first nation self-governance, but it is also obviously very inconsistent with the government's much ballooned and ballyhooed referral to the Red Tape Reduction Commission.

At a cost of several million dollars, the Conservative government instituted a Red Tape Reduction Commission to travel all over the country conducting meetings and hearings as to how exactly the federal government could reduce the paper burden on businesses. I guess it did not conduct very many hearings with aboriginal businesses. If it did, it would have a serious problem with this legislation.

I will read directly from the report that the member for Beauce, the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, produced. It reads:

...the Commission's first task was to "identify irritants to business that stem from federal regulatory requirements and review how those requirements are administered in order to reduce the compliance burden on businesses, especially small businesses."

At a cost of several million dollars, this commission had that task in mind.

Somebody was asleep on the front bench on this proposed legislation which would increase the regulatory burden on aboriginal business. In order to allow this bill to proceed without actually considering the impact on aboriginal business, somebody was not taking care of their fiduciary responsibilities to speak up for aboriginal people.

Where was the member for Beauce, who is such a strong believer, at least in theory, of anti-regulation, when this was going through?

The compliance burden on small business would be huge. We have already heard in the chamber that there are already 60,000 reports that must be filed with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada on an annual basis. Can members imagine the compliance burden that would be placed on aboriginal businesses, a burden that does not exist on any other business? Can members imagine the regulatory red tape that would be imposed upon that important section of our economy, our aboriginal businesses, that does not apply anywhere else?

• (2145)

Let me put this into perspective. Federal crown corporations on lists specifically included in the Access to Information Act do not have to comply. They are not under the jurisdiction of the Access to Information Act. If a band-owned business, however, wants to establish itself and promote the economic best interests of the band, it has to do something a federal crown corporation does not have to do.

During the course of its multi-million dollar discussions, the Red Tape Reduction Commission—which I guess might have been actually for the purpose of creating more red tape instead of reducing it, but the actual title of the commission was the "Red Tape Reduction Commission", so I guess that would not necessarily apply—gave specific direction to the Government of Canada. It gave specific recommendations to individual government departments. It even made recommendations to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada as to how it could participate in reducing the red tape burden.

Do members know what it recommended to the minister and to the department? It made two main suggestions specifically for this department. One was this:

To improve service standards and streamline program requirements, we recommend that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada establish streamlined application and review processes to support small business growth and development.

I do not think anywhere did the red tape commission say, "By the way, we should also impose the equivalent to the Access to Information Act on every aboriginal band-owned business". They said, quite frankly, the opposite.

It further recommended:

To facilitate service standard improvements, streamlined processes and the integration of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada programs with those of other federal regulators, we recommend that the department develop a simplified approach for land processes and economic development projects.

That was not a recommendation for an expanded approach, not one for the regulatory burden to be exponentially increased to the point that every minute of every day that the band-owned business operates, its lead managers must be filing compliance reports. That was not the recommendation of the Red Tape Reduction Commission.

However, if we look at this, that is what the government is suggesting.

Now, the MP for Beauce went even further. In his final recommendation report, he said again and again,

...to deal with the long-term aspect of regulatory growth

—which he viewed as a serious negative—

we are recommending that a substantial part of the bonuses of senior public servants be directly related to their success

—or, conversely, their failure—

in implementing the decisions that ministers make on the One-for-One Rule.

What is the one-for-one rule? I will tell members what the one-for-one rule is. It is a commitment that the Conservatives made in their 2006 election platform, just above their commitment to make the Parliamentary Budget Officer an independent officer who could get whatever material he or she needed in order to perform his or her function as the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

In the Conservative platform for election in 2006, entitled "Here for Canada"—I guess not all Canadians, just some Canadians—the would-be Prime Minister's low-tax plan for jobs and economic growth promised to implement a new standard for regulation:

We will legislate a One-for-One Rule—every time the government proposes a new regulation, it must eliminate an existing one.

Government Orders

● (2150)

If we look at what is happening at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, we see there are a lot of new regulations coming into play. There do not seem to be very many reductions. If we are to judge this based on bonuses paid to senior bureaucrats as to whether they are complying with the one-for-one rule, the government just saved an awful lot of money because there will not be one dime in bonus paid out to the minister's senior mandarins, not a dime. I guess the government is saving a few bucks there, is it not, unless of course it is going to circumvent that rule and pay out bonuses without any compliance or consideration of its own rules.

The government would never do that, though, would it? It would never actually ignore its own rules. Okay, it probably will. That is what is happening right now. We have a government that is absolutely intent on saying to everybody else, "Do as we say, but just do not do as we do", because that is exactly what is being asked. People are being told, "Do as we say, but not as we do".

There was also some discussion about the Auditor General and whether there should be a first nations auditor general, a proposal that received widespread support, not universal but widespread support. It was a key proposal within the Kelowna accord. When the government was proposing its Red Tape Reduction Commission, except for aboriginal communities, it suggested in its report that the Office of the Auditor General of Canada should be mandated with reviewing and reporting on the government's progress. The Auditor General should be mandated to review the government's progress in reducing regulatory administrative burden through its one-for-one rule aimed at cutting costs to businesses, as well as implementing its overall red tape reduction plan.

That was a suggestion of the government. It has never actually done it or tasked the Auditor General to do that, even though there were recent amendments to the Auditor General Act. I am wondering, since it does indeed believe that the Auditor General should be involved in red tape reduction, whether it would allow the Auditor General to come in and see whether Bill C-27 complies with the red tape reduction recommendations, as adopted by the government. Will it allow the Auditor General of Canada to do an assessment before or during second reading of whether the government is consistent with its red tape reduction promises and do so in a very public way? Will it have the Auditor General do an assessment as to whether Bill C-27 is consistent with that? Is it a do as I say government and not a do as I do government? There is one way to find out, is there not?

This is very serious. It is very serious because we are actually imposing a higher standard on a core of small businesses, band-owned aboriginal businesses. Not only would the government not impose it on other sectors of the economy, other types of privately held non-aboriginal owned businesses, but it is a standard that the government will not even impose upon itself for its federal crown corporations. Why? Because if we suggest that certain federal crown corporations should be liable and held accountable under the Access to Information Act, the very first thing the ministers responsible will say is that it could put the crown corporation in jeopardy and expose the federal crown corporation, which benefits from federal tax dollars and federal oversight, to potential competitive impacts.

● (2155)

The competitors of the federal crown corporation might actually know what the crown corporation was doing, and that could jeopardize the revenue stream of that federal crown corporation.

No problem, though, for band-owned aboriginal businesses. Their competitors will have a great way to find out about what they are up to and where they are going. They would just have to apply under Bill C-27. The provisions of Bill C-27 would lay their business dealings out bare. That is reason enough, if for nothing else, to want to have this bill go before committee to have witnesses come forward to establish what the impact would be, because there has been no consultation whatsoever.

There has been no consultation with the aboriginal community on this issue, because if there were, there would be a lot of senior mandarins, a lot of highly-paid executives within the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, who would not be getting a bonus for an awfully long time. If they tie a substantial part of the bonuses paid to senior public servants directly to their success or failure in implementing the decisions that ministers make on the one-for-one rule, the government just saved an awful lot of money. There will not be a darn bonus paid out in Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada for a long, long time if Bill C-27 gets passed.

That is a relatively snide way to tell the government to think through what it is doing. There are checks and balances that do exist and there are checks and balances that can be improved. There is no doubt about it.

First nations are embracing those changes. There is not always universal support. I do not think anyone should expect or assume that there will be. However, there is a solid core of support within our first nations. They have nothing to hide. They are prepared to engage in full accountability. They want to be participants. They do not want to be spoken to and they do not want to be spoken at; they want to be spoken with.

In this chamber right now, instead of talking to first nations, we are simply talking about them. Why did the government not just take the time to talk with first nations, to realize the consequences and the legal ramifications of its actions.

Some might consider it another snide way for the government to play it tough. Sometimes tough actions are required, obviously, but sometimes toughness is also the sign of a bully, and bullies need to understand that what they say and do can hurt. It can hurt self-esteem and it can also hurt the economic well-being of first nations and aboriginal businesses owned by bands.

The government is sticking its nose in a place where it really does not belong. Tighter accountability rules are always something we strive for. The aboriginal community is no stranger to that. It is not a reluctant witness to that. It is creating its own higher accountability standard without the Big Brother approach from the Government of Canada. It is acting on its own behalf and increasing its accountability standards.

Government Orders

The government here seems to want to take a parochial approach, saying that it is “us” and them”, and that it is going to tell “them” how to run their businesses.

Why? The member for Beauce, the junior minister, spent millions of dollars on a Red Tape Reduction Commission. Why did the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development sit in cabinet and allow Bill C-27 to pass through cabinet without any examination as to the consequence to this important community?

• (2200)

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech reminds me of that saying “this animal has four legs, therefore it is a cow”. Suggesting that we are imposing a larger burden of red tape on first nations is a ridiculous notion.

In fact, it is very obvious that the member did not listen to my speech. It is very obvious the member has no idea what is in the legislation. It is very obvious that the member does not know we made an announcement within the last few days about a single reporting mechanism for first nations that actually created less paperwork. That is without the bill. With the bill, it is the very same paperwork as they do now.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that in December 2010 the Assembly of First Nations endorsed the accountability and transparency measures that were implicit in Bill C-575. That is adopted within this bill. There is first nations support for the bill, contrary to the member's statements.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Speaker, if I were back home and said, “If animal has four legs and a cow has four legs, well, you know that the animal must be a cow”. There is another animal that has four legs, and I will let people draw their own conclusion. That is probably what they would say to me back home.

The fact is that this is a government that regularly does not read its own legislation and believes its own press releases, such as when it came to spying on citizens, when all of a sudden government ministers had an epiphany. They did not know the legislation would allow the government to spy on Canadians and said that they would try to fix it.

Quite frankly, the government does not read its own legislation very often. I do not take a whole lot of comfort in the minister saying that I did not listen to his speech. I am not interested in his speech per se. I am more interested in the actual legislation, which will become law if the government allows it to do so.

The legislation would force band-owned first nations businesses to expose their financial dealings. I cannot make it any simpler or clear than that. The minister needs to read his own legislation.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the hon. member about the cynicism from a lot of first nations surrounding the bill. Unlike the minister, we have been to many first nations and most of them find this legislation very troubling, especially in the area to which the hon. member has referred.

With the release of the information and data of band-owned businesses, does the member think the cynicism is well-founded? Does it inflate the numbers people think the Government of Canada is giving to first nations and therefore somehow gives the

government permission to give less? Is it a way of conflating the numbers?

As a physician, I know that when my billings were calculated, people did not understand that out of my billings I paid a nurse, a receptionist, my rent and for all of the supplies. Those gross numbers are sometimes quite disturbing to people at first glance.

The way that these disclosures may be interpreted feeds this ongoing plan of the government to blame first nations and making it look like they are rolling in money and doing badly with the money they have been given.

• (2205)

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague. She is absolutely correct. The government has already done that, not just through aboriginal business but also with what happened at Attawapiskat. The government engaged in a public relations smear campaign against the band council at Attawapiskat to enforce an opinion or point of view that money spent on education was in solution to a housing crisis. It compiled and aggregated all the funds that were given to a particular band and displayed that to the entire nation and to the world press to make a sleazy suggestion that this band was rich and was abusing its funds, when in actual fact the money that was appropriated and dispersed was for health care and education. The money was spent on health care and education.

Therefore, the government already has a track record of doing exactly what the hon. member has just suggested. It integrates these incidents into a communications strategy.

In my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are aboriginal communities and first nations, the Innu and Inuit, who are involved in multi-million dollar business enterprises that are benefiting the community at large. They are engaged in those businesses for the benefit of the community at large.

If I were a competitor, I would want Bill C-27 because I would find out all about those businesses and actually move in and hone in on that because they would be unable to do the same for me, which is a shame.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it seems that we are in a rather circular argument. Members, including myself, have stood and pointed out that first nations' leadership, including the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, a number of first nations chiefs and a resolution passed in 2010 by first nations, have said that they are prepared to provide, and want to see, accountability and financial transparency.

When we make that point as an argument against heavy-handed top-down legislation, the minister says that first nations support this legislation because of the 2010 resolution. It is clear that the first nations do not, as a body, as the Assembly of First Nations, support the legislation. They do want to move to financial transparency and accountability. Therefore, we are in something of a dialogue of the deaf going on here.

Government Orders

I ask my hon. colleague for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte this. Does he not think we need to be clear that while everyone wants to see transparency and financial accountability, we will not get to it by ignoring the inherent rights of first nations in our country, granted under treaty obligations and constitutional protection?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Speaker, I applaud and thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands because she underscores the fact that there is a strong potential, probability even, that much of this act will be subject to judicial review after the fact.

First, there is a duty to consult. There is also a duty to respect the inherent right of first nations to engage in business practices in a way that is not arbitrary and not subject to uniquely them and not to anyone else in terms of the conduct of regular business. Quite frankly, I am not a lawyer, but I think there is a more than probable reality that there will be a legal challenge under an arbitrary provision of law that actually imposes a different standard on a band-owned business than any other type of business.

In return, I ask the government this question. Before we get into any sort of judicial or legal review, since it is the one that suggests the Auditor General of Canada should review its performance on red tape reduction, will it allow the Auditor General to review whether Bill C-27 is consistent or contrary to its own expectations of itself before passage of the legislation? I think we already know the answer.

• (2210)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I usually say it is an honour to stand in the House and speak to certain bills, but today I am ashamed. I am ashamed to stand here and speak to a bill that is so offensive to Canada's aboriginal people. It is pretty unbelievable, and today of all days, the day before National Aboriginal Day.

Tomorrow the government will send its representatives out to wish aboriginal people a happy National Aboriginal Day instead of saying that they are there to work with aboriginal people, instead of saying they want to listen to aboriginal people, instead of saying that not only will they work with them but they will refrain from playing the nasty, dirty politics of division that this very legislation is all about.

I will take it one step further. Let us flip Bill C-27 around. Maybe we should be talking about a federal government fiscal transparency act. What would it look like with that crew? Would we talk about the F-35s and how that was bungled? Would we talk about the orange juice that cost \$16 in London? Would we talk about the helicopters that have flown ministers around? Would we talk about the Senate appointments, the kickbacks, the breaks for friends who have given the Conservatives money?

That is what we are talking about. We are talking about a government that is so eager to change the channel and play the politics of division with some of the most marginalized people in our country instead of looking at its own complete disrespect for, frankly, legislation that governs this place and also the ethics that the Conservatives seem to be following.

If we talk about an accountability act when it comes to the Conservative government, then let us talk about aboriginal people

and how the government has broken that accountability time and time again.

Some years ago the Conservatives apologized to first nations when it came to the residential school tragedy. Some months after that they cut the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, the only decentralized program so successful that it was a world model. It provided cultural healing for aboriginal people across the country. Report after report and accolade after accolade indicated how important it was. However, the government cared so little about its own commitment to residential school survivors that it got rid of that program.

How about the deadline that is approaching on the IAP? The IAP, as many aboriginal people know, is the application people, those who were abused so badly in residential schools, have made that requires to go to another level. Where is the accountability when so few supports have been put in place to support the healing of those people who are applying for the IAP? Where is the work that needs to be done to talk to people like those in my own constituency, in places like Tadoule Lake and Lac Brochet? People of the generation who were abused at residential school do not speak English in the way that may be needed in this process. They need the support for translation and for healing. It is nowhere to be found.

Let us talk about health and how out of the 33 first nations that I represent only 1 of them with a community of 6,000 has a hospital.

Let us talk about the fact that I represent four communities in Island Lake. Over 10,000 people do not have running water, that in Canada in 2012. These communities were among the hardest hit with H1N1. Many health professionals said that it had nothing to do with some sort of genetic predisposition. It had to do with the fact that people did not have running water.

Let us talk about education and the lack of accountability we see in the government in funding first nations education. Aboriginal children, because they are aboriginal, are systematically underfunded because of who they are. They receive less than half in some cases of what provinces will pay for that same aboriginal child to study off reserve. We know that means generation after generation are being left with the legacy of inadequate support and failure when it comes to the federal government.

• (2215)

We could talk about the mould in schools. We could talk about trailers. We could talk about the fastest growing population in Canada having a government that not only is not there to support them, but with a bill like this, insults them.

Let us talk about housing, third world living conditions. I represent communities that have a waiting list of 500 houses, not 5, not 50, but 500.

Government Orders

Let us talk about the way the government has lost its accountability when it comes to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Many people came together and said it is right for Canada to show leadership, to stand up for aboriginal people at the United Nations, to maybe join other countries that are leaders around the world when it comes to working with their aboriginal people. After months of pushing and prodding, and I am proud that our party was at the forefront of saying Canada should do this, yes, the government signed the declaration. It boasted about it, but it has broken the commitments it has made every step of the way.

Most recently, where it is most apparent, is in Bill C-38. The national chief came to the committee and said, "Where is the duty to consult?" By eliminating all of the legislation, the environmental legislation, the lack of protection for fish habitat, the first nations treaty right to fishing is at risk and first nations territorial lands are at risk.

Bill C-38 also proposed changes to employment insurance that would have a disproportionate impact on aboriginal people. Where is the accountability there, when so many aboriginal communities depend entirely on seasonal work? This is not a question of moving on where there is something else.

The Conservatives know very well because they know the statistics and have tried to prevent the rest of us from seeing them. They know that people will turn to provincial welfare. People will turn to the increased social turmoil that unfortunately government after government, and this government is right along with them, not only turns a blind eye to, but frankly encourages. This kind of societal breakdown is unfortunately the legacy of government after government, and this government is no different.

The bill is absurd. It is offensive and it speaks to the government's approach. We have heard about the backward policy of the Conservatives when it comes to refugees and the comment that "Canadians want this", as though refugees who come to Canada are not Canadian.

Aboriginal people were the first Canadians. The bill seeks to divide people and to pit people against each other and their communities. It seeks to change the channel from the government's failure to live up to its fiduciary obligation, not "it would be great if it did", but a fiduciary obligation, an understanding that there is a commitment in the Constitution to first nations.

The Conservatives loves to talk about the War of 1812. Let us talk about who allowed us to build a country like Canada. It was first nations people, aboriginal people. In their relationship with the crown, aboriginal people have always been at the other side with an attitude of respect and an attitude of co-operation and they have only been spat in the face. They have been subjected to third world living conditions in a country as wealthy as ours, followed with legislation like this.

I have a prediction here. I am sure I will be digging this quote out in the next few days. The government has its press releases and robocalls ready to go. There are issues around the robocalls. However, the Conservatives have their lines about what side they are on and what side everybody else is on.

Canadians see through this. Canadians are increasingly sick and tired, and frankly disgusted, with the politics of division, these games the Conservatives seek to play with people in our own country, pitting us one against the other. Somehow because we are of this background, we have to have an issue with aboriginal people in aboriginal communities. It is not like that.

I am proud to come from a part of the country and to represent a part of the country where people know that we have to work together, where people know that the legacy of residential schools and of colonialism impacts all of us. People know that it would be nice to have a federal government that stood on the side of eradicating the third world conditions people in Canada face.

● (2220)

I wish I could say there was a good chance of that prediction not becoming true, but I have seen it before. I saw it in the last election.

The government brought up a private member's bill, which again speaks to its two-sided approach. The government says that just one member brought it up so it is not where the government is at. It is a similar story with the private member's Motion No. 312, which seeks to reopen the abortion debate. We hear all sorts of stories from the government. On this one, there is no hiding the fact that the government has been behind it all the way. We might be able to say that for Motion No. 312 too. I certainly would.

After its commitments to sit down with the first nations gathering in January to continue that conversation, the government's wish is to leave this Parliament as one of its lasting legacies one of the most offensive, absurd bills that seeks nothing more than to divide Canadians, to pit Canadians against each other, and most importantly, to pit people against aboriginal people.

This is not fitting of our Canada. This is not in line with the kinds of values that we seek to realize. I am proud to be part of a party that has been at the forefront of standing with aboriginal people: first nations, Métis and Inuit. I am proud to belong to a party that so many people in my part of the country see as the party that has stood for them. I know that is the case among so many aboriginal people across the country. Many of them are looking to us tonight and will be looking to us tomorrow on National Aboriginal Day, to hear that we are willing to work with them; willing to respect our Constitution, the historical framework that is based on a relationship of respect between the crown and first nations; and that we are willing to say that we can build a better Canada.

I say these words, thinking about the elders who have supported me on a personal level, about the leaders who support their communities, about the young people who are looking to us to show leadership. They are not seeing this from the government, but that is another sign of where the government is at.

I am proud to be part of a party that believes that our Canada means working with aboriginal people every step of the way, that our Canada is one in which third world conditions for anyone, including for aboriginal people, will not be tolerated and that our Canada lives on this side of the House and will continue to live on as we fight for it.

[Member spoke in aboriginal language]

Government Orders

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the member's heart is in the right place and that she understands the constituents she serves, many of whom are aboriginal people.

She made some very important points about the duplicity of the government. She pointed out the fact that it says one thing and does another. We have to go back to what my colleague, the member for St. Paul's said about the deep-felt apology in the House many years ago, followed within a few months by the cancelling of the aboriginal healing fund. It was one of the most successful funds. The government was taking money from the table while apologizing.

We now see this concept that a government should be responsible for the least of its citizens, for the most vulnerable of its citizens, that it should seek to rise them up and allow them to have the opportunity to live lives in which they participate fully in everything that the nation has to offer. This is an ethical duty and responsibility of a government.

How does the hon. member explain the fact that the government has all its talking points all set out to say how great it is and then it fails every time and actually sticks a shiv into the backs of the people it says it is supporting? It turns them down and leaves them suffering and vulnerable, in an even worse position than they were in before.

• (2225)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that aboriginal people see through this kind of legislation. A number of my colleagues in the House have spoken about how opposed they are and they have raised concerns.

What is so absurd, and that is the word that keeps coming to mind, is how consistent the government is in ignoring and insulting aboriginal people, trying to pit people against one another and change the channel instead of talking about its own failure to live up to its obligations and the kinds of financial commitments that need to be made. I would note that just a few short weeks ago, the Minister of Health was very insulting to the UN rapporteur who visited communities that I represent. The minister did not visit the communities I represent. The rapporteur saw how expensive vegetables and milk were, and made the commitment to the health challenges people experience, including the high cost of foods. Instead of saying it was going to do something, the government insulted the UN and aboriginal communities and continues to do so with this bill tonight.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Churchill for her continued passion and commitment to the people, not just in her part of the world but right across this country.

I was at a recent aboriginal business function. Mixed with hope and opportunity between the business community and the aboriginal community about what could be done, there was a recognition of the lack of partnership in the government. One elder went to the microphone and made a very good point, and I will ask for my friend's thoughts on this. He said the Government of Canada will put a native band into third-party management under two specific conditions. First, if it feels money has been misappropriated or spent in the wrong field, such as money that was meant for housing and went instead to schooling, which has occurred periodically. Second,

if there is the potential of a fraudulent election. In both of those conditions, the federal government will impose control on the band.

His point was this. After having watched the Conservatives in government for a number of months with allegations of having potentially stolen various elections around the country and certainly misspent money on gazebos that was meant for borders and F-35 purchases that never existed, should the federal government not be put into third-party management? Then there could be some discretion and accountability for Canadians who are footing the bill for these guys. I wonder if she could comment on that particular perspective.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, they should be put in third-party management. This is the kind of stuff that throws bands into third-party management. Yet somehow the government is able to shove it all aside and, instead put the target on aboriginal people and rile people up on the issue as well.

I know that constituents of many members have been speaking out. They are speaking out even louder about financial irregularities, the lack of transparency and the way they would fail miserably when living up to an act like this. I have no doubt that will continue to happen. Aboriginal people's voices will continue to be at the forefront of saying that the government does not represent them, does not represent us and it is time to focus on building a Canada that represents all of us.

• (2230)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do actually like the idea of putting the government into third-party management. That has a certain appeal.

Personally, I would be quite prepared to have management by the Parliamentary Budget Officer until the books are straightened and we, in this House, actually know what the government spends in a timely sort of fashion.

However, assuming that is a bit beyond the reach of tonight's debate, I want to ask the hon. member about this repeated layering of filings that must go with the bill.

The Auditor General's latest report was in June 2011. He has repeated time and again that the government has made no progress whatsoever with the reduction of the filings burdens for first nations, and here we have a bill that effectively goes in the opposite direction.

We had the minister up just a few minutes ago, saying that we could not possibly have read the bill, that we could not possibly understand what is going on here. When I have a choice between believing the Auditor General versus the minister, I think I am going to go with the Auditor General most times.

The question, therefore, for the hon. member is this. In her community, are the regulatory filings so burdensome as to make it extraordinarily difficult just to achieve compliance as of now?

Government Orders

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for raising an issue that, as we know, was not only part of one of the Auditor General's reports some years back, but before she left, she made known a couple of key priorities she felt had been overlooked, and one of them was exactly the situation that aboriginal people face, generally in terms of living conditions but also very specifically in terms of the auditing process.

I have met so many people in communities I represent. I know many of these Conservative MPs, many of these government MPs, represent aboriginal communities as well. I wonder how much time they spend in their communities to hear these stories, where bands do not have money to hire people to do the filing, where they do not have enough money to hire people to apply for grants, where they do not have enough money to hire people who know the reports—or how about this—where they cannot access the educational programs that might give them greater tools to express what is needed in the community, both in terms of paperwork and even in here.

It is a sad story but, on all fronts, the government is failing aboriginal people. It will be two-faced tomorrow when it stands to celebrate National Aboriginal Day. I look forward to standing with aboriginal people, not only in opposition to the bill but in opposition to the government.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-27, An Act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of First Nations.

To begin with, the title of this bill is all wrong. It would have been better to call it “Do as I say, not as I do”. This bill is asking aboriginal communities, the first nations, to do what the government is not prepared to do. I will give two examples, but there are many more.

The first example concerns the government's intention to eliminate 19,200 public service jobs, in accordance with the budget tabled this year. Since the budget was tabled in the House, more than 20,000 people have already received a notice indicating that their jobs may be affected. People are trying to figure out how many jobs will disappear.

The President of the Treasury Board is hiding behind a so-called requirement to abide by a provision in collective agreements to maintain his silence. This provision allegedly requires him to notify the incumbents of affected positions before making the information public.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada even asked the President of the Treasury Board to release the overall figures. PSAC representatives understand this provision but are still asking the President of the Treasury Board to disclose this information. However, he still refuses to do so, even though the president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada made the same request.

According to an article by Manon Cornellier in today's *Le Devoir*, the president fully supports the full disclosure of this information, as long as it does not identify the members concerned. The President of the Treasury Board could easily give an overall figure, but he refuses to do so. He even refuses to disclose this figure to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

So the government is asking the first nations to fully disclose the figures concerning specific people, yet it is not prepared to obey Parliament's own laws, this country's own laws, by disclosing information. However, this information is necessary to understand the scope of the measures in the budget. As I mentioned earlier, the bill we are discussing this evening should instead be called “Do as I say, not as I do”.

The other example is that of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is asking for information that he is authorized to have by law, but that the Treasury Board secretary refuses to give to him. We are headed for an interesting showdown. We have a Parliamentary Budget Officer whose very position was created by this government at the beginning of its mandate in 2006.

I have had the opportunity—on more than one occasion—to carefully examine the piece of legislation that created that position. Perhaps you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that we examined it very carefully during a meeting of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament. Indeed, the problem we had was knowing where the Parliamentary Budget Officer should fit in. So, having a good grasp of this piece of legislation, I want to share the legal opinion that the Parliamentary Budget Officer made public at the beginning of the week: the law does give him the right to have this information, which the government refuses to provide.

Here we have two examples of the government's refusal to be transparent. And yet one of the primary duties of parliamentarians on both sides of the House—not only on this side, but also on the government side—is to ensure that we have the information we need in order to verify that the government is in fact doing its job.

● (2235)

It is impossible for us to do this work when there is no transparency. Asking parliamentarians to support a bill that imposes draconian transparency on the first nations that the government is not even prepared to consider itself borders on hypocrisy. Parliamentarians have a constitutional mandate to verify the government's actions and figures. They have to have this information before they can support the plans that are presented to them.

Other aspects of the bill are very troubling to me. One of my colleagues spoke at length earlier about the simple fact that aboriginal communities have been encouraged for some time now to take charge, to develop businesses, to move forward and to create jobs, wealth and capital. Many have done just that.

If we approved the legislation before us without making any changes to it—I am going to take a few minutes because I am on a roll—we would be asking the first nations who took the advice they were given to disclose all their trade secrets. The government itself refuses to do so, and rightfully so, for crown corporations that have to remain competitive.

The bill that the Conservatives are asking us to pass does not protect companies belonging to first nations and would require them to fully disclose to all competitors all the information and secrets that allow them to operate in a competitive world. We cannot support that.

Government Orders

I would also like to quickly address the fact that the government is adding to their burden. This was mentioned earlier: 60,000 reports are submitted to the department each year. There are approximately 600 aboriginal bands. That means that every year, each band has to submit an average of 100 reports, or approximately one report every three and a half days. And now the government wants to add to that. This would create an administrative burden that would prevent them from meeting this obligation. And the government is asking us to support this as though it were no big deal.

In less than 10 minutes, I have pointed out three glaring inconsistencies in what the government is asking others to do but is not willing to do itself. Since I have 20 minutes, I could go even further. This does not make any sense. If the government really wants to go ahead with this, it should at least agree to some amendments.

I would be remiss if I failed to bring up the last point because all my colleagues mentioned it. I have been here for quite a while now. I have had the opportunity to work in seven Parliaments since I was first elected, and this is the first time that I have seen the government completely refuse to conduct any consultation. They do not consult us at all.

We are the elected representatives of the people, and the government decides and dictates everything: process, dates, what we are going to do, when and how. It has no intention of consulting the official opposition, the third party or the people who are concerned about its bill—in this case the first nations. It is absolutely shameless. I was in cabinet when this agreement was being negotiated. There was our colleague at the time, Andy Scott, who was the Minister of Indian Affairs; the hon. member for St. Paul's; and other colleagues.

• (2240)

It took a year and a half to negotiate the agreement with aboriginal peoples. There were respectful and structured consultations that produced results and made progress. Solutions were found in this place. The government has decided to impose a bill requiring full disclosure.

The first nations themselves had agreed to the creation of the position of auditor general. It was in the Kelowna accord. Contrary to what we will be told and what has been constantly repeated, funding of \$5 billion over five years was allocated. It was in the fiscal framework, as the member for Wascana would say. It was in the budget envelope. It had been negotiated. The weekend before the government fell, in Kelowna, every premier, without exception, and all first nations chiefs, without exception, supported the Kelowna accord, which would have eliminated the gap in the circumstances and quality of life that existed between aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. There was still a gap in terms of education, housing and health.

The Kelowna accord would have helped eliminate this gap within five years. We finally would have had something to be proud of in our relationship with Canada's aboriginal peoples. What did the government do when it took office? The first thing it did was tear up the Kelowna accord claiming that there was no accord, that it was some agreement scribbled on a napkin somewhere and that no funding had been allocated. That is not true.

I was in cabinet at the time. I know what was negotiated. I know that everyone agreed. If we had had the Kelowna accord, our first nations would not be in the situation they are in today. If the government has a modicum of respect for Canada's first nations, then it will go talk to them. Let the government go talk to them before imposing this type of bill. This is no way to go about things. We live in Canada and as far as I know, we live in a democracy. However, I am starting to have some doubt about that given everything I am witnessing in this Parliament and in the committees.

I cannot help it; I have the time and I am going to use it. There is a phenomenon in this Parliament that is very indicative of what this government does with regard to first nations and other groups it does not agree with. It does everything behind closed doors.

Committees are struck and instead of debating in public, instead of being transparent as the government wants the first nations to be, what do the Conservatives do? They come to the committee meeting, they move that it be held in camera and, because they have a majority and the decision cannot be debated, the meeting is held in camera. I call that the new definition of a black hole. Everything that is said in camera remains sealed forever. Consequently, all discussions are held in camera instead of in public. The voters, the people who sent us here to represent them and to work for their well-being, can no longer follow the work done in committee. That is shameful.

I hope that one day, perhaps when an election is looming and the members across the floor are beginning to feel the heat, they will come to their senses and put an end to this crap. This really is crap. They treat the members of this House, who are duly elected by their constituents, like people who are incapable of public debate, when they are the ones who are afraid of it. This just is not working anymore.

When the time comes to vote on Bill C-27, I invite my colleagues to allow it to go to committee, but we probably will not have a choice, since the Conservatives have a majority. Let us hope that in committee, an ounce of common sense will prevail and the most shocking, hypocritical and contradictory elements of this bill will be amended and removed to ensure that the first nations are treated with the respect they deserve.

• (2245)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Questions and comments. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The question is on the motion that this question be now put. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Government Orders

• (2250)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. If I could ask for clarification from the House, on the initial voice vote on the previous question I had not heard a nay. However, I understand that there were members in this House who did say nay.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the other day when I rose there was something of a similar nature that had occurred. I was told then that it was too late and then we continued on. I would suggest that we should be consistent with that.

I think the government House leader was about to stand and make an announcement.

• (2255)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The voice vote that was put before the House was on the previous question. When I asked for a voice vote, I did not hear a nay, but there are several members in this chamber who say that they said nay at that time. I appreciate that the decision has been made. If that is the case, we would proceed with the question on the main motion.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North is correct in the sense that if it is the will of the House to not revisit the matter but to take the decision that was made that the initial vote on the previous question was carried, then it is necessary that we proceed on that basis.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I think you would find consent in this House to defer the vote until 3 p.m. tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my understanding that the whips from the three parties have agreed to defer the vote until 3 p.m. tomorrow.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that having been done, I have a motion which also follows consultation among the parties and it reads as follows, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, on Thursday, June 21, the House shall meet at 1:45 p.m. when the daily routine of business shall be taken up no later than 2 p.m., members may make statements pursuant to Standing Order 31; not later than 2:15 p.m. oral questions shall be taken up; at 3 p.m. the House shall take up any deferred recorded divisions scheduled for that day, and following the recorded divisions, the House shall adjourn and shall stand adjourned until September 17, provided that, for the purposes of Standing Order 28, it shall be deemed to have sat on Friday, June 22.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the government House leader have unanimous consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I ask that you see the clock at 12 midnight.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:45 p.m.

(The House adjourned at 11 p.m.)

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