



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 8, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 8, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a copy of the following documents:

[*English*]

Final Agreement Annual Report of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement Implementation Coordinating Committee, 2009-10; the Annual Report of the Implementation Committee on the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, 2009-10; and Annual Report of the Tlicho Implementation Committee, 2009-10.

* * *

CANADA ACCOUNT ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of International Trade, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Canada Account Annual Report, 2012-13, prepared by Export Canada.

* * *

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 42 petitions.

Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The 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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1045)

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

(*Division No. 120*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Armstrong
Ashfield	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Gosal	Gourde
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney

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MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Strahl	Sweet
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 136

NAYS

Members

Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Brahmi
Brisson	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Chicoine	Choquette
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseauit	Freeman
Garrison	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gravelle
Groguhé	Hassainia
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray	Nantel
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Patry
Péclet	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Thibeault	Toone
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have submitted a letter to you, pursuant to Standing Order 52 (2), in order to make an emergency debate request on the increasingly disturbing situation in Nigeria. As members know, in the last couple of days we have heard reports from Nigeria about the missing girls.

I did want to bring this forward to you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, because of the motions we have had, both today and yesterday, I have not been able to provide that motion to you. I am asking for unanimous consent from the House to put my request forward to you, Mr. Speaker, to have an emergency debate on Nigeria.

Therefore my request would be that this House do revert to the rubric of requests for emergency debates.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

THE SITUATION IN NIGERIA

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all members of this House, in fact citizens of this country, have been seized with the disturbing reports coming out of Nigeria, where over 270 girls have been abducted. In fact, just two days ago, eight more girls were abducted by the terrorist group in Nigeria.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking you, and I have submitted a letter to you asking that we have an emergency debate as soon as possible. I will end with this. Since we have come to know of the situation a couple of weeks ago, the world has been seized with the issue. We need to have an emergency debate on what Canada can do. We have heard from the government that there are some initial steps that have been taken.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking you to acknowledge that this House should be seized with this issue, and to have an emergency debate as soon as possible. If we can do this, we can have a debate that will please the Canadian population as to what they are looking for from their Parliament; that is, to be seized with this issue. It is an emergency. It is something that people want to see members of Parliament speak to.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the request I have put to you be agreed upon as soon as possible.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Ottawa Centre for raising this issue. As a father of two young girls myself, I can certainly understand the impact this would have on concerned Canadians and members of the House.

Government Orders

I am inclined to grant the emergency debate. However, given the changes to the House calendar that the House has just adopted, I think it would perhaps serve the House better and allow for better participation if I exercise my discretion under the Standing Orders and direct that the debate be held Monday evening so that there can be better participation of members at that time.

Therefore, I will direct that the emergency debate be granted and be held Monday evening.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1050)

[*English*]

FAIR ELECTIONS ACT

BILL C-23—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation to Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at report stage of the Bill and one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at third reading stage of the said Bill; and that, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at report stage and on the day allotted to the consideration at third reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: There will now be a 30-minute question period and I will ask members who wish to participate to keep their questions to around a minute and responses to a similar length so that we can accommodate as many members as possible.

The hon. opposition House leader.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely disgusting. This is the 63rd time they have used time allocation or closure to shut down debate. As we know, the government cannot seem to come up with bills that hold water.

In the past six weeks, the Supreme Court has rejected four government bills. I think that we are heading the same way with Bill C-23. I think the people will reject it, and so will the judicial system.

[*English*]

We are talking about 130 amendments that have been tabled to this bad bill, 130 amendments that were supposed to be considered by Parliament, and we got notice of time allocation after 10 minutes of debate for 130 amendments.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the result of this closure, this steamroller that the government is putting in, because it realizes now just what the reaction has been from the public across the country, is that 290 members of Parliament will not be permitted to speak on the bill. For those who choose to vote for this motion, Conservative MPs are muzzling themselves. They are muzzling 290 ridings across this country.

My question is very simple. What kind of disdain comes from a government that invokes closure after 10 minutes of debate and why is the government muzzling 290 members of Parliament on this bill?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been more than enough debate in this House of Commons on the fair elections act. It has been subject to dozens if not hundreds of questions posed on the floor of the House of Commons. We have had dozens of witnesses and detailed testimony. The committee sat extra hours in order to consider the matter before it. It voted on dozens of amendments to the bill.

Here we are with a bill that started off very strong in common sense. It was widely supported by the Canadian public and improved by some amendments. The bill received roughly 87% support for its key measures, in particular the requirement that people provide ID when they vote. The opposition lost that debate entirely. Through the amendments we have further ensured that these bolstered ID requirements will not only protect the integrity of the vote but maintain its accessibility to all Canadians.

I would conclude my answer to this question by quoting the CEO of Elections Canada. These are his words. He stated:

As I conclude, it is my hope that any amendments to the legislation will be adopted by spring 2014, in order for my Office to implement changes and secure additional resources in time for...October 2015....

In the past, the position of the CEO has been that this bill needed to be adopted by the spring of this year. That is the timeframe that we have established with today's action.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is shameful for the government to use time allocation well over 60 times now. What is most offensive is that it is doing it on the Elections Act. Traditionally, government would have sought a consensus when making changes to the Elections Act.

Let there be no doubt that my question is not for the minister responsible for democratic reform, because he has been a failure on this issue. Rather, my question is specifically for the government House leader.

This bill is nothing more than a Conservative bill when in fact the government had a responsibility to work with the different stakeholders, in particular, the Chief Electoral Officer. There is no possible Conservative spin that the government could possibly put on this to try to give the impression that our election law would be healthier today than it was yesterday based on this legislation. Without the ability to compel witnesses, what we saw in 2011 is not going to improve. I do not care what the minister responsible for democratic reform tells Canadians, which are mistruths or untruths.

At the end of the day, this legislation will weaken. The question I have for the government House leader is this. Why invoke time allocation on a fundamental bill that affects our basic democracy in Canada? I pose that question for the government House leader.

Government Orders

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member claims that there is an unbroken precedent that all amendments to the Canada Elections Act must be passed unanimously by the House of Commons. The Liberal government passed two major reforms to the Canada Elections Act under the previous regime. It did not have a consensus in the House of Commons in either case. It was met with total opposition from the parties on the other side of the aisle. Therefore, for the member to suggest that the Liberal Party needs to support a bill for it to be passed when Canadians only gave 30 seats to that party runs contrary to Liberal history with respect to amending the Canada Elections Act, and it has nothing to do with democracy.

The Canadian people elected 155-plus members of Parliament who are supporting this bill. The Canadian people widely support this bill. It is a very popular piece of legislation. We won the debate on it and now we will pass it into law.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the House of two things.

First, I have allowed the first two questions from the two recognized official parties to be longer and the answers to be longer. Henceforth I will be limiting the questions and answers to one minute.

Second, I would remind particularly the members on the government side that priority is given to the opposition parties in terms of questions for this half hour.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth has one minute.

• (1100)

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this “has nothing to do with democracy”, the Canada Elections Act. Did I hear the minister correctly?

I would like the minister to listen to what the Prime Minister said: “...using time allocation for electoral law, doing it quickly and without consent of the other political parties, is...dangerous...”. He then went on to analogize any government that would do that to third world dictatorships.

Something has changed on that side of the House. The Conservatives got in by virtue of an unfair election system that produces 40% of the vote and leaves them with 54% of the seats. They think that gives them the right to ram through massive butchery of the Canada Elections Act. It is incredibly disingenuous of the minister to now cite the Chief Electoral Officer, who said this needs to get through by the end of this session, because the Chief Electoral Officer at the time, a year ago, had no idea you would be butchering this act.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Again, I would remind the member that he is to direct his comments to the Chair, not to the other side of the chamber.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the reality is the Chief Electoral Officer himself said that the changes to the act needed to be passed by spring of 2014. Of course, it is not the job of the Chief Electoral Officer to write the law. That is the job of democratically

elected officials. That is what we have done. We have put forward good legislation. It has been thoroughly studied and improved through amendments.

Let me just share the facts. Since it has been introduced there were 15 committee meetings to study the bill, amounting to roughly 31 hours of study. We had 72 witnesses offer their points of view. In addition to all of that, we have probably had about a hundred questions on the floor of the House of Commons. I have answered every single one of them through facts. The aftermath of those exchanges is that Canadians, through all the public opinion research that has been published, overwhelmingly support the fair elections act. We have won this debate and now we are moving forward with a law that Canadians want.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been almost a hundred times, probably close to a thousand if we include committees and other procedural motions that have been put forward by the government, that there has been closure in the House of Commons.

In terms of sports critic, we have a huge event that is potentially coming up on Monday. Monday is game 6 of the Canadiens-Boston series. It is a unifying event that is possibly going to happen, where all Canadians are going to be watching. They are the only Canadian hockey team left in the playoffs. Why is the government choosing Monday to sit down and vote for two hours when we can all rally around the Montreal Canadiens?

Does the government has something to hide? Are the Conservatives hiding? What do they have to hide? They could put this off for another week.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, did he actually just ask that question? I am sorry, but my friend across the way would rather be watching a sporting event than doing his job here in the House of Commons.

It is a very important sporting event and I will make the commitment to him that I will find him an effective Twitter feed that will keep him regularly updated on the score of the game. I would also be happy to keep him updated on the score of the votes on the floor of the House of Commons. There is a lot of suspense about how it might turn out, but I think in the end the result will be in the Canadians' favour.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what a letdown. What blatant disregard for democracy. When I came to Canada, I came because I was looking for a country where I believed democracy to be strong. These debates are one of the strengths of the parliamentary system. They are its strength and its wealth.

The minister says that this bill will pass because the people elected the government to pass it. I would like him to tell me how our fellow citizens were consulted on such radical changes to the Elections Act. I would like him to give me a clear answer about how he sought people's opinion.

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the fair elections act will keep democracy in the hands of everyday Canadians. One of the ways it would do that is through the common sense change to require people to show their ID when they vote. Overwhelmingly, Canadians believe this is a fair and reasonable request. The opposition believes that individuals should be able to turn up without any identification whatsoever and cast their ballot by having someone else vouch for their identity.

Our bill, the fair elections act, as amended, would end identity vouching altogether and require every single Canadian to show their ID prior to voting. It is a disagreement we have with the opposition. We have had this debate, and the Canadian people have pronounced the verdict. Eighty-seven per cent of them believe that an ID requirement is fair and reasonable and that is exactly what the bill will require.

• (1105)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, we see closure in the House of Commons.

We are at report stage. We are reporting back many amendments that have been made to the bill. Many of these amendments need some disclosure within the House of Commons. We need to talk about the amendments that have been made.

Why is the government taking this tack? The bill was first presented as being a complete bill and has now gone through many amendments, yet is still imperfect, and we are being refused the opportunity to discuss those amendments.

Why is the government doing this?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the fair elections act provides a fair and reasonable update to the Canada Elections Act. For example, it would require that every single Canadian who presents himself or herself to vote to present ID. Overwhelmingly, Canadians accept that this is a fair and reasonable requirement.

The opposition disagrees. Those members believe that people should be able to show up with no ID whatsoever and cast their votes just by having someone vouch for who they are. That is not fair, that is not reasonable, and that is why we have rejected that proposal by the NDP and the Liberals.

Canadians had a chance to hear this debate. There has been much witness testimony on it, and 87% of Canadians agree with us on that point.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister a question in regard to this.

Obviously, I was one of the members in an almost unanimous vote to make sure that the Chief Electoral Officer had the powers at his disposal to deal with any questions or issues with respect to illegal robocalls or someone impersonating an elections official. I think that is something all of us felt very strongly about and voted in favour of.

The minister has mentioned that there are time and administrative pressures that are going to be upon the Chief Electoral Officer if these powers are not bestowed upon him. It is a part of the bill that I think we all agree absolutely needs to go forward.

Could he explain the reason the bill needs to go forward in all due haste to give the Chief Electoral Officer those powers and the ability to tackle the administrative challenges for the next election?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I think the fair elections act does a lot to improve compliance with election law.

For example, it would make the Commissioner of Canada Elections independent, so he would be able to direct his own investigations, hire his own staff, and make his own decisions. He would also have a fixed term, which means that he cannot be fired without cause over his seven-year period in office. That is the kind of independence we need to ensure good, solid enforcement of the act. It is a very big improvement over the status quo, whereby the commissioner is under the control of the CEO of Elections Canada. The CEO can fire him at any time and hires him in the first place. He has the legal authority to pick his staff, set his budget, and direct the investigations, direct the inquiries.

We are changing that. No longer would the CEO have any involvement in that area, which properly belongs to the enforcement side. That independence is new, strong, and absolute. We think that will improve compliance under the act, and we look forward to a new era of this improved enforcement and compliance with the law.

• (1110)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Toronto brought up a good point in committee. He said that about 87% of people agree with the identification process. One question that was not asked was whether they considered vouching to be a part of that identification. The question was therefore really incomplete when the minister came to the conclusion he did.

The minister talked about independence. Without the powers, it is not an exercise in independence. It will prove over time to be an exercise in isolation from an effective job without the powers being given to him. Again, to use the analogy, it is the referee wearing the referee jersey but not having a whistle, or one that is effective.

I want to quote from an Australian newspaper. Dennis Shanahan, a popular columnist in Australia, had this to say:

Canada's Conservative government, embroiled in a furor after disenfranchising 120,000 voters by changing identification standards, has demonstrated the way not to go about important electoral reform. Australia's changes should be driven by parliament's multi-party Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

What a novel idea. We are setting a bad example.

When the changes were made about the modicum of vouching the minister brought back in, who inspired him to make those small changes?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for not only his question but for his very thoughtful contribution to the debate throughout the process.

Government Orders

What we have proposed with the amended fair elections act is the following. We have eliminated identity vouching. That is the process whereby people show up with no ID whatsoever and cannot demonstrate who they are, so someone else vouches for their identity. That would no longer be permitted under the Canada Elections Act.

Every single person would be required to provide ID. If that ID did not have an address on it, for example, if a person lived in an area where there was only a P.O. box on the driver's licence, someone else could co-sign an oath with the person as to the person's place of residence. A person would still have to prove his or her identity, but residence could be proven through a co-signed oath.

There would be a \$50,000 fine for lying on that oath, and potential jail time could accompany that fine. For the first time, Elections Canada would be required by law to compile a list of all the oath-takers in order to check for duplicates to find out if people voted or signed oaths more than once, which would be an offence under the act.

Finally, there would also be a legal requirement for an auditor to examine Elections Canada's management of this oath-taking process to make sure that all of these rules were followed. In other words, people would have to show their ID, and if an oath had to be signed to prove residence, we would follow up to make sure that the person did not vote more than once. That is a massive improvement over the status quo.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is utterly absurd.

An MP asked for a day off so he could watch hockey, even though he can watch it later, and a minister is limiting the speaking time that we are entitled to in our democracy.

They are certainly breaking records when it comes to time allocation. We are here to say what we think about bills and to ensure progress in our society. We have the right to express our opinions on these issues.

Can the minister tell us what is happening to democracy? Like a broken record, he keeps giving us the same answers. He does not answer our questions truthfully or candidly.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is complaining that I am repeating my answers. I do not change them because the truth does not change. I keep repeating the truth.

The debate is on the issue of identification. Under the fair elections act, we will require people to show some ID in order to vote.

The NDP believes that people should be able to vote without showing any ID. None whatsoever. They think that people could simply vote by getting someone to vouch for them.

That does not make sense, and Canadians agree with us on that. Vouching will no longer be an option. People will have to show ID in order to vote, and Canadians overwhelmingly agree that this makes sense.

•(1115)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no questions for the minister because I do not believe him. I think his answers are illogical and short on the truth. I do not have a question, but I have two comments.

First, I think it is a shame that the government is once again limiting the number of speakers from each party to 10% or 15%—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of unparliamentary language here today, such as accusing other members of being untruthful. That is the same as accusing the hon. member of lying.

No one gets into public service and stands in his or her spot here to try to distort anything. If the members have questions, they should supplant them and not try to smear a minister or any member of this House.

I would ask you to rule on this, Mr. Speaker, because I have heard a number of things—

The Deputy Speaker: Without any hesitation, the use of the terms “untruthful” or “lacking in truth”, that type of terminology has been accepted in this House. For as long as I have been here, it is acceptable parliamentary language.

I would have to rule against the objection.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I think it is a shame that only 10% or 15% of members will have the opportunity to speak to such an important bill, including a whole host of amendments that have been made. What is more, a hundred or more other amendments will have to be considered. We will have just one day to do all that. This behaviour is totally unacceptable.

As for my second comment, those of us on this side of the House who are against the bill have a duty to remind Canadians of what the government has imposed with its majority between now and the next election. Indeed, what this government is doing is undermining our democratic process.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the member did not read the bill, so he does not know what he is talking about. He did not talk about any of the bill's content. If I were him, I think I too would avoid mentioning the content, because he is voting against common sense measures.

I have no doubt that his constituents agree that Canadians need to show ID to vote. Canadians agree that an independent investigator is needed, and the bill will make that happen. Canadians completely agree that we need to eliminate the process his party used to circumvent the donation limits by claiming that hundreds of millions of dollars in donations were major loans.

Government Orders

Canadians agree with this bill. Every poll shows it. We won the debate on this issue, and that is why the member neglected to mention the content of the bill.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have many questions I would like to ask the minister because this bill is so problematic and contains so many elements that will undermine our democracy.

A little earlier on, the minister mentioned the number of hours we had to examine this bill in committee. The reality is that all of the witnesses who came to talk about Bill C-23 pointed out the various problems with it and spoke about how it would be a real problem for our Canada Elections Act. In their opinion, there are many provisions that will not have the intended effect.

I think it is terrible that the minister is quoting the Chief Electoral Officer to justify the fact that he is now limiting the debate, because the Chief Electoral Officer himself came to committee to talk about just how many problems this bill will cause if it is passed.

As a result, I would like the minister to explain how he plans to continue introducing this type of bill when Bill C-23 does not even make any improvements to the Canada Elections Act. None of the requests made by the Commissioner of Canada Elections and the Chief Electoral Officer regarding this bill were granted, and I do not understand why.

• (1120)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is complaining that we did not give unelected people the power to draft the bill, but we live in a democracy. Elected officials make the laws. That is why we have put forward a bill that Canadians support. The fundamental principles of the bill are overwhelmingly supported by Canadians.

Those principles are as follows: voters must show identification in order to vote; investigators should be independent; and Elections Canada advertising should focus solely on where, how and when to vote.

Those are common sense principles and Canadians agree. In a democracy, elected officials make the laws. I am proud to live here, in this democracy, and to help pass a bill that will make it even better.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1205)

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

(*Division No. 121*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Armstrong	Ashfield
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeshen	Falk
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Strahl	Sweet
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson

Government Orders

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

Williamson
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Zimmer — 136

NAYS

Members

Andrews
 Ashton
 Aubin
 Bélanger
 Benskin
 Blanchette
 Boivin
 Brison
 Casey
 Choquette
 Cleary
 Côté
 Crowder
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Dion
 Donnelly
 Dubourg
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Easter
 Freeman
 Genest-Jourdain
 Goodale
 Groguhé
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hsu
 Jacob
 Julian
 Lamoureux
 Larose
 Laverdière
 Leslie
 MacAulay
 Masse
 May
 McGuinty
 Michaud
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Murray
 Nunez-Melo
 Péclet
 Quach
 Rankin
 Raynault
 Saganash
 Scarpaleggia
 Sgro
 Sitsabaiesan
 Stewart
 Toone
 Turmel

Angus
 Atamanenko
 Ayala
 Bennett
 Bevington
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Brahma
 Caron
 Chicoine
 Christopherson
 Comartin
 Cotler
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dewar
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Freeland
 Garrison
 Giguère
 Gravelle
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Hassainia
 Hughes
 Jones
 Kellway
 Lapointe
 Latendresse
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Liu
 Mai
 Mathysen
 McCallum
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
 Nantel
 Pacetti
 Pilon
 Rafferty
 Ravignat
 Regan
 Sandhu
 Scott
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
 sor)
 St-Denis
 Stoffer
 Tremblay
 Valeriote — 102

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

SAFEGUARDING CANADA'S SEAS AND SKIES ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported without amendment from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC) moved that Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Lisa Raitt moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act. This project focuses on five key initiatives: amendments to the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, the Marine Liability Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, and the Aeronautics Act. Today, I would like to speak specifically to the proposed changes to the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

First, turning to the Marine Liability Act, the proposed amendments will implement the commitments of the Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea Convention, helping to ensure Canadians are adequately compensated for the damage caused by spills of hazardous and noxious substances from ships. For this reason, I highly encourage the passage of the bill so it can be adopted as quickly as possible.

The proposed amendments to the Marine Liability Act will fill an important gap in the current liability and compensation regime for ships, because they protect Canadians against the financial consequences of hazardous and noxious substances and spills from ships. They will also ensure that shipowners carry the appropriate amount of compulsory insurance for the risks associated with the cargoes they carry. Finally, they will provide Canadians access to an international fund to provide compensation beyond the shipowners limits.

Canada has an extensive history of seeking economic gains from international trade and, in particular, through international shipping which, worldwide, is responsible for the carriage of 90% of the world's goods. With the world's longest coastline bordered by three oceans and a wealth of natural resources, this will surely continue to be the case as Canada looks to move those resources to existing and new markets.

Government Orders

Given this, it is important to have in place the appropriate legislation and regulations to minimize the risks associated with marine transportation. Spills of hazardous and noxious substances from ships can be costly to clean up and this government is taking action to ensure that Canadians are insulated from these costs. Shipping is inherently a global industry and it is critical to the practical functioning of global commerce. With the international nature of this industry, it is important to advance an international framework and contribute to the uniformity of international maritime law.

Canada has had a long-standing tradition of multilateralism with regard to international shipping and Canada's heavy involvement in the advancement of the Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea Convention is indicative of that long-standing tradition.

The 2010 Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea Convention would provide roughly \$400 million in compensation for a spill of hazardous and noxious substances, which is currently not available. It would establish strict liability for the shipowner and would introduce compulsory insurance for the liability for the pollution damage caused by a spill of hazardous and noxious substances from a ship. This is a major improvement over the current regime as, currently, shipowners are not required to carry insurance for their liability in relation to a spill of hazardous or noxious substances. Should damages exceed the shipowner's insurance coverage, the convention would provide access to an international fund that would pay compensation for pollution damage caused by such spills.

The international fund, once established, will be paid into by cargo owners. By sharing the responsibility between the two principal parties involved, this convention supports the very important polluter pays principle, one that our government seeks to enshrine in law whenever possible.

The convention covers a wide variety of substances, some 6,500 hazardous and noxious substances, that are carried in bulk packages and containers along our coasts and through our ports. We have a robust maritime governance regime and we have implemented some tough prevention measures, but, even so, in the unlikely event of a spill, these amendments would allow affected individuals to submit claims for compensation. This would include claims for cleanup costs, economic losses, damage to property, and environmental damages.

Through these amendments and by joining the convention, businesses that could be directly impacted by a spill would have access to compensation from the polluter. This includes the fishing and tourism sectors that are usually the most affected economically. It would also see that compensation would be available for environmental restoration.

● (1210)

These changes would also include loss of life and personal injury claims, ensuring that compensation would go to those who were affected in the worst possible way. People who are hurt, or worse, by an explosion of a hazardous substance on a ship, including oil, would receive proper compensation. This protection would be extended to both the crew on board the ship and any innocent people affected outside the ship. Currently, there is no such compensation available. Victims must pursue shipowners in courts.

When the bill was being discussed in committee, the members heard from many witnesses who strongly supported these amendments. It was well-recognized that this was an important step forward and filled a crucial gap in the current liability and compensation regime. Those stakeholders reminded us that this convention was a significant improvement over what was currently available, which we believe is woefully inadequate.

In the case of an incident involving hazardous and noxious substances today, the shipowner is not held strictly liable. That means victims are required to prove fault or negligence on the part of the shipowner. These amendments would remove that burden and guarantee that compensation would be available.

The shipping industry is supportive of the convention because it gives them certainty and the ability to ensure against a known risk. The convention is viewed as the most efficient way to offer coverage for a ship-source chemical spill.

Such conventions avoid negative impacts to the ability for ships to trade internationally, as these are mobile assets that trade across the world on a continual basis. Therefore, the convention pools the risk and the financing of paying compensation to victims among a large number of players. This minimizes the costs of insuring the risk. The access to the international fund allows higher amounts of compensation than what shipowners alone can provide. The international nature of the fund means that all major industries that trade in hazardous and noxious substances are sharing the financial burden of paying for compensation.

To attempt to do this nationally would mean that Canadian industries could never offer the same levels of compensation as the international fund could. Of course that would put Canada at a competitive disadvantage and consumers would end up paying for a system that is ineffective.

For those reasons, I highly encourage the passage of this bill, which contains these amendments to the Marine Liability Act.

The bill being discussed today is an important component of our government's plan to enhance the safety of shipping in Canadian waters and protect our marine environment. We expect our international trade to increase in the coming years as demand for our national resources grows. With this growth, comes higher volumes of vessel traffic.

For this reason, it is becoming more and more important than ever to ensure that Canada has appropriate measures in place to protect people and the environment from potential oil spills. That is why on March 18 of last year we announced our intention to create a world-class tanker safety system. It is a comprehensive approach. It is made up of several measures which are all designed to prevent spills from happening, ensure that proper response is there if they do occur, and make polluters pay.

Government Orders

These measures also include the proposed amendments to the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, that are now before the House as part of Bill C-3.

Since last March we have already taken action to protect people and the environment from potential oil spills. To give an example, Transport Canada has increased inspections of foreign tankers in our waters to ensure that they meet internationally accepted standards. Our government has increased flight hours for the national aerial surveillance program. This is a great program. It is a program that allows us to detect ship-source oil spills in all three of our oceans and the Great Lakes, and significantly contributes to our ability to hold polluters accountable.

In February, I had the opportunity to participate in a surveillance flight. I can assure the members of the House that this is a very effective program.

In addition, we appointed a tanker safety expert panel last March. It has submitted a report on ways to improve tanker safety south of 60° north latitude. Our government is currently consulting with all parties about these recommendations. Next fall, the panel will submit a second report. This one about the regime in the Arctic and hazardous and noxious substances.

• (1215)

These measures and others are an important part of how we plan to ensure that Canadians benefit from a marine environmental regime that is truly world class.

The proposed amendments to the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 that I am now putting forward for third reading are a key component for our efforts to build a world-class tanker safety system. These amendments were debated by the House during second reading. I am encouraged that members of the House generally recognize that our proposed measures would improve safety in our waters. They would enhance government oversight of industry, and they would increase our enforcement powers.

The amendments have also been reviewed by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, which heard directly from stakeholders, as it did with respect to amendments under the Marine Liability Act. I am pleased that the reaction from industry has been favourable. That shows that stakeholders understand the value of the measures we have proposed. Their support confirms that these changes are practical and they are achievable.

I would like to remind the House briefly to what these amendments relate: providing immunity for agents of response organizations, strengthen the requirements for oil handling facilities, and extend application of administrative monetary penalties.

Under the current marine oil spills preparedness and response regime, the polluter is responsible for cleaning up oil spills. The Canada Shipping Act, 2001 protects response organizations from civil and criminal liability as they carry out their work on behalf of the polluter.

The first proposed amendment will clearly provide immunity for certain certified Canadian response organizations when they respond to a spill that occurs when an oil handling facility is unloading or

loading oil to or from a vessel. This would clarify that they are covered by the act when responding to these particular situations.

A further amendment would provide the agents of a certified Canadian response organization with the same level of immunity when responding to an oil spill in Canadian waters. These agents would be able to proceed with the cleanup and know that would they have the same level of protection as the Canadian response organizations that engaged them. This would expedite their response, which is a significant advantage in a case of an emergency. Since this coverage would also extend immunity to non-Canadian responders, this measure would increase Canada's access to international resources.

If there should ever be a large-scale oil spill, these additional resources could really complement our own environmental response capacity, and that would help ensure the fastest, most efficient response possible, eliminating possible bureaucratic, jurisdictional hang ups that could further impact lives and the environment.

Bill C-3 also puts forward amendments that would strengthen the regime governing oil handling facilities during the loading or unloading of oil to or from a vessel. Currently, under the Canada Shipping Act, oil handling facilities are required to prepare oil pollution prevention plans as well as oil pollution emergency plans, and they have to keep these plans on site. The plans have to detail who is responsible for taking specific action to prevent oil spills and to respond adequately if they do. The amendments would introduce new requirements for these facilities, and that would help enhance government oversight.

To give an example, we are reinforcing the requirements that the operator at the oil handling facility must ensure that its plans are kept up to date. We would also require that the operators of existing oil handling facility notify me, as Minister of Transport, of their operations. This is simple and it would help ensure that oil handling facilities set out in the regulations would be identified. This requirement would facilitate regulatory oversight and ensure that all of these facilities would meet a sufficiently high safety standard in their operations.

New facilities will also have to submit their plans to me before they begin operations, as would those who were making significant changes that might affect the loading or unloading of oil to or from vessels. Examples of this are changes to capacity, changes in equipment, changes in design or the type of product that they are transferring.

• (1220)

Under the proposed amendments, operators of oil handling facilities will also have to demonstrate how they comply with the act and the regulations.

Government Orders

In addition, the changes give me and any future minister of transport the authority to direct an operator of an oil handling facility to take the necessary measures to adequately prevent marine oil pollution. That is going to include the authority to require an operator to repair, remedy, minimize, or prevent pollution damage from these facilities, or to stop the loading or unloading of oil to or from vessels.

Taken together, these amendments will significantly increase oversight of the operation of oil handling facilities, both existing, and new ones as well. It will help ensure that oil spills are prevented whenever possible, and that appropriate measures are in place if a spill should happen.

Lastly, Bill C-3 addresses enforcement of the legislative regime to promote compliance. Enforcement should be adaptable to the seriousness of an offence. Marine safety inspectors in my department will be able to issue administrative monetary penalties for contraventions of part 8 of the act and its regulations. This ability, in addition to the existing enforcement powers under the act, only strengthens Canada's marine oil spill preparedness and response regime.

In conclusion, this is a bill that is an important step in our government's comprehensive plan to develop a world-class tanker safety system in Canada, and in particular off the west coast. I look forward to having all members of this House support the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her explanation and her comments on the bill.

I was a member of the committee, and we heard from witnesses. I must admit that, as the minister said, there is a lot of support for this bill. Some of the people said it is a step in the right direction.

However, the Canadian Maritime Law Association made a suggestion that we, the official opposition, proposed as an amendment. We want to be sure that, at the end of the day, Canadian taxpayers will not have to foot the bill.

Yes, there is a system in place. However, if the damages total more than \$500 million, the convention does not apply. The fund created by the convention cannot be used. Then who is responsible? Taxpayers, that is who. The government will do the cleanup and Canadians will be on the hook.

Given the importance of the polluter pays principle, as the minister pointed out, why did she not agree to our amendment, which would take the existing oil fund and allow it to be used here? It has already been created. It already exists and we could have used it to ensure that Canadians will not have to pay.

Why did the minister not accept the NDP's proposed amendment?

• (1225)

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we are following along with international convention in ensuring that we are complying to international rules, given the nature of marine transport.

The total amount of compensation under the convention that makes shipowners strictly liable for damages like pollution would be approximately \$400 million for a single incident. We hope that does not happen. Above and beyond that, we would take this on a case-by-case basis, in terms of how we would effect pollution cleanup.

What this demonstrates is that we clearly do see the gaps that need to be filled. We have looked at it very carefully, and we are moving forward to ensure we are playing on the same level playing field as other countries in the world.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this bill amends a number of existing statutes, and it does touch directly on aviation, marine safety, and so on.

I want to ask a question. Because we have walked through the door with respect to aviation issues, I want to ask the minister a question that I think she would rightly expect from the Liberal opposition here today.

It is about the recent survey of aviation inspectors who work for your department at Transport Canada. I want to know whether this bill has any bearing on what we have determined from your own inspectors on aviation.

Eighty-five percent of them believe that air travellers have been exposed to higher risks as a result of your government's policies; nine in ten of your own aviation inspectors—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I would remind the hon. member to direct his comments and questions to the Chair rather than directly to his colleague, and could he get to the question, please.

Mr. David McGuinty: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and through you, nine in ten aviation inspectors in the minister's own department are now saying that her department's safety management system prevents the correction of safety problems in a timely fashion. Finally, two-thirds of the minister's own inspectors believe that Transport Canada's safety management system will actually increase the chances of a major aviation accident.

Can the minister tell us how the bill debated here today is going to address these issues?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member would know, moving to a safety management system platform was a decision taken many years ago. As the Auditor General has noted in his report in November, there have been difficulties at Transport Canada in terms of implementing oversight with respect to auditing as opposed to inspecting.

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I think the hon. member is quoting from a survey that was conducted by the union, and, in that, the determination came forward that there was a discomfort with SMS. However, the reality is that safety management systems, or SMS, are internationally recognized as being the way forward. The chair of the Transportation Safety Board here in Canada has indicated that it is the right thing to do. It is what industry says is the right thing to do. It is what ICAO has said is the right way forward, in terms of ensuring that a safety culture is embedded. As a result, we can point to a decrease in aviation accidents in the past number of years of approximately 25%.

However, on the member's point, I think it is important for Transport Canada officials to take a look at the result of the survey and apply whatever skills we can to ensure that people are trained appropriately and that they have a culture in which they like to work. I know my officials take the matter very seriously in the management of their department day by day.

However, the concept of SMS is sound, and it will be implemented because it is the right way to go for our country.

• (1230)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to be in Victoria, and I launched a great project that was funded with support from my department, Western Economic Diversification. It is around ocean monitoring and has a series of sensors, expertise, and a hub for collecting data related to baseline measurements up and along the B.C. coast.

Certainly I know that our government has invested heavily, not only in the infrastructure but also the research expertise and capacity, to help inform us and put together sound public policy around regulation in the area that my colleague is speaking to today.

I wonder if the minister can provide the House with some additional details on the level of work related to science and technology that our government has funded, and how it is has informed the policy that she has put forward to the House for debate.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, indeed innovation, such as the minister has indicated, is really important to ensure that we are at the cutting edge in terms of prevention, response, and, at the end of the day, liability.

On the prevention and response side, these types of sensors that the member referred to will allow us to understand what is happening in the ocean. They will provide real-time information to vessels about dangers to them, to ensure we are preventing an accident from happening.

It is an incredibly smart project, and I am very grateful that the minister is funding it through her department. It shows that we have a whole-of-government approach when it comes to ensuring that our marine environment will continue to be safe, so that we can responsibly develop our resources here in Canada.

The only other item that I think is unique to us in Canada, and of which I am very proud, is the national aerial surveillance program. That flies out of Vancouver, the north, and the east coast. It is something unique to our country. They do not have this capability or this instrumentation in the United States. From 10,000 feet, it can see a spill of as little as one litre of oil on the water.

These are very important things that we can do to ensure we respond as quickly as possible to a spill and make sure we contain the damage, and of course the liability, as best we can. I am very pleased that we have expanded the coverage. We are providing more hours in the air and more coverage across the country in the national aerial surveillance program.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I have a few questions for the minister.

Before the bill was brought forward at second reading, the NDP made a request to have the scope of the bill broadened so that we could look at ways to make sure the environment is protected. For instance, we look at how the government has been acting with closing Coast Guard stations and cutting a lot of environmental protection measures.

Why did the Conservatives not agree with the NDP proposal to broaden the scope of the bill to better protect the environment?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, when we brought the bill for reintroduction, in October of last year, it was a bill that contained a number of items, as I have already outlined. However, these are all items that are practical, pragmatic, and have the ability to make a change now.

One of the examples I gave was that we are ensuring that aids to navigation, which are buoys, lights, and other devices to mark locations and preferred shipping routes, are installed and maintained. It is these kinds of practical, action-oriented devices that we want to accomplish, to make sure we are not studying, not waiting, nor contemplating; we are moving forward. We are getting action, and we are going to protect the environment in the short term, and not thinking about it in the long term.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-3.

Before I start, I would like to commend my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster for the extraordinary work he has done on this bill.

It is important to take a look at what this bill does. It has a rather long title: An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. This bill involves a number of different acts.

Since the bill already involved a number of other laws, we requested that it be expanded and be a little more open, so that we could take a good look at what is going on with environmental protection.

The Conservative government has made cuts that affect the environment, particularly in western Canada, in British Columbia, but also in the east, where the government has closed rescue stations. The government's actions contradict its claims that it wants to protect the environment.

We lobbied, we wanted to talk and we wanted to see meaningful action. Unfortunately the government refused to listen to us.

Yes, this bill is a step in the right direction, especially in terms of marine protection and safety. That is why we will support the bill at this stage.

However, the committee heard testimony from a number of experts. We made very reasonable suggestions to improve the bill. Unfortunately, once again, the government refused any amendment from the opposition.

Unfortunately, this bill is yet more proof that the government does not have an open approach. Not only did it refuse to expand the scope of the bill, but it also refused to listen when we scrutinized the bill and made suggestions based on expert studies. Unfortunately, this is not the first time this has happened.

The bill has four rather major parts dealing with separate issues. The first part deals with the aviation industry indemnity. This allows the Minister of Transport to compensate certain airlines for any losses, damages or liability caused by events known as war risks. We support what has been proposed on this issue. It is a solution to a problem that was there before.

The second part amends the Aeronautics Act to give the airworthiness investigative authority the power to investigate aviation accidents or incidents involving civilians and aircraft or aeronautical installations operated by the Department of National Defence. In the event of military-civilian occurrences, this part gives the airworthiness investigative authority the power to conduct investigations.

However, we have noticed a problem. In the past, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada used to carry out the studies and investigations. At the end of the day, since the board was responsible, the report was made public. In this case, the report will be submitted to the Minister of National Defence. The minister will be able to see the report, but he will not be required to make it public.

The NDP proposed to force the government to make the report public so that anyone who has questions can be informed and the public is reassured. Once again, unfortunately, the government rejected our amendment. However—and this is not in defence of the government—we heard that it is in the interest of the Department of National Defence to make these reports public.

• (1235)

They are telling us that the reports will be made public on an administrative level. If the information is confidential—for example, if the reports are talking about strategic or other types of military issues—we can understand why they would not be made public. However, nothing prevents the government from making these reports public. Even the officials from the Department of National Defence who testified in committee said that all existing reports on these types of investigations are made public.

Why did the government not take the NDP's proposal to make these investigations public? Our proposal took into account that the reports would not have to be made public if they contained confidential information or strategic national security information,

Government Orders

and the government already has that right. This government already does it. Most of the time, when the public wants to see a report or investigation, only a part of the report will be disclosed—not the full report.

This is in the interests of transparency, which is very important to the NDP. Unfortunately the government did not accept our proposal.

I would now like to talk more about part 4, which we think is one of the most important parts. As the minister mentioned, this part will fix a problem that existed before with respect to compensation for victims or others who have to pay in the event of disaster. Here is what is going on. Canada was a signatory to the convention.

• (1240)

[*English*]

Canada was a signatory to the HNS Convention, and what we are doing here is actually implementing the convention. The reason for the convention and the reason we are supporting part 4 is that we are moving forward. We need to have these rules, these regulations, to make sure that the convention is applied. We want the convention to be applied here because it would actually allow us to access a fund. It is an international fund for HNS, hazardous and noxious substances. In case of a spill, we would be able to use money from that fund.

Also, the bill would actually limit the responsibility of the shippers. Just to make it simple, if a spill happens with HNS, the shipper will be responsible up to a certain amount, which is approximately \$230 million. That amount changes. I will not go into detail about why, but that is the amount.

The information we have from the Library of Parliament is that the other amount will be covered by the convention. The fund will cover up to \$500 million. In excess of that, what happens? That is the question we were asking. What happens if there is a spill that exceeds \$500 million in terms of liability, in terms of damages? Basically, the answer from witnesses, and also now from the minister, is that it might not happen.

What if it happens? Before all the oil spills, we were saying that it was not going to be a problem. Everything was safe. However, when we saw what happened with the *Exxon Valdez*, for instance, and when we saw what happened in Lac-Mégantic, where in terms of insurance, the company did not have enough insurance, who ended up paying for it? It was the taxpayers. What is worse, the people who have to do the cleanup are going to be on the hook for that.

A fund already exists. Duties were taken for oil, so the fund exists already. We wanted to make sure that at the end of the day, it will not be the taxpayers who have to pay. We could use that fund to make sure that we protect Canadians. Unfortunately, again, the government refused our amendment.

It is really hard for me to understand why we do not want to make sure that Canadians are off the hook, especially when the government has said that polluter pays is really important. In this case, if something happens, again, Canadians could be on the hook.

Government Orders

It is an amendment we thought was reasonable and would make sure it was in the right direction. The response from the government was not satisfactory. We do not understand that position.

[*Translation*]

I would like to come back to the fact that the bill contains some good features, including part 5, which is an interesting part because it sets out further safeguards. Operators of oil handling facilities will have to meet some additional obligations, such as submitting an emergency or response plan to the department to ensure that they have a plan for their operations. When petroleum is moved from one source to another, be it by boat or by train, there is a transfer here, which is when we want to be covered.

In addition, a certain form of liability will provide some freedom to the first responders on site in emergency or problem situations. In other words, response organizations will be entitled to some immunity, which is important. Indeed, in committee, the first responders told us that this was important to them too, which is why we are supporting it.

However, we can do more and look at the government's way of doing things. I will make a parallel with what is happening in rail safety. There are regulations in this sector that the government says are strong. However, in practice, what we have is deregulation. Companies are increasingly being allowed to self-regulate and self-inspect.

The Auditor General clearly stated that Transport Canada did not have the resources needed for the inspections, which is what concerns me in this case. Indeed, we are taking a step in the right direction with the legislation by providing for inspections and an obligation to submit response plans. However, if we look at the budget and how the government is doing things, there has been no follow-up at all on that. For example, there was no increase in the last budget to ensure protection in rail safety.

Once again, inspectors are being given more duties without necessarily being given the resources they need. The Auditor General was scathing in his report. The department said that it would follow-up. We are waiting to see this follow-up to determine whether the government is committed to protecting Canadians first and foremost. Although this is a step in the right direction, the government's actions suggest otherwise.

When a response plan is produced, what co-operation will there be? What information will we have as interested parties to find out whether the government is doing its job?

It is easy to draw a parallel between this issue and rail safety because we started studying that issue in committee after the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, which concerns the same department, the Department of Transport. That is why we are trying to identify the real shortcomings. We have to admit that Lac-Mégantic opened our eyes. We saw that there were shortcomings not just in the measures implemented by the government, but also in how laws are managed and implemented.

Now, on the one hand, we are headed in somewhat the same direction by enforcing the laws and asking companies to submit a plan to us. On the other hand, we do not have the resources to ensure that these plans are safe.

Once again, I am drawing a parallel with emergency response plans. After the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada asked that these plans be put in place. However, we do not know if these plans will be put in place correctly because Transport Canada does not have the resources to check everything. We believe that is a problem.

Furthermore, there is a lack of transparency in the government's approach. If I am drawing so many parallels with rail safety, it is because we have clearly discovered shortcomings.

● (1245)

In this case, the same type of system is being put in place. That is where the problem lies. The government is presenting a plan. However, neither the public nor parliamentarians can obtain all the information.

We asked the government to ensure that municipalities, for example, have all the necessary information about dangerous goods transported by rail through their area. We were told that it would be a step in the right direction to ask companies to submit the list of dangerous goods, albeit after the fact. In other words, people will be told what has already passed through their area, but will not be told what is soon going to pass through. This would have allowed municipalities to have the information they need to ensure that they have the necessary resources in place.

Unfortunately, the minister at the time said that if the municipalities wanted that information they would have to use the Access to Information Act. That is just ridiculous. Once again there is a lack of transparency. We believe that this approach unfortunately does not show any goodwill on the part of the government or any concern for informing the public and working with the municipalities to ensure that everyone has the information needed to move things forward.

That is why I am making a comparison with rail safety. As I explained, that is what the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities is now studying. In this case, we had very little time to study the bill. We had a few meetings. Still, we did make requests to flesh out the bill so that we could study other issues. This bill addresses some problems with liability. Implementing an international convention is a good thing.

However, there is nothing about protecting our coasts. Some of my colleagues are very worried about how the government operates and the measures it introduces. As they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The time for that is now. Unfortunately, the government is refusing to listen to what the opposition has to say and what its concerns are. Several MPs from eastern Canada, and many from western Canada, are very concerned about everything to do with supertankers. They are very worried about the coastlines. They are very worried about the government's approach, about the lack of transparency and especially about the government's failure to protect our coasts and the environment.

Government Orders

This would have been a good opportunity to study this issue. Since this bill already affects four other laws, why did the government not take the time to do something good? The minister replied that it was time to take action, not to do more studies or think long term. We are asking the government to take action to protect the environment.

Taking action does not mean cutting the services, resources and personnel that are meant to protect us. What we are asking the government to do is reverse those cuts because they have serious consequences. If problems come up after those cuts are made, the government will realize that it made a mistake. That is why environmental protection is so vitally important to the NDP. It is terribly unfortunate that the government did not listen to us. That is why we will continue to fight to protect our coasts and the environment.

• (1250)

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech today.

For the benefit of the members in the House and the Canadians who are watching, I would like to present some simple facts and key points. I would like to share them with my colleague and see what he has to say.

We know from the 2012-13 public accounts that VIA Rail was cut by 15%, aviation safety was cut by 11%, marine safety was cut by 25%, road safety was cut by 5.5% and rail safety remained relatively constant. At the same time, we know that the Conservative federal government spends more on economic action plan ads than on rail safety.

Could my colleague comment on these cuts and explain the fundamental adverse effects they will have on safety in Canada?

• (1255)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, and I would especially like to say how pleased I am to work with him on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The government is reducing spending to balance its budget and fulfill its 2015 election promises. However, what the government is not saying and what we are clearly seeing is that there is a direct negative impact on public safety.

I know that the Minister of Transport does not like it when we say that people are not as well protected, but those are the facts. When inspectors are not doing the job, when there are fewer and fewer inspections and companies are increasingly allowed to self-regulate and do their own inspections, at the end of the day, you have what happened in Lac-Mégantic. When the government chooses deregulation and abandons rail safety, that is what happens.

That is why we are concerned when all the government does is cut spending. Yes, it will amend the legislation and say there are more reasons to protect people. However, in reality, we know that inspectors do not have the resources they need to really ensure that the safety of Canadians is a priority.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Brossard—La Prairie for an excellent speech. I know that he is doing incredible work as part of

the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, and I thank him for that. I am certain that many Canadians are appreciative of the fact that he is standing up to the Conservative government, especially on a topic as important as the one before us in the House today.

The NDP proposed very reasonable amendments to this bill to ensure that Canadians will not be held responsible for compensation and cleanup costs if there is a spill involving noxious and potentially hazardous substances, for example. We also asked the Conservative government to expand the scope of the bill. Unfortunately, the government rejected all of those requests.

This bill contains some extremely disappointing elements, and it does not go far enough. For example, it does not cover oil spills. I am thinking about my colleagues from British Columbia, which is home to many oil projects. I am also thinking about my colleagues from the east, in the Maritimes, who are seeing the same thing happen there.

What does my colleague think about the fact that the Conservatives do not want to broaden the scope of this bill or the fact that they do not want to better protect our environmental resources or the health of Canadians?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alfred-Pellan for her very good question.

It is hard for us to understand why the government will not expand the scope of the bill to ensure that we are protecting our coasts and coming up with tangible measures.

I get the impression that the government does not want us to see all the negative things it is doing that go against protecting the environment and the public from these spills.

My colleague is absolutely right. Some very reasonable amendments have been proposed to ensure that taxpayers are not on the hook at the end of the day. Unfortunately, the Conservatives rejected our amendment, in favour of the oil companies.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General recently presented a report on rail safety. We learned that the self-regulation system has led to some unthinkable situations.

My colleague can confirm and make a case for this statement: only 23% of inspections are done. Verifications of these analyses indicate that everything was done incorrectly. Only 23% of the job is being done and it is done poorly. What is more, apparently Transport Canada did not do any follow-up. When it detected an incident or an irregularity, it contacted the company and did not verify whether corrective action was taken. Nothing is done.

My question is simple: after 20 years of using a system that produces such poor results, can we really talk about rail safety?

• (1300)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

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As I was saying, a connection must be made with rail safety when we are talking about environmental protection and all the rest. We are talking about the same department and the same way of doing things. The government has introduced legislation that we support and that, on paper, offers better protection. However, in reality, Transport Canada does not have the resources necessary to follow up and ensure that the safety and protection of Canadians are the top priority, and that is a problem. We are not the ones saying so; it is the Auditor General. Even if Transport Canada wanted to provide Canadians with greater protection, the Conservative government is cutting those jobs. It is cutting inspector jobs and the department's budget.

The legislation says one thing, but in reality, the government is letting companies regulate and manage themselves, which sometimes results in catastrophe. That is why victims are suing Transport Canada. That is too bad, because it is time to take action and find solutions. Unfortunately, when we propose solutions, the government does not listen.

[*English*]

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, on two or three separate occasions, members of the NDP have unfairly characterized the notion of a safety management system as deregulation. That is not quite the situation. The problem, as we have learned from the Auditor General's important report on rail safety, is not the notion of a safety management system. The problem is the fact that one of the essential partners in the safety management system, Transport Canada under this government, is not doing its job. That is because it is, as Ronald Reagan might say, a question of trusting but verifying, with inspections and audits.

Therefore, I would like to get a better understanding on where the NDP stands on the notion that we can have co-operation between regulated sectors and the regulator, the federal government in this case, and be able to provide a safe environment for rail safety and other forms of transport safety.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question because it gives me the opportunity to highlight how the Conservatives' and Liberals' ways of seeing regulation are similar, and how they are heading toward the right direction.

I have heard time and time again in committee my colleague ask companies, like railway companies, whether they have read the Auditor General's report, or whether they think they should go forward in terms of making it safer. I do not think it is the responsibility of the private companies to self-regulate.

The real position, our position in the NDP, which is contrary to the Liberals' and Conservatives' position, is that the government should make sure that the rules are the strictest rules, to make sure that safety is the number one priority. What we have seen from the Conservatives, and the Liberals, is deregulation, letting the companies self-regulate.

What we have seen after that is that the Auditor General says the system, the way it is done, is not working because the inspectors do not have enough resources to actually look at what the companies are doing, so there is a problem, and it came from the Liberals.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a wonderful starting point for my speech this afternoon on this bill,

Bill C-3, which is a follow-up to Bill C-57 from the last session of this House.

In truth, this is a bill that should have been dispatched some time ago. It was not, because of the very long prorogation brought in by the Conservative government.

It is a technical amendment bill in many respects. It makes a number of good, positive contributions to improving transportation. However, my remarks this afternoon will be couched in a broader context, and I think it is important for us to keep in mind how these changes are but a step forward in a transportation environment that is, in my view, in a very serious and precarious state in Canada today.

It is a conclusion I and our party do not come to lightly. It comes from many dozens of witnesses who have appeared before committee. It comes from the exhaustive and detailed report from the Auditor General on rail safety released late last fall, which can fairly be described a scathing indictment of the Conservative government's performance on rail safety over the past eight years.

In some respects, Canadians are not surprised, because this is the fifth minister in eight years. What we have had is a succession of ministers transiting through the transport portfolio. Whether they are transiting upwards or downwards or out is another question, but what it shows is that those five ministers have not been paying attention to their brief. They have moved through, and Transport Canada's systemic problems remain.

When my colleague from the NDP persists with his seatmates to point to the private sector as the bad guys, or the bad gals, what it really demonstrates is the fundamental problem with the NDP, which is that it has a difficult time with the free market and a difficult time with free market operators. It does not understand that in today's world in the 21st century, companies derive their licence to operate not from any one order of government—not from the federal government or a provincial government or a municipal government—but from the Canadian public.

It is a concept that is widely known as the social licence to operate, and woe befall a company that crosses the Canadian public. However, that said, the notion of a safety management system as put forward by the Auditor General and as put forward by many actors who participate in safety management systems is that it is a partnership, a partnership between the regulated and the regulator. In this case, the regulator is the Government of Canada, through Transport Canada, the department responsible for transportation and transportation safety.

It is a partnership. It takes two to tango in a partnership.

The thrust of my remarks this afternoon is as follows. One of the partners is falling well short of its responsibility in making sure the safety management system is working, whether it be in the marine sector, the airline sector, the rail sector, or the road transport sector. That partnership, that point at which the regulated company and the regulator come together, is why we are studying safety management systems at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities today.

● (1305)

Let us talk a bit about the role and purpose of government.

The NDP believes that there should not be this kind of partnership with the private sector. I believe that is a mistake. I believe there are efficiencies, good faith, goodwill, and many other drivers in the private sector that can be harnessed in a partnership to make sure that conduct is appropriate and that things remain safe.

On the other hand, the Conservatives believe that the real role and purpose of government in the 21st century is to withdraw government. I believe the Prime Minister is what I would describe as a constitutional purist. He does not believe the federal government should be involved in many areas where it is involved today, and he is—by stealth, by subterfuge, hidden behind the scenes—removing the federal government from very important areas. That is manifesting itself in this sector.

That is why, when we look at the public accounts for 2012-13, this is what we learn. The numbers do not lie.

The Minister of Transport will get up and say, for example, that the government has spent \$100 million on safety since 2009. It sounds like a big number, except that it spent \$600 million on advertising over those same years. It spent \$550 million on outsourced legal fees. Let us set that into context and look at the public accounts.

The office of Infrastructure Canada was cut 17%. VIA Rail was cut 15%. Aviation safety was cut 11%. Marine safety, which this bill addresses most specifically, was cut 25%. Road safety was cut 5.5%. Rail safety has a very marginal increase at a time when we are seeing great stress and pressure on our railway system, particularly as it relates to the transportation of dangerous goods like oil and diluted bitumen. There is pressure from Canada's oil sands and from the Bakken oil shelf in North Dakota and from southern Saskatchewan. Many different sources are now putting lots of pressure on our rail safety system.

What would we expect of a government that believes in the role and purpose of government and believes in getting the big things right, such as safety? What would we expect it to do in full knowledge that there is increased pressure on our railway system and our marine system because of increasing traffic? We would expect it to invest more, not less, in safety. However, we have seen systematic cuts in investments in safety.

Crude oil shipped by rail in Canada has increased 32,000% since 2009. The government has known that for eight years. It was given this information when it received its briefing books when it formed the government back in 2006, so we have to ask what has happened since then.

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The most definitive voice we can rely on, as Canadians would agree, is the Auditor General of Canada. That is the most trustworthy and objective voice we have so far. There will be more to come, I am sure, as more information is made available.

Let us take a look at the Auditor General's incredibly important report, because it has a bearing on this bill and whether or not this bill goes nearly far enough to deal with the crisis in rail safety.

Moments ago the minister stood and said, quoting the Auditor General, that the concept of SMS is sound. She is right in quoting the Auditor General. That is what he wrote. He wrote that the concept of safety management systems is sound, but then he went on to eviscerate, to make plain, to expose to the light of day the absolute failure of the Government of Canada under the Conservatives to make sure its side of the partnership is upheld in the notion of these safety management systems.

● (1310)

Here are the fundamental conclusions that the Auditor General of Canada has reached. This is undeniable. The government knows it, all members know it, and Canadians know it.

First, Transport Canada does not have an audit approach that provides a minimum level of assurance that federal railways have implemented safety management systems to manage their safety risks and comply with safety requirements. Wow. It does not have an audit approach that provides a minimum level of assurance. That is conclusion number one.

Next is conclusion number two, and it gets more serious as we move forward in the report. On safety, here is what the Auditor General said explicitly, in words in black and white. In speaking of safety, he said that despite the department's discussions with the industry, it does not have clear timelines. The report says:

...it does not have a formal process to set clear timelines for overseeing significant safety issues from the time they are identified until they are resolved.

The report goes on to state:

We found that the work plans are vague in terms of timelines for monitoring progress on important safety issues.

Conclusion number three is as follows:

...the Department was missing other important risk and performance data to supplement inspectors' knowledge gained from previous inspections.

Unbelievably, here is the list. This is in the wake of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. This is what we learned.

We are missing the federal railways' own internal risk assessments. That is a fundamental part of the safety management system of our railway system.

We are missing information on the sections of track that are used in transporting dangerous goods. We are missing information on the condition of railway bridges, which are carrying tens of thousands of cars carrying dangerous goods, and we are missing the financial information of privately owned federal railways. That is not publicly available. Therefore, we cannot even assess the financial status of many of the companies that are being regulated and are participating in the safety management system.

Government Orders

There is something else, and it is perhaps the most egregious aspect. It really is shocking.

The Auditor General looked at Transport Canada over three years. It took 36 months. The report said that the department set up a three-year cycle for auditing the safety management systems of each federal railway. There are 31 federal railways, and that cycle is supposed to be completed once every three years for each railway.

In three fiscal years, Transport Canada completed 14 audits on eight federal railways—not on 31, but on eight. That is according to Transport Canada's own determination.

Inside, it says it needs to perform way more audits than it actually did. How many did it perform? How many did it complete out of the number it said it had to complete? It completed 26%. Just one-quarter of the audits that Transport Canada itself said had to be performed to keep railways safe were performed.

Just to set this in context for Canadians, four million passengers a year ride VIA Rail, and that is a good thing. We want to encourage people to use light transit. We want to work toward reducing our greenhouse gases and make our transportation system more efficient.

• (1315)

In the three years it was audited by the Auditor General, VIA Rail and its safety management system was not audited once. Four million passengers a year and not one audit was performed by Transport Canada. That is very serious business.

The Auditor General goes on to say at the conclusion:

These findings indicate that Transport Canada does not have the assurance it needs that federal railways have implemented adequate and effective safety management systems.

That is where this is falling down. It is the responsibility of the Conservative government to invest in the capacity it needs at Transport Canada to do its job, not to work toward fictitious and arbitrary deadlines for the elimination of deficits so the Conservatives can run on it in the 2015 election campaign. As they do this, we see behind the scenes what they are doing to transportation safety. It is undermined.

The Auditor General says that even the methodology being used to determine the number of inspections it is supposed to perform is outdated and flawed, and it goes on. This is how serious it is right now.

The Auditor General's office examined whether there were enough inspectors inside the department to perform the inspections they had to perform on aviation, on marine, on road, on rail, on all forms of transportation for which the government is responsible.

The Auditor General found, according to Transport Canada, that it needed 20 system auditors to audit each railway once every three years. How many did Transport Canada have on staff over the three-year period audited by the Auditor General? Ten. One half of the actual amount of inspectors and auditors it required to do the audit required is actually on staff.

It gets even more challenging. Not only does it have half of the inspectors it is supposed to have on staff, on top of that Transport Canada is now responsible for overseeing another 39 non-federal

railways. That is 31 federal railways and 39 non-federal railways for which it has responsibility.

For the 10 inspectors it had on staff during the three-year audit, Transport Canada did not know whether the inspectors actually had the required skills and the competencies to do their jobs. It says that inspectors and managers are not trained in a timely basis. It cannot even warrant that the inspectors who are there are objective and independent because they come mainly from the federal railways that are regulated.

In short, we have a government that does not get it. It does not get the role and purpose of government in the 21st century. It is about cut and withdraw, and what happens? We compromise cherished Canadian public services and values.

It is the responsibility of a government to get the big things right. That includes safety in the transportation sector, but we have no evidence, and we have waited for it, that the government will take it seriously. I hope, beyond all hope, that it does not take another tragedy like the tragedy at Lac-Mégantic to get the government's attention.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

He spoke a lot about dangerous cars and rail safety. He also spoke a lot about the Auditor General's report.

As a result of an agreement with the Province of British Columbia that dates back 40 years, oil tanker traffic is basically prohibited off the coast of British Columbia. However, this agreement was never put in writing and now risks being abandoned by the Conservatives.

Do the Liberals support the NDP's request to impose a written moratorium on oil tanker traffic on the west coast in order to protect the coastline?

• (1325)

[*English*]

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party of Canada believes there has to be proper quasi-judicial regulatory bodies in place, properly resourced, to do their jobs. What we have seen under the Conservatives are changes, for example, to the National Energy Board, our national energy regulator responsible for pipeline hearings, interprovincial issues. What has the government done? It has done two things. It has made the test to appear in front of the National Energy Board much more difficult to meet because it wants to winnow away different voices, suppress them. It describes them as radical voices.

Second, the Conservatives have said that it that does not really matter what the National Energy Board decides. It has taken the power for decision-making away from the NEB and given it to cabinet.

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Therefore, we are seeing the usurping of authority, no more arm's-length between the process to decide what should happen vis-à-vis our west coast, because big daddy government under the Prime Minister knows best. That is unfortunate. We have a tradition in our country of working with arm's-length organizations that have provided us with decades of very good service.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Ottawa South may know that the CN main line passes through my riding of Kingston and the Islands. I remember recently looking at the trains with my young daughter and telling her which cars contained what. I remember telling her that many cars were full of oil. The composition of the trains has certainly changed in the last few years.

Could the Liberal critic for transport tell my constituents in Kingston and the Islands what effect better regulations and better surveillance and auditing of Canada's rail system would mean to the people who live along that rail line?

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his incredible service to Kingston and the Islands. He is a strong advocate not only for his region but for many of these safety issues.

It is important for us to remember a couple of things. Given the expansion of Canada's oil sands and given the expansion of the shale deposits in the Bakken field in North Dakota and southern Saskatchewan, we will see by 2024 one million barrels a day of excess oil that will not be capable of being transported by pipeline. Where is that oil going to go? The railways tell us it is going to go on rail. The oil companies tell us it is going to go on rail. The Conservative government tells us that it is going to go on rail.

The problem is that the government has not stopped long enough to project out where we are going to be, the importance, as my colleague suggests, of bringing regulation and enforcement. We need capacity to enforce, inspect and audit. That would make it much safer.

Finally, the government did a deal with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It said that it would inform the federation 90 days after the fact that a dangerous substance went through, for example, Kingston. That is wrong. Advance prior notice should be given to municipalities so they can be best prepared in the event of a mistake, an accident or a tragedy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not a new problem we are discussing. The policy allowing transport companies to regulate themselves in terms of safety was introduced 20 years ago, and after 20 years we have learned that this work was never done. This is not just about the government opposite. There has been a lack of governance for 20 years.

It gets worse. We are discussing transport companies, but first and foremost they are public services. I would like to remind everyone that at one time Air Canada and Canadian National were crown corporations. They were privatized later by the Liberal government. This government neither took the care nor had the vision to ensure that these companies would continue to safely provide public services. How is it going to fix this 20-year-old mess that the Liberals created? At some point, you have to stop criticizing others and take a hard look at yourself.

● (1330)

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, that is where we really see the difference between the NDP and the Liberal Party.

There is no doubt about the fact that the NDP does not believe in the private market. No doubt about that. Apparently, the state has to own everything. In today's world, the private sector can believe in the role of government in the 21st century and want to work with the government. That is the difference between our two parties.

Progress definitely has to be made. By working together, we can make many changes. However, that takes the will to invest and put in place the means to ensure that Canada's transportation system remains safe. The Conservative government does not have that will.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to a few of the hon. member's responses and even parts of his speech, but his illustration seems a bit simplistic to me.

It is true that the problems have been around for 20 years. However, the DOT-111 cars were under the Liberals. What did they do? Nothing.

Now they are saying that they want to change things. However, they put in place a system whereby companies self-regulate. Even today, in committee, they are asking companies to make regulations. Instead of considering that the government is responsible for regulating safety, the Liberals are asking companies to create better regulations for improved safety. That is how they see things, and therein lies the difference.

The NDP believes that the government is responsible for ensuring that the safety of Canadians is the top priority. What the Liberals want to do is take a hands-off approach and hope for the best. That is the major difference.

What does my colleague think about the deregulation that started under the Liberals and is continuing under the Conservatives?

[*English*]

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, it is hard not to chuckle, because first it is a mischaracterization of the position of the Liberal Party to suggest that we are asking private companies to self-regulate. That is false. I and the party believe that the most successful nation states on the planet today are those where government, NGOs, civil society and business work together. It is not an us and them; it is not a them and us; there is no bad guy or gal. We are all in this together. The New Democrats are stuck because they have difficulty dealing with the realities of a free market.

The important thing, going forward, is to ensure that we see the requisite investments we need in the capacity of Transport Canada so the good people who work there, including the inspectors, auditors, clerks, analysts and economists, are all together having the desired effect, and that is to ensure transportation in our country remains safe and safety is enhanced, particularly given the big challenges we face, as I alluded to earlier.

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There is a fundamental difference between the New Democrats and the Liberals, and clearly it has to do with an understanding of and a willingness to work within a free market.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-3, an act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

The length of the bill's title would suggest that it is quite a comprehensive bill, but in fact, one of the opposition's primary criticisms of the bill is that it is too modest an approach. It was a missed opportunity here to broaden the scope of the bill to make comprehensive changes to protect our coasts.

As deputy fisheries and oceans critic for the official opposition, I have heard many concerns over the past years about how the current government has closed B.C.'s oil spill response centre and shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard station and is shutting down Marine Communications and Traffic Services centres in Vancouver, Tofino, and Comox. Many of these closures fly in the face of conventional and practical wisdom.

During second reading of the bill, I spoke at length about the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station in Vancouver. There was a lot of anger and frustration among British Columbians when the minister made this decision and shut the station down. This anger and frustration only continued as expert after expert stood up and said that this decision was a bad idea and was guaranteed to put people's lives at risk. These experts included the Vancouver police chief, the Vancouver fire chief, the mayor of Vancouver, and the premier of B.C. Yet the Conservative government chose to completely disregard the facts and the evidence. Instead, it sped up the closure and dismantled the station as fast as possible.

Put simply, it is increasingly difficult to trust that Canadians' concerns are being taken seriously.

In terms of the bill before us today, I acknowledge that there are some positive parts in it. The NDP is pleased to see a few new measures for increasing tanker safety, including increased inspections of foreign tankers, expanded aerial surveillance designed to monitor ship traffic and detect oil spills, a review of tug escort requirements, and expanded research into the science of oil spills. However, British Columbians are very concerned about the preservation of our coast and the way of life in coastal communities.

In 2012, our province was reminded of the very real threat of a catastrophic oil spill when two major shipping vessels ran aground on the west coast. Given the Conservative government's apparent desire to end the moratorium on north coast tanker traffic, the threat of a spill is something our province must seriously prepare for. That is why I introduced a private member's bill to ban tanker traffic in this important and sensitive area off B.C.'s north coast. It is why so many British Columbians are opposed to the Enbridge northern gateway pipeline proposal in the north and the Kinder Morgan pipeline proposal in the south.

If an oil spill or a spill of hazardous and noxious substances were to happen, Canadian taxpayers should not be on the hook for cleanup costs and damages following a spill.

The bill before us today would amend the Marine Liability Act to implement in Canada the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea, 2010, to which Canada is a signatory.

The HNS convention establishes a liability scheme that limits shipowners' liability to approximately \$230 million. Damages in excess of shipowners' liability are to be paid by an international HNS fund, up to a maximum of \$500 million. My concern is that in the event of a spill of hazardous and noxious substances, the cleanup bill is likely to exceed these limits.

The opposition has attempted to work with the government to improve this part of the bill. The proposed reasonable amendments are to prevent Canadian taxpayers from being responsible for damages exceeding \$500 million. Unfortunately, the Conservatives rejected our proposal to make the bill more comprehensive.

I would like to read into the record a quote from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' submission on Canada's marine oil spill preparedness and response regime.

Our members have a strong interest in the changes to the federal oil spill preparedness and response regime given the proposed pipeline and liquid natural gas projects in our province. B.C. Local governments have indicated that environmental protection is a top priority, and have supported several resolutions with respect to a polluter pay principle, environmental issues and restoration, working with local governments, and the need to increase federal agency staffing and training.

● (1335)

B.C. municipalities support the polluter pay principle, and they do not believe that current environmental measures are adequate to clean up damages caused by these types of large-scale spills or disasters.

The bill before us today is by no means ideal. Its scope could have been broadened to include more comprehensive measures to safeguard Canada's coasts.

Despite the bill's shortcomings, I intend to vote in support of moving it forward. I suppose a modest improvement in marine security is better than no improvement at all.

If the opposition had its way, the bill would have been vastly different. It would have reversed the government's reckless cuts and closures in marine environmental safety.

I should also mention that I am splitting my time with the member for Surrey North.

Government Orders

I have already spoken about the Kitsilano Coast Guard station and the three MCTS centres in British Columbia that are slated for closure. The NDP wants to see a reversal of these Coast Guard closures. We want to see cuts to the MCTS centres cancelled. We also believe the government should cancel the closure of B.C.'s regional office for emergency oil spills responders.

A number of environmental NGOs have highlighted Canada's insufficient safety measures in regard to oil tanker traffic. Unfortunately, Bill C-3 focuses on administrative organization and is lacking in actual environmental improvements.

British Columbians are very concerned about maritime safety. The Conservative government has demonstrated time and time again that it does not take these concerns seriously. Conservatives ignore first nations. They ignore fishermen, and they ignore our coastal communities. I do not believe that the bill will serve its intended purpose of convincing British Columbians that the federal government takes coastal safety seriously.

While I will vote in support of this modest attempt to play catch-up with industry regulations, I would ask the federal government to start listening to British Columbians' concerns. Stop gutting marine safety resources and spending millions on trying to sell the people of British Columbia on risky oil pipeline projects that will see tanker traffic increase exponentially.

I held a series of town hall meetings in my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam and in Port Moody. I heard these concerns. In fact, I had a follow-up focus group in Port Moody, which is right on the Pacific Ocean, in Burrard Inlet. They are very concerned about marine safety. They are very concerned about an increase in tanker traffic. They are very concerned about pipeline projects that are proposed for our area. In fact, a pipeline project is proposed to go through Coquitlam, and there is a staging area in the park of one of our sensitive areas. This is right on the other side of my riding, which borders the Fraser River.

These are very real concerns to the people living in my riding. They have concerns. They have expressed them to me. When I hold public sessions, when I consult, when I ask for feedback, I time and time again hear how important it is to protect our coastal communities, our way of life, and the concerns that are raised on these projects. I am trying to bring forward these I think reasonable and modest amendments to the government to make these changes. Unfortunately, we do not see the government listening and incorporating these changes.

I hope the government will listen to the people in my riding who have these concerns and make changes going forward. The way I think we could have a productive Parliament would be to have this exchange, and I am not seeing it. I hope the government will listen not only to the opposition but to the people in my riding. Those concerns are real, and they want to see those changes made.

• (1340)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from New Westminster—Coquitlam for putting so strongly the views of his constituents, which I must say are shared with, if anything, more enthusiasm by my constituents.

I have just been reading through the so-called Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain 15,000 pages of alleged evidence about how it can safely move, through tankers and pipelines, a substance called dilbit.

I do not know if the member has had time to dive into this yet, but let me just inform him and the rest of this House that their evidence on dilbit's behaviour in a marine environment comes from a couple of tanks the company set up in Alberta for 13 days. It put dilbit in with salt water. They say that they mimicked wind and wave action by stirring.

I do not know what the member thinks of a test on the marine environment based on tanks found in Gainford, Alberta. I wonder if the member would like to comment on what we know about the behaviour of dilbit in the marine environment and the threat to our coastlines.

• (1345)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, while I do not know if I have actually dived into dilbit, I certainly have done some research on how this substance can affect our marine coastline and our precious oceans.

Let me say that this is a big concern. It is a concern across the country. It is especially a concern on the west coast. In communities that live there and rely on getting their employment from the ocean on Canada's west coast, any kind of threat to that way of life is paramount to them. Whether it is for the fishing industry, tourism, or first nations, the way of life we have on the west coast is precious. We want to ensure that this way of life can continue, as it has for thousands of years on the west coast. We want to see that continue into the future.

Certainly in looking at the types of noxious substances that are going to be carried, either on rail or through pipelines, it is critical that we get that right.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It is clear that he truly cares about his constituents' concerns.

Last week I participated in a waterfront cleanup in a park with some people from my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard. It was great to see the public involved in cleaning up the environment and the waterfront.

However, the bill is not just referring to garbage being thrown out by people in a specific community. Should the public be responsible for the costs associated with toxic spills? The NDP does not think so, as my colleague mentioned earlier. We want those responsible to be held accountable, and Canadians or the people living in the communities affected are not necessarily those responsible.

I would like to quote Mr. Sumaila, a professor at the University of British Columbia and member of the Fisheries Economics Research Unit, who testified in committee regarding this bill. He said:

Government Orders

Who pays for this? We have mechanisms to cover up to \$1.35 billion, but as I gave you in the example from the ExxonMobil incident, about \$6.5 billion was needed to do the cleanup.

He does not think that the measures go far enough and thinks that we should ask ourselves why the public should have to pay the difference. I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, in my community, there are many efforts to be involved with river conservation, ocean cleanup and protection, and beach cleanups.

People are very concerned about making a difference in the community. They want to see that way of life protected. That is why I spoke in my presentation today about the importance of shifting the burden of responsibility to fund cleanups from the Canadian taxpayer, from public funds, to where it should be, and that is with companies. They should have the funds necessary.

This bill does not go far enough. The NDP tried, in committee, in an attempt to make changes, to make reasonable amendments. Unfortunately, the government did not listen. There are many experts who are saying that we need to increase the liability, the funds available, to make these cleanups happen, and we are just not seeing that. Unfortunately, we are seeing that transferred to the taxpayers. We find that unacceptable.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak on behalf of the constituents of Surrey North. Before I get to the bill I do want to mention something else that has come up. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, we have recently raised awareness about organ donations in our country. Organ Donation Week took place a few weeks ago, with Canadians signing up to donate their organs to have them available for those who need them at a particular time. One such drive took place in Toronto.

Members of the Amar Arts of Life Academy, with Amarjit Rai, who is a founding member, along with Balvinder and Amendeet Rai, and over 200 volunteers signed up over 1,200 members of our community to be organ donors. This is a huge accomplishment that took place in Brampton around the Vaisakhi Khalsa Day parade. I congratulate the Amar Arts Academy for taking this initiative and signing up organ donors.

It is a pleasure to speak to this bill. I spoke to the bill at second reading. At that time, I was hoping the government would listen to the opposition and critics to improve the bill. Unfortunately, as we have seen, the Conservative government has failed over and over to listen to the opposition and critics, academics and experts, to make the bill better so that our environment, our pristine waters off the coast of British Columbia that provide employment for hundreds of thousands of people throughout British Columbia and the rest of Canada, are protected and safe for travel.

Tourism on our waters is a huge industry in British Columbia. There could be an impact on tourism. Also, fisheries is a huge part of British Columbia. As the previous member, the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, has pointed out, the government has not taken into consideration jobs related to our coast in British Columbia that could be affected by the bill. We wanted to broaden the scope of the bill to include a number of other initiatives that could be taken to

protect our waters off the west coast of British Columbia and across the country.

I know I have a limited time, but I want to speak to a particular part of the bill that really concerns me. I will share that, not only with members in the House, but also with the audience of Canadians at home. This concerns part 4 of the Marine Liability Act, to implement in Canada the international convention of liability and compensation for damage in connection with the carriage of hazardous and noxious substances by sea. The HNS convention establishes a liability scheme designed to compensate victims in the event of a spill of hazardous and noxious substances. Basically, the shipowner's liability is limited to approximately \$230 million and there is an additional fund available that caps the liability for these hazardous materials spills to about \$500 million.

I brought up this story before, just to put it in perspective. A total liability of \$500 million is not enough when a hazardous or noxious material is spilled, or there is a disaster. I talked about this before and I am going to bring an example from my family, from my young children. It will highlight that if a 7-year-old can understand the economics of disaster, why is it that the Conservatives cannot understand?

● (1350)

Here is the scenario. I have two children. I have a seven-year-old son and a seventeen-year-old daughter. My son is a typical seven-year-old. He likes to not take responsibility. He was playing around with his toys, they were all over the place, around our living room and the kitchen. He thought he would pull a fast one when mom asked him to clean up his mess. He cleaned up a bit of it, but he said, "No. My sister should do it. My sister should clean up my toys." When he asked his sister she said, "No. It's your mess. You made this mess, you clean it up." Both of them went to their mom and my wife understood that. She said, "Well, Jaron, it's your mess, you clean it up." My seven-year-old understood that it was his mess and he should clean it up.

Therefore, if there is a hazardous material spill of a noxious or hazardous substance, here the government is only limiting the liability up to \$500 million when we know that disasters cost a lot more to clean up. It is in the billions of dollars. The Conservatives want Canadian taxpayers to pick that up. If a seven-year-old can understand, I am sure the Conservatives understand that liability should not be put on taxpayers. That is of huge concern to me.

There are many other related issues that we could have addressed in this bill. We want to broaden this bill to address a number of issues that have been plaguing our coasts, east to west and up in the north. What are some of the things that the Conservatives could have or should have done or not made cuts to? They made cuts to the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. The summer season is coming up. There will be a lot of activities in our harbours. I know that Vancouver is a very busy place during summertime. We get quite a bit of traffic in Burrard Inlet. What did the Conservative government do? It cut the very measures that allow for safety in our harbours.

Those are the kinds of things that the government needs to address in order to ensure that we have safe and secure passageways in our waters. Time after time, we have seen the government step away from its responsibility to ensure that we have those waters off our coasts protected.

Another thing that the government has done is cancel cuts to the marine communications and traffic services centres, including the marine traffic control communications terminals in Vancouver and St. John's. We have heard stories where sailors in distress would pick up the phone and the call goes into some third country. We do not know whether the people who take the calls will be able to communicate in English or French. These are the kinds of cuts the government is making that are putting the lives of sailors, shippers, and leisure cruisers in danger. These are the kinds of steps the government can take in order to improve safety and security in our waters.

The government cuts include the closure of the B.C. regional office for emergency oil spill responders. We talked about the increase in tanker traffic in the last 10 years in British Columbia alone. That will have an impact on tanker safety. Therefore, we need to ensure that this government, at the federal level, puts measures in place to ensure the safety of our waters. Time and time again, the government is failing.

The list goes on. I can go on and on about cuts to environment, fisheries, and a number of other safety measures that we could have worked on and included in this bill. Time after time, we have seen the government shirk its responsibility to ensure our waters are protected, that we can protect jobs, that we can protect tourism, and protect fisheries.

• (1355)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The time for government orders has expired. Consequently, the hon. member for Surrey North will have his five minutes for questions and comments when this matter returns before the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

FARLEY MOWAT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to my friend Farley McGill Mowat.

Born May 12, 1921, he was, as we all know, one of Canada's most outstanding talents, an author whose more than 40 works were translated into 52 languages and sold more than 17 million copies. Repeating the accomplishments of his literary career, we risk losing out on the other things he contributed to this country: his war record in the Second World War serving with the Hasty Ps in the dreadful Sicily campaign, going behind enemy lines to organize food distribution for starving Dutch civilians.

He was, more than anything else, a voice for the wild. He was a voice for the environment and, more than that, he was a voice against the recklessness, greed, and indifference of humanity as we destroy

Statements by Members

our only planet: home. Let his epitaph be the cry of the loon, the wolves' howl, and the human voices raised in the public square that we stop the squandering of our natural world".

God bless you, Farley.

* * *

FARLEY MOWAT

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to also pay tribute to one of Canada's most widely read and well-known authors, who passed away recently at the age of 92.

Farley Mowat lived a full life, which began in Belleville, Ontario, nearly 93 years ago. He went on to become an honoured Second World War veteran and an accomplished author. Many Canadians may remember reading as children *Lost in the Barrens*, or, as I recall, *Two Against the North*, a book in my youth that I must have read at least 30 times, or *Owls in the Family*. Undoubtedly, Mr. Mowat's unique storytelling will be remembered for generations to come.

His contributions to arts and culture in Canada have been honoured with various awards and distinctions, including being made an Officer of the Order of Canada and receiving the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals.

I wish to extend on behalf of my party sincere condolences to Mr. Mowat's family and friends. He will be remembered as a passionate Canadian, and his legacy will live on through the iconic Canadian literature that he left for all of us. It is quite a history.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every year I hold extensive consultations across my riding to find out what issues constituents are most concerned about. This year, once again, the top priority identified was health care. I heard many ideas and changes that were needed to improve health care and ensure better use of public dollars.

Quality accessible public health care is a proud part of our Canadian identity. After eight years in power, the Conservatives have failed to strengthen health care. Instead, they have allowed the health accord to expire and will cut \$36 billion in funding, including \$5 billion less in health care transfers to British Columbia over the next 10 years. This is unacceptable, and Canadians deserve better.

I would like to thank my constituents who attended my town hall meetings and provided feedback. I heard concerns loud and clear. An NDP government would work with the provinces and territories to improve long-term health care, home care, palliative care, expand coverage for prescription drugs, and focus on preventive care and the importance of mental health care.

An NDP government would listen to Canadians and make health care a priority for all.

*Statements by Members***THAILAND**

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 7, the Constitutional Court of Thailand convicted democratically elected Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra of abuse of power. The decision made by Thailand's Constitutional Court has resulted in the removal of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and nine members of the caretaker government.

Canada, as a friend of Thailand, wants to see a free, peaceful, and democratic Thailand. We therefore call upon all parties to show restraint. As our foreign affairs minister stated, we urge all Thais to work together to resolve their differences. Our government is calling for the forthcoming election to take place peacefully, with the broadest possible participation, in accordance with the Thai constitution and in keeping with democratic principles and the rule of law.

We wish the people of Thailand our best wishes.

* * *

• (1405)

IRAQ

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a scan of history reveals many examples of inaction leading to human rights abuses or even genocide, but, sadly, not all examples are in the past.

The president of the EU delegation to Iraq recently requested that the UN move to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe at Camp Liberty, a refugee encampment in Baghdad that now houses thousands of MEK members, Iran's primary opposition. These people are fighting for democracy in the face of one of the most oppressive regimes known yet, and they are being systematically killed as the world watches.

If we are to help foster democracy in places like Iran, we need measures that guarantee the basic security of Camp Liberty residents. The Canadian Friends of a Democratic Iran want the UN to send peacekeepers to Camp Liberty, and today I want to add my voice to that chorus.

Canada has always stood for what is right, and I am asking this government to step up. Inaction should not be a death sentence for those fighting for peace.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Motion No. 501 is about refining a strategy for sustainable health care through innovation and targeted initiatives that demonstrate both effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.

There are low-cost options to deliver healthier people and save billions of dollars in the process. In the past few weeks, I have drawn attention to a regulatory failure at Health Canada that has contributed to thousands of deaths and hundreds of millions in unnecessary expenditures in each of the past 10 years. We can do better.

On Monday, scientists who are experts on vitamin D gathered in Ottawa, urging Health Canada to increase the upper level of D recommended to Canadians. They argue for billions in savings

through reduced diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and infectious disease management costs.

Motion No. 501 is patient-centred. It combines wellness promotion and disease prevention. More information and petitions are on my website.

Sustainable health care is everyone's concern. Let us work together with the provinces and territories to make Canada a leader in first-class sustainable health care.

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THUNDER BAY FOLKLORE FESTIVAL

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I was pleased to attend Thunder Bay's 41st annual Folklore Festival. This world tour of nations highlights our multicultural diversity and showcases the wonderful, tolerant, and supportive residents of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario.

There were two days of fabulous entertainment, including traditional dance groups from Bangladeshi, Chinese, Japanese, Scottish, Irish, Portuguese, Indian, Caribbean, first nations, and Filipino communities.

There was the Community Arts and Heritage Education Project, the ever popular Macgillivray Pipe Band, and of course the Zorya and Chaban Ukrainian dance groups.

Special thanks to Walid Chahal, president of the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association, and to Folklore Festival chair Jim Squier, and to the volunteers, sponsors, exhibitors, and artists who have done Thunder Bay proud yet again.

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SANOFI PASTEUR CANADA

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, vaccines have revolutionized our world. Millions of lives have been saved and extended through the dedicated efforts of vaccine researchers and manufacturers.

Sanofi Pasteur Canada, formerly Connaught Laboratories, has been a leader in the Canadian and global vaccine field over the past century, and today plays a key role in improving the health of people around the world through the production of life-saving medicines.

This world-class company, located in York Centre, is currently celebrating its 100th anniversary in Canada.

Sanofi Pasteur Canada owes its foundation to the pioneering vision of Dr. John FitzGerald, a graduate of the University of Toronto medical school. FitzGerald's goal was to provide life-saving public health products in Canada at a price that was affordable to all.

From working with Banting and Best to produce the first supply of insulin and penicillin to playing a key role in the introduction of the Salk polio vaccine to the eradication of small pox to developing the first five-component pertussis vaccine, this world-class company now employs over 1,000 people at its complex at Dufferin and Steeles in the heart of York Centre. It is one of the largest suppliers of vaccines in the world.

On behalf of all residents of York Centre, and all Canadians, I wish Sanofi Pasteur Canada congratulations and the greatest of success as it enters its second century.

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FUNDRAISER IN WHITEHORSE

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize an amazing young Yukoner.

Toddler Marek Stehelin has acute lymphoblastic leukemia, and this past weekend the amazing community of Whitehorse hosted a fundraiser at the Robert Service Campground to support Marek's marathon to recovery.

In true Yukoner fashion, our community rallied and raised \$28,000 to help alleviate the costs for his family as they travel back and forth from Vancouver for treatment.

In the words of Marek's father Bernard, "The Yukon is a truly amazing place, and we are lucky to live here."

Soon after the community gathering, Marek, who was not available to attend the event, saw the pictures and said, "Wow, I love that feel me better party".

I want to say to Marek, Bernard, Amanda, and Marek's siblings, who are waiting anxiously for him to get home healthy, that I hope they understand that the wishes of Yukoners, and indeed the House of Commons, has a "feel me better message" today. We are behind Marek. The best of luck in his recovery. We hope he gets home soon; the Yukon misses him.

* * *

• (1410)

NORM BISAILLON AND MARC METHE

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour Norm Bisaillon, 49, and Marc Methe, 34, two experienced drilling contractors who were killed Tuesday at First Nickel mine in Greater Sudbury.

On behalf of all members here, I offer our thoughts and prayers for these men, their families, and their colleagues.

As a former mining company worker, I know what these days are like back home. I had friends killed in the mining industry. Now my daughter and her generation mourn a friend who was killed. Generation to generation, it can be a dangerous job.

We are tough in the north. We persevere. Despite a splendid diversification of our region and economy, mining continues to define us.

Statements by Members

One death is one too many. Sudbury has had three mining deaths in four weeks, and six deaths in less than three years. This is a call to action.

The local paper said it well this week:

It is understood that at a time like this, grieving and reflection takes precedence over all else.

And so it should.

But we surely must turn to why these tragedies keep occurring in our community and find ways—not words—to deal with them.

* * *

[Translation]

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay special tribute to all the mothers who will be celebrated by their families on Sunday. Is there anything more beautiful, anything greater than giving life?

We take one day each year to recognize all they do for us and how they are always there for us, day in and day out, through joys and challenges.

Caring, warm-hearted women, protective and welcoming souls filled with good intentions, mothers know how to offer warmth and comfort and make each moment a happy memory.

A mother is often the only one who can find the right words to soothe a wounded heart.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank my mother, Rita, who is 89 now, for her positive influence on my life and her steadfast devotion. She is a very wise woman.

To conclude, I would invite each and every person to find a special way to say, "I love you, Mom."

[English]

The Speaker: That is a high bar to set for us sons here.

The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

* * *

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister stated that the government is going to build a new local bridge. That nonsense is an insult to the thousands of people in my riding who are stuck in traffic jams on a daily basis.

In reality, the new bridge will be a replacement for the Champlain Bridge, and the local bridge will be the busiest not just in Montérégie, not just in Quebec, but in all of Canada.

The residents of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and the surrounding area overwhelmingly rejected the idea of having to pay a toll on a bridge they use every day to go to work in Montreal, which amounts to keeping Canada's second-largest city running.

Statements by Members

The residents of Saint-Jean have asked me to send the Minister of Infrastructure a clear message. We just want to keep what we already have. Since the minister likes short phrases: a bridge, but no toll.

* * *

[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, Canada has stood proudly and firmly beside the people of Ukraine, taking concrete actions to help them along the path toward freedom, democracy, and stability. Our government remains steadfast in our support for Ukraine, and we will not stand idly by while its sovereignty and territorial integrity are threatened.

Yesterday the Minister of International Trade was at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, at the ministerial meeting. The minister called for enhanced OECD co-operation with Ukraine to help support reform of its economy.

The minister also made it clear that the illegal actions of Putin's regime have become a real threat to global peace and security. Consequently, the minister made it clear that Canada will not support Russia's accession to the OECD.

* * *

• (1415)

NATIONAL DAY OF HONOUR

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, across the years, when the call went out, Canadians answered, and were willing to lay their lives on the line for what we know to be right and just.

Beginning in the fall of 2001 and until the final Canadian soldiers returned from Afghanistan in March of this year, some 40,000 men and women went halfway around the world, willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, and 158 did.

We celebrate those who returned. We mourn for those who did not, and their families.

Tomorrow, across the country, we will mark this solemn occasion and commemorate these men and women with the National Day of Honour, a fitting tribute to pause and rightly recognize each and every person who showed such courage and endured such terrible trials in service of their country.

I leave it to those more adept than I to find the proper words to lend poetry to the potent mix of admiration, gratitude, sorrow, and pride that we feel this day, and every day, for our Canadian Forces and veterans. I will simply offer my thanks and lest we forget.

* * *

NATIONAL MINING WEEK

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize National Mining Week, which begins on Monday. Our government is proud to support the mining sector, which is a vital part of Canada's economy. Mining and mineral processing contribute \$60 billion to our GDP, and provide good-paying jobs for over 400,000 hard-working Canadians.

In economic action plan 2014, our government extended the 15% mineral exploration tax credit. We have heard that this is instrumental in helping junior mining companies finance exploration activities. Through our responsible resource development plan, we are ensuring Canada's regulatory regime is among the most efficient, effective, and competitive in the world.

Given the importance of this industry, I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing the vital role mining plays in the Canadian economy and in the lives of all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

17TH ANNUAL PAGES VERSUS MPS SOCCER MATCH

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Parliament would not be able to function without the contribution of essential employees such as those who protect visitors' and MPs' safety on Parliament Hill, those who prepare and serve meals, and those who help House debates run smoothly.

I also want to mention the important role that the House of Commons pages play. Yesterday, at the height of an evening filled with emotion and excitement, the pages came back from a 4 to 1 deficit in the last seven minutes of our 17th annual pages versus MPs soccer match to win in a shootout.

MPs from all parties joined forces to defeat the formidable team of pages, but they were too strong for us.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve a team of better-trained MPs who can win the match against the pages. In the meantime, our hats are off to them. We congratulate them and thank them for their excellent work. Thank you, pages.

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[English]

VETERANS

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition accused the Prime Minister of making a 91-year-old veteran, Arthur Haché, pay for his airfare in order to attend the ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Normandy. This accusation was false.

Today's *Acadie Nouvelle* makes clear that the federal government would have covered this venerable veteran's travel costs; however, the reason he cannot attend the ceremony in Normandy is due to personal health reasons. It is unacceptable that the Leader of the Opposition, without knowing the facts, would publicly use this veteran and his case as an opportunity to attack the Prime Minister.

I ask that the Leader of the Opposition apologize to Mr. Arthur Haché and his family and to set the record straight for the House. I also encourage him, if he wants to actually help veterans, to raise their case files privately so he can ascertain all the facts rather than opportunistically use veterans to score political points.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a letter to the President of the Treasury Board, the Privacy Commissioner criticized the government for using social media to gather Canadians' personal information, without linking the practice to a program of any kind. Instead of consulting the provinces and Canadians before implementing their policies, the Conservatives would rather spy on Canadians' Facebook and Twitter accounts.

What are the parameters for this data collection?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is always ready to listen to Canadians who want to be heard, whether it be through a letter, a petition, a tweet, or a shout in the street.

[English]

Of course, we must, and will, operate within the law, within the confines of the Privacy Act. We are always willing to engage with the Privacy Commissioner to ensure our oversight, our laws, the oversight of government is modern for the 21st century.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government scrapped the long form census because it was too intrusive, but it is fine with private companies intruding on the personal lives of millions of Canadians.

Conservatives cut Statistics Canada, they scrapped the long form census, and they killed research funding, so when they actually run out of credible data they turn to Facebook, Twitter, and Kijiji. The new study shows that data collected flows freely between public and private sectors.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his government has failed to protect the privacy of Canadians?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this line of questioning is very curious. In a day and age when Canadians willingly put information about their opinions and their beliefs and want to engage with government, the NDP wants to shut it down. We think that is antediluvian. We do not think it is the way that we go about modern ways of communicating with Canadians.

We will continue to communicate with Canadians who want to communicate with us.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, private companies are allowed unprecedented spying on Canadians and government privacy breaches have topped one million. Conservatives should be hanging their heads in shame, not patting themselves on the back.

The media are reporting on new problems with Marc Nadon's appointment. They are saying that Conservatives warned Justice

Oral Questions

Nadon about potential problems and even suggested he resign and join the Quebec bar.

Could the Prime Minister confirm that this suggestion was made to Justice Nadon? Does he not agree that telling a judge how to circumvent the Supreme Court Act is inappropriate?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those members are really going out on a limb now. I suggest she loosen the chinstrap on her tinfoil hat.

Clearly, we followed a process that is inclusive, that reached out to provincial attorneys general. That involved, of course, members of her party and a committee that was tasked with vetting numerous names.

The reality is that we had the backing of former Supreme Court judges, the expert advice that allowed us to move forward, to move in a direction that we felt was appropriate. The Supreme Court, in its wisdom, saw otherwise.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): That, Mr. Speaker, is the Attorney General of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order, please. In about 25 seconds the members of the government can feel free to applaud the member for Gatineau, but I will ask them to wait until then, when she has finished asking the question, and not before then.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, telling Justice Nadon that he should resign and join the Quebec bar shows how low the Conservatives will go.

The Prime Minister said that he refused to speak with the Chief Justice about the appointment, but his office was giving pointers to Justice Nadon. Even the one dissenting voice, Justice Moldaver, noted that this would be absurd.

It shows that the Conservatives knew all along that appointing Justice Nadon was a problem. Therefore, why was this suggestion made, and by whom?

● (1425)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as throughout this story, I am not going to comment on unnamed courageous voices who are speaking to the press about this. I can tell the member the process that we followed.

As the hon. member herself knows, being part of that process, there were names that came forward, that came from the Federal Court. We know Mr. Justice Nadon's name was among those names. We also know it was in fact that member who described Mr. Nadon as a brilliant legal mind, and I agree with her.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess somebody will have to teach the minister the difference between being competent and eligible.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

The worst part is that Justice Nadon reportedly expressed his disagreement with the suggestion from the Prime Minister's Office, and even after that, they still consulted former justice Ian Binnie to find out what trick they could use to circumvent the law.

The question is simple. Why did the government stubbornly insist on still proceeding with the appointment of Justice Nadon? Why did it take such a huge risk?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question.

We went ahead with this process on the advice of two former Supreme Court judges, Binnie and Charron. We went ahead on the advice of Peter Hogg. We went ahead on the advice of a committee, of which the member was a part.

We went ahead on the presumption that the numerous Federal Court judges who had applied to be members of the Supreme Court of Canada believed, as she, apparently, and her leader do not, that Federal Court judges were in fact eligible. The word is "eligible".

* * *

PENSIONS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know the Prime Minister hates the Canada pension plan. We know he will get a strong, stable government pension. Maybe that is why he so outrageously dismissed Premier Wynne's concerns about retirement savings with nothing but a smirk and a platitude.

Two-thirds of Canadians who work in the private sector will have trouble making ends meet when they retire. How can the Prime Minister make such a mean-spirited comment?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at face of this Ontario campaign is a Liberal premier who wants to raise taxes on businesses and ordinary citizens by \$100 a month. This is a huge tax grab from a government that is already proposing to hike hydro rates by 40%.

It looks like the federal Liberals are on the same track, high-taxing, high-spending Liberals who want to ruin jobs and opportunities, not only in Ontario but throughout Canada.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he and his boss, the Prime Minister, should just butt out of the Ontario election.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Markham—Unionville still has the floor.

[Translation]

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, the NDP member for Western Arctic wrote to the Minister of Employment and Social Development to complain about the fact that low-skilled temporary

foreign workers were being overpaid. That same NDP member said that higher salaries were making the program "unworkable".

Does the Minister of Employment and Social Development agree with the NDP that paying temporary foreign workers market wages is harmful to the program?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the first time I have been asked a question about NDP policy.

It is true that I received a letter from the member for Western Arctic, which was published in the media. The member was complaining about the fact that employers have to pay temporary foreign workers a reasonable wage. It is not the only letter I received from NDP members.

However, I received similar letters from Liberal members as well.

● (1430)

[English]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have not seen such a Liberal letter.

It is not just the NDP that wants to suppress Canadian wages, it is the Conservatives. In 2009, the Conservative member for Yellowhead wrote to ask that an employer in his riding be allowed to pay foreign workers less. In 2012, the government did just that.

Was the minister leaping into action in response to a caucus proposal, even when that action resulted in the deliberate suppression of Canadian wages? Was that his intent? Is that why he did it?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the member for Markham—Unionville is getting up on his soapbox and pretending to be holier than everyone else on this issue, I must remind him that his own leader asked us to overturn the refusal of a temporary foreign worker application by one of his favourite restaurants in Montreal.

Then when I put the moratorium on the food services sector, the member for Markham—Unionville complained about it and said we should lift it for one of his favourite restaurants in his constituency.

It was the Liberals who created the low-skill stream in 2002, and let us not forget that it was the Liberals who admitted 600 strippers as temporary foreign workers every single year. That is their record.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the temporary foreign worker program has become a real free-for-all. Even federal ministers and a political office are using the program to recruit staff.

Oral Questions

The Department of National Defence, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Agriculture Canada, Health Canada and even the Office of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness have qualified to hire temporary foreign workers. I cannot believe that in a country with a population of 34 million they are unable to find qualified employees to work for the government.

When will the minister realize that the program is flawed and needs major changes?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely ridiculous. First of all, the political assistant the member mentioned was hired by the PQ government of Quebec, not the federal government.

Yes, it is true that Agriculture Canada hired two scientists with very specific skills, much like there are Canadians working abroad as experts in certain fields.

The NDP members were complaining about the program rules being too stringent.

[English]

I have a letter from the member for Halifax complaining that it is unreasonable to ask employers to continually complete lengthy and cumbersome LMO applications, creating a heavy administrative burden on employers. She wants us to streamline the whole program.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Grogue (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before all of the details of the Conservative fiasco came to light, the NDP thought that this program was well managed and so we promoted it. Clearly, we cannot trust the Conservatives to properly manage programs.

The government claims that the temporary foreign worker program can be patched up. However, given that the Conservatives would rather hire temporary foreign workers to work in the federal public service than young Canadians who have just finished university or experienced Canadian workers, there is a serious problem.

When will the minister finally decide to call on the Auditor General for help?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this question shows that the member has no idea what she is talking about. We are talking about a few Canadian scientists who needed to hire other scientists from overseas with a very specific skill set to work on specific research projects.

Does the NDP believe that we should not let scientists from overseas come to Canada to work on research projects? That is ridiculous.

Letters or no letters, the NDP wants to streamline the process.

• (1435)

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is pretending to fix the program but has failed to stop abuses, failed to protect Canadian jobs, and failed to clean up

the mess he has made of this program. He claims to acknowledge the problem, yet he is even authorizing the hiring of temporary foreign workers to work in government departments.

Will the minister acknowledge that he is acting just like the Liberals when it comes to mismanaging labour market opinions?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is it really the position of the NDP that when government scientists in Canada require the collaboration of scientists from overseas with specific skills, they should not be permitted to do research in this country? Is it the position of the NDP that when foreign military forces have an exchange program with Canada, they should not enter Canada? That is exactly what the member is complaining about. Those, believe it or not, are temporary foreign workers.

However, it is funny that I have a letter here from the member for Halifax complaining about the approval times in the program, complaining that we ask employers continually to complete lengthy and cumbersome LMO applications that create a heavy administrative burden, and asking that we streamline the LMO process.

We did not listen to her.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): There is a lot of hypocrisy on display today, Mr. Speaker, just like when the minister—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order. This is now the second time I have had to remind members to hold their applause until the member is finished asking the question. It is taking a lot of time, and I would hate to run out of time toward the end of the list. I will ask members to come to order.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta has the floor.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: I can see that hit a nerve, Mr. Speaker.

There is a lot of hypocrisy on display today, just like when the minister chastised the Liberals for allowing in exotic dancers, yet the Conservatives did the same thing for over six years. The Conservatives allowed adult entertainment businesses like strip clubs from coast to coast to coast to bring in temporary foreign workers.

When will the minister stop these mindless attacks on the opposition and agree to an independent audit? When will he fix this broken program once and for all?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is that the best those members can do?

Speaking of hypocrisy, I have right here in my hands letters from New Democrat MPs complaining that the temporary foreign worker program—

An hon. member: Table them.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney: I would be happy to table these letters, Mr. Speaker.

For example, the member for Western Arctic complains that “the wage levels that are being set for the low skills retail counter employees are high and making an important program unworkable”. He complains that we are not properly balancing the interests of employers in the program, just as the member for Halifax asked us to speed up the program, streamline the labour market opinions, and reduce “lengthy and cumbersome LMO applications”.

Hypocrisy—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister gets a kick out of reminding us that the Liberals issued work permits for exotic dancers.

Interestingly, for six years, the Conservatives continued to issue such work permits. Here is a short list: Saint Pete's Men's Club in Edmonton, The Gent's Club in Red Deer, Showgirls Exotic Nightclub in Edmonton and Cabaret Lady Mary-Ann in Quebec City. Just to be clear, these are the kind of establishment where the food is not the biggest draw.

How can the minister be all holier than thou and criticize the Liberals, when for six years, his government determined that Canada lacked skilled dancers?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is strange. When we came to power, we placed a moratorium—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

The Speaker: Surely members of the opposition heard me just a few moments ago when I asked the government to hold off on its applause. I will ask them the same thing now.

The minister has not finished answering the question. I am sure they will be applauding when he is finished answering, but they could wait until then. I will give the floor back to the hon. minister.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as soon as we came to power, we placed a moratorium on that program. However, we had to change the law. When we were a minority government, we proposed amendments three times to get rid of the program. The NDP and the Liberals opposed the amendment to get rid of the program. It was a majority Conservative government that passed the bill.

• (1440)

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the entire fiasco created by the Conservatives with respect to the temporary foreign worker program exposes what Canadians have long since suspected: that when it comes to this program, there is little difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

Conservatives love to bash the so-called Liberal stripper program, but they allowed it to go on for six years while in office. They talk

about clamping down on employers who abuse the system but have with only a few employers out of hundreds of cases going on across the country. A bit of tough action to match some of this tough talk would be welcome in this place.

This hurts the Canadian economy. It hurts Canadian workers. When is the minister going to start matching some of the action with the talk?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will address problems in this program in the very near future. We have tightened up the program.

To completely shut down the program the member talked about required a change to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. We proposed that change on three separate occasions in the minority Parliaments of 2006 and 2008. It did not pass because the opposition would not let it pass. It required a strong, stable, Conservative, national majority government to finally pass that amendment to shut down the Liberals' stripper program.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on another matter, the NDP has always said that it would welcome the trade agreement with the European Union, but that it would have to see the details before deciding whether to support it.

We still have nothing concrete. We have been waiting for seven months, and with the upcoming European elections, there is still a lot of uncertainty here in terms of the agreement. Investments in the Quebec cheese industry are on hold because people are waiting to understand the impact of the agreement on the industry.

Could the minister give us an update on this agreement and tell us when we might hope to see the final wording of the agreement?

[*English*]

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that question. Our government has negotiated a historic agreement with the European Union, a market of 500 million consumers, as announced last fall, with the final agreement to come before this place in the coming months.

Today is European Union Day, and I will be meeting our ambassadors tonight, talking about the jobs that will be created by this truly historic agreement. I hope the NDP can change its ways and finally get behind trade and the jobs that come from it.

Oral Questions

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that answer just does not fit the facts. It has been over seven months since the trade minister boasted, “All of the substantive issues have now been resolved”. That is clearly not true. Beef and pork, the investment chapter, rules of origin requirements, and more were not settled then and they are not resolved now.

Canadians want a good trade deal with Europe, so where is the promised deal? When will Canadians see the actual text of CETA?

Mr. Erin O’Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows as a colleague of mine on the trade committee, this agreement is historic, and all of the fundamental principles, including reduction of tariff lines, including phase-in years, including a region-by-region breakdown on how beneficial this agreement will be, were all released. In fact, the European ambassador to Canada praised Canadian documents outlining the details of the agreement and said that in Europe they use the Canadian details to showcase the agreement.

The final agreement will come before the House, which is a precedent our party established in getting agreement for these trade agreements.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard that line seven months ago.

Clearly the minister has failed to close this trade deal with Europe, so why did the Prime Minister fly off to Brussels last year at the height of the Senate scandal? Will the Prime Minister tell us how much his European photo op has cost Canadian taxpayers?

• (1445)

Mr. Erin O’Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we see today, sadly, is the true NDP. In some circles NDP members praise trade because they know one Canadian job in five is directly attributable to our exports, yet when they are in other places or at national meetings of unions, they bash trade and try and oppose all of our agreements, whether it is with Europe or whether it is with Korea.

Our government has launched the most ambitious diversification of our trade relationships in Canadian history. One job in five is now attributable to trade. We want to see those jobs secure and we want more in the future. It is time for the NDP to get behind it.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister’s Office suggested to Justice Nadon that he resign as a judge and join the Barreau du Québec to be eligible to be on the Supreme Court. Justice Nadon did not go along with this scheme, which Justice Binnie and other lawyers described as unworthy.

By suggesting that a judge do something unworthy of his office, by attacking the Chief Justice, and by violating the secrecy of the judge appointment process, will the Prime Minister admit that he is the one who is unworthy of his office as head of government?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have noted a number of times now, and I will inform the hon. member again, we followed a process that can only be described as the most inclusive ever undertaken by a government with respect to a Supreme Court appointment, but we took an unprecedented step of going further and getting outside advice, which conformed with the decision we had taken with respect to that appointment. We then proceeded to put that name forward, the nomination occurred, and the individual in question was actually sworn in by the Supreme Court. We also went to the unprecedented step of seeking clarification through legislation, and then sent it to the Supreme Court for a reference.

The world unfolded as it did. We accept that inevitability, and we are now moving forward.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General is suggesting that the Chief Justice brought this whole he-said-she-said affair upon herself, that she had acted inappropriately by making a phone call about a Supreme Court vacancy in July of 2013.

The government had months of notice. If the minister and the government really felt so strongly about that phone call, why did they not simply request that the Chief Justice recuse herself from the Nadon case and avoid the smear campaign that he and the Prime Minister are now on?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to tell the Supreme Court Chief Justice what to do. That is, in fact, the question here. I would not do that. That would, in fact, I am sure, spark much controversy, with members of the opposition standing here demanding my resignation.

The reality is we followed a process. That process came forward with a name. We took that name forward. The court ruled with their pronouncement on eligibility, and we accepted that. Now we are proceeding, with great anticipation, on a new name.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Now, there is a great idea, Mr. Speaker.

The government botched the appointment of Justice Nadon. To deflect its incompetence, it is engaged in a smear campaign against the Chief Justice. The Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Judicial Council, the deans of law schools from across the country, experts, and academics have all raised serious concerns about this deliberate smear campaign.

How can the Attorney General defend his behaviour as a full participant in the smear of Beverley McLachlin?

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remember, back in law school, people saying that if someone is uncertain of his or her argument, he or she should speak louder, use hyperbole, use words like “attack” and “smear”, as this member has continually done over the last number of days here in the House.

The reality is that we followed an open, transparent, inclusive process. We came forward with a name that we deemed appropriate, and as a result, we have seen the decision now of the Supreme Court, which causes us to go back. As the member may know, I took the step this week of speaking with the Attorney General from Quebec, and we intend to come forward with a new name for the Supreme Court very soon.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2005, Canadians strongly rejected the idea of participation in American missile defence. They were opposed to a system that would weaponize space and drive an arms race, but now a source has told *Global News* that the government is considering participation in a new missile defence program.

Can the minister tell the House if his government will participate in the U.S. ballistic missile defence program?

• (1450)

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has declined to participate in ballistic missile defence in the past, and no decision has been made to change this policy. We will continue to monitor international developments and will also continue to ensure both the safety and security of Canadians both at home and abroad.

The member is vice-chair of the House defence committee. The defence committees in both the Senate and over here in the House are studying missile defence and the defence of North America respectively, and we should let those committees continue their work.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, the minister responsible for the file cannot even confirm or deny whether Canada will take part in a missile defence program. It is simple: either we intend to take part, or we do not intend to take part.

The cost of a system like this is astronomical, and the system's success has yet to be proven. Could the minister please tell us whether his government intends to take part in a ballistic missile defence program? If so, could he also explain where he intends to find the money?

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just said that there has been no change to the policy. We made the decision not to participate in ballistic missile defence. The member, as a member of the national defence committee in the House of Commons, should wait until we actually finish our study. We will have some collaboration and

discussions, make a recommendation, and report back to the House of Commons.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us change the subject, but keep talking about the Conservatives' lack of judgment.

Instead of keeping our communities safe, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness prefers to waste his time making the Canada Border Services Agency participate in a reality TV series for the third consecutive season against the written recommendation of CBSA president Luc Portelance. Border Services Agency officers do serious and dangerous work. It is not entertainment.

When will the minister listen to the Border Services Agency officers and let them do their job?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague.

Border Services Agency officers do serious and important work to preserve the integrity of our immigration system.

They are taking part in the third season of a program that attracts nearly 11 million viewers a year. This helps show Canadians the remarkable work border services officers do to enforce our laws, to ensure that people coming from other countries are properly received and that those who are not entitled to enter are turned away appropriately.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is not entitled to his own facts here. He is the one who approved the third season of the reality TV show that recklessly exploits immigration raids. He did this against the recommendation of CBSA president Luc Portelance, who cited costs and the need for CBSA to focus on its real priority, keeping Canadians safe, and not on having to worry about filming reality TV programs.

Will the minister finally employ some common sense, listen to his officials at CBSA, and put a stop to this reckless and wasteful PR stunt?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the work that is accomplished on a daily basis by our front-line officers to ensure that our borders are safe and that our immigration system is working properly. That is why we are not shy about the work they are doing. We are proud that CBSA is participating in that documentary that explains the work of the front-line officers and that is viewed by more than 11 million viewers a year.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can never give enough thanks to the brave men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces. We must never forget those who fought and those who fell during Canada's mission in Afghanistan, including those from the South Alberta Light Horse Regiment, whose tie I proudly wear today. The Prime Minister has designated tomorrow, May 9, as a National Day of Honour. This is a truly important moment in our history, when we will recognize the courage and sacrifices made by our soldiers and their families.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence please provide this House with some details regarding the events taking place tomorrow?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Centre for his service to Canada and for his ongoing support and work in support of our troops and our veterans.

Tomorrow's National Day of Honour will be commemorated right across Canada through a series of events. In Ottawa, the national ceremony will begin with a parade that will travel from the Canadian War Museum up to Parliament Hill.

I ask and encourage all Canadians to please observe two minutes of silence tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m. eastern standard time. This will recognize the completion of the mission in Afghanistan and honour the more than 40,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces who served overseas.

To the families of the fallen, Canadians will forever be grateful for their sacrifice. Let us never forget.

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•(1455)

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, when we asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages if she would appear before the committee to talk about the crisis currently rocking CBC/Radio-Canada, she said she was open to the idea.

This morning, the Conservative members of the parliamentary committee voted against the NDP motion calling for a special appearance by the minister. While CBC/Radio-Canada might be an independent crown corporation, the minister has responsibility for it and she must be transparent.

Why did her colleagues vote against the motion? Why is the minister refusing to take one hour of her time to explain how these cuts will affect millions of Canadians?

[English]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member actually answered his question in his question when he stated that the CBC is in fact an independent organization that operates at arm's length from the government. When it comes to the direction it wants to take, whether it be programming, whether it be fiscal decisions, whether it

be human resources, that is a decision to be made by the CBC. I think it is appropriate, and this government believes it is appropriate, for those responsibilities to remain with the CBC.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, Conservatives voted down an NDP motion inviting the heritage minister to appear at committee to respond to CBC cuts. Despite the minister telling this House she wanted to appear, her colleagues obstructed our motion.

The CBC is in crisis. It has lost great talents like Linden MacIntyre, yet we cannot even discuss it in Parliament. Will the minister tell her Conservative colleagues that she wants to appear at committee to explain these drastic cuts to Canadians?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this member knows as well that CBC operates independently and at arm's length from the government.

What folks would probably like to understand is that currently we are undertaking a study of Canadian music and the way that music is funded and the growth of all the artists who are Canadian who create all of this music across this country that is so well known around the world. In fact, if Greg Keelor, from the band Blue Rodeo, were in the audience today, I have a feeling that he would prefer that we focus on the success of the music, its industry, and our artists in this country instead of on questions that have nothing to do with what we are studying at committee.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United States sent a strong message to Russian president Putin by blacklisting Igor Sechin and Sergei Chemezov, close allies of President Putin, but Canada has yet to follow suit. These men have close ties to the Russian security establishment. Their companies have very large investments in Canada.

The question is this. Why were they left off the list, and will the minister include them on Canada's sanctions list immediately?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, Canada has the largest number of people and organizations and businesses sanctioned of any country in the world. No other government has stood up more forcefully and more aggressively against the Russian aggression in Ukraine. This government is very proud of our record. We have expanded the sanctions list on a number of occasions, and we will be expanding it again in short order.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only are our sanctions different than those of our allies, but Canada has yet to suspend its high-tech military exports to Russia, as requested by the NDP.

Canada must continue to support the Ukrainian people. When will the minister finally suspend our military exports to Russia and when will he impose sanctions on all the Russian individuals and businesses already sanctioned by our allies?

Oral Questions

● (1500)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report to the House that Canada has no bilateral military exports to the Russian federation. I have instructed the department not to approve any export applications destined for Russia and that any pending applications are to be suspended and refused. Nothing will be approved that could benefit the military in Russia.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we rightfully honour those who served in Afghanistan, the current government continues to neglect the many military personnel and veterans who still suffer from physical and emotional injuries. When will the Conservative government stop underfunding services for veterans and recognize in court, where they are currently fighting them, that they actually owe our veterans a sacred obligation?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the question. The hon. member is of course conscientious and concerned. I realize that, but Canadian veterans who have service-related conditions benefit from many of the initiatives that are in place to address not only their particular issues but their transition into civilian life, and of course, support for their families, as well, in a whole range of support systems that are geared and structured and available to them to help them through their difficult times. Of course, for any veterans who need help, or their families, we are here to do exactly that.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has now been told by the Auditor General as well as by the Correctional Investigator that double-bunking presents a serious risk to prison staff as well as to inmates. In its own report, prepared in 2012, CSC warned it would be challenged to meet reduction targets on violent incidents and assaults, and double-bunking was the problem.

Why does the minister continue to create an explosive environment in prisons, putting correctional staff and inmates at risk?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only explosive thing we have seen is the verbal explosion by opposition members, who claimed that our prisons would be full, which is not the case. The truth is that there has been little increase in the prison population. Furthermore, with the 1,700 cells we have added, we are now able to ensure that criminals are behind bars.

We will continue to make our streets and communities safer.

*[English]***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all players in the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery agree that the quota for northern shrimp must be reduced to protect the stock. Most quarters in the fishery also agree that inshore fishermen, who are becoming a rare breed, must not bear the pain alone. The quota must be balanced between the inshore and big business offshore sectors.

The inshore fishery is the heart and soul of our outports. Will the minister defend the survival of these communities by ensuring they are not sacrificed on the altar of big business?

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are difficult decisions for the minister because she is well aware that changes in the ecosystem that require reductions in the total allowable catch do affect people's lives and livelihoods. That is why she has consulted broadly with stakeholders on this science-based decision that she has made.

With respect to the last in, first out policy, it has had its roots since 1997 when the Liberal government of the day allowed new entrants into the fishery. The new entrants received the vast majority of the increased access since that day with the knowledge that, should it decline, it would—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

* * *

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have essentially gutted Service Canada. One result is that now, one in four unemployed workers does not receive a response to their EI claim within the 28-day deadline. Think about it: four weeks without income is huge when rent, grocery and hydro bills are piling up.

Yesterday the minister asked the parliamentary secretary to find out how he could shorten wait times. I have a very simple suggestion for him: hire more staff.

Does the minister understand that the time to do more with less has passed?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there we see the NDP's philosophy of always spending more of taxpayers' money. If you spend more taxpayer money you have to increase taxes and increase the tax burden on workers, families and Canadians.

The government wants to deliver high-quality services to the public, but with low taxes, so that we can create jobs and opportunities for all Canadians.

Oral Questions

•(1505)
[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago I was honoured to receive unanimous support for my private member's motion calling on our government to recognize our Afghanistan war veterans in a permanent way that would forever mark its place in history.

Will the Minister of Veterans Affairs please update this House on any new developments about how our government plans to remember and honour our veterans of the Afghanistan War?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the national day of honour, I am pleased to announce that the dates of the Afghanistan War will be forever inscribed on the National War Memorial. I am also pleased to confirm our government will construct a dedicated permanent memorial to honour the sacrifice of our men and women who served in Afghanistan.

On behalf of this Prime Minister and our government, I hope all members in this place will use tomorrow to pay their respects.

Lest we forget.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Patriarch Sviatoslav, head of the Ukrainian Catholic church, is visiting Ottawa today.

Vladimir Putin has said he will withdraw Russian troops from the Ukrainian border and that Russia will not interfere in the May 25 Ukrainian presidential elections.

Does the government believe the Kremlin's assurances? Will the government show it means business by adding Igor Sechin to the sanctions list? Can the minister tell us what Canada is doing to ensure this crucial vote takes place freely, fairly and that its results are recognized in the Ukraine and the world?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we would obviously want to verify any commitment made by the leaders of the Russian Federation. Their actions in Ukraine over the past six months have been deplorable.

Canada has stood up firmly against them. We want to do everything we can to support the Government of Ukraine and the people of Ukraine, in the lead-up toward the May 25 election. We will be sending 500 observers. I am very pleased that I will have an opportunity to meet with a leader from the Ukraine Orthodox church later today.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure promised us a gas tax fund agreement by April 1. After five months of negotiations, Quebec still does not have an agreement. No agreement means no money for roads this

summer. The people and mayors in my region are getting fed up. It is spring now, and municipalities are running short of time to take advantage of the construction season.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure tell us once and for all whether the gas tax fund money will be delivered in the coming weeks?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that this member, with all the years he has spent in the House, does not know how the process works. Incredible.

In Quebec, it starts with the province approving the projects. We sent an agreement to the province of Quebec on November 5. It is up to the province to send it back to us so we can sign it.

Therefore, my answer is that the member needs to ask the Government of Quebec this question, because we are ready to sign the agreement.

We are a few days or weeks away from signing a long-awaited agreement with the new government. Quebec determines which files take priority. Mayors in the member's region know that, even if he does not.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, G7 energy ministers held a special security meeting in Rome to discuss action on energy security. The global demand for energy is projected to increase by one-third over the next 25 years. Canada is well-positioned to benefit from this opportunity.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources, as if he were explaining it to his own mother, elucidate this House on the role Canada could play on this important file?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we send a strong message to Russia that we do not accept their violation of Ukraine sovereignty, and that energy should not be used as a means of coercion.

We agreed on immediate steps to assist Ukraine on energy security and the need for Europe to diversify its energy supply. G7 members recognize Canada as a responsible exporter of energy products. Canada will be a big part of the solution to global energy security and take our rightful place as an energy superpower.

Business of the House

•(1510)

*[Translation]***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has been waiting for an answer from the minister for three months. We want to know if she plans to sign the convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

Last time, I was told that the minister was looking at the matter and would follow up. The convention has been around for 11 years. How much time does the minister need to think it over? Does the minister plan to sign the convention or not?

[English]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take the member's question under advisement and get back to him with an answer in due course.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, while Canada waffles on climate disruption, Red China is eating our lunch on green technologies and jobs.

Canada has sleepwalked into their trap. By refusing any binding greenhouse gas targets, Red China has successfully hamstrung our Conservatives while Red China's national bank is pouring capital into solar and wind energy.

When will our government wake up and smell the morning, not coffee, but green tea?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House what this government wants with respect to a climate change agreement. We want all the large economies, all the major emitters to be part of a solution with respect to global climate change. That is why this government, joined by the Obama administration and joined by the European Union, is working to try to get all the large emitters to accept binding targets so that we can finally break the back of growing greenhouse gas emissions and do the right thing for the environment.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Beatitude Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Patriarch of the Ukrainian Catholic church.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Speaker: I would also like to draw attention to the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards.

[English]

For Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award: Anik Bissonnette, Brent Carver, Tom Jackson, Louise Lecavalier, and Janine Sutto.

And members of the band Blue Rodeo: Michael Boguski, Colin Cripps, Bazil Donovan, Robert Egan, Gregory Keelor, and Glenn Milchem.

The Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts, Jean Giguère.

The National Arts Centre Award recipient, Albert Schultz.

[Translation]

Lastly, for the Mentorship Program: Jean-Philippe Fortier-Lazure.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[English]

The Speaker: I invite all hon. members to meet the recipients at a reception in room 216N immediately.

It being Thursday, we will go to the traditional Thursday question. The hon. opposition House leader.

* * *

*[Translation]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, last week and this week, we saw a host of unprecedented attacks by this government. It makes us wonder what is in store for next week.

The government and the Prime Minister attacked the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Before that there were attacks on Kevin Page, the Chief Electoral Officer and even Sheila Fraser. The Chief Justice has now joined the group of eminent Canadians who have been criticized by this government.

Now, as we saw earlier, the government is even attacking our democracy. It is limiting MPs' speaking time after 10 minutes of debate on the electoral "deform", Bill C-23. After 10 minutes of debate, the Conservatives informed us that they would be reducing MPs' speaking time. Thus they have cut the speaking time of 290 MPs representing 290 ridings across the country.

•(1515)

[English]

After the attacks this week against the Chief Justice and the attacks we have seen in the past against Kevin Page and Marc Mayrand, and even Sheila Fraser, a Canadian hero; after the attacks on democracy that we saw this morning, with the government imposing, after 10 minutes of debate on Bill C-23, the unfair elections act, time allocation of closure and forcing that through this morning; after these deplorable attacks, the question is very simple. Will the Conservatives stop their attacks on eminent Canadians who happen to disagree with them and what will the government do in the next week to restore badly shattered public confidence in the government?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I think it is appropriate that perhaps it shall be nominated for a fiction award, perhaps for the Governor General's award under the category of fantasy. It bore little relation to anything I have heard or seen anywhere around here in the past week.

However, I am prepared to provide some factual responses on what we will be doing in the week ahead.

[Translation]

This afternoon we will continue the third reading debate on Bill C-5, the Offshore Health and Safety Act. If we wrap that up before 6:30, we will resume this morning's third reading debate on Bill C-3, the Safeguarding Canada's Seas and Skies Act.

[English]

Tomorrow, the House will not sit in order to accommodate the events of the National Day of honour. Hon. members will recognize those Canadians who served in Afghanistan and, particularly, those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Those ceremonies on Parliament Hill will be the cornerstone of the nation's commemorations. There will be significant events all across Canada, in which all Canadians are welcome to participate.

[Translation]

Next week, on Monday, we will conclude the report stage of Bill C-23, the Fair Elections Act. Tuesday will see third reading and final passage of the bill. Wednesday and Thursday shall be the sixth and seventh allotted days. On both occasions, we will debate New Democratic motions.

[English]

Friday, May 16 will see Bill C-27, the veterans hiring act, debated at second reading.

Finally, Wednesday, May 14 shall be the day appointed, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), for the consideration of the main estimates related to Finance for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2015.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Éloise Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today on a point of order to draw your attention to an incident in the House this week that I find particularly troubling. I am not sure what you can do about the situation, but since it happened in the House, you will at least have the opportunity to clarify what the precedents are in this regard and what you expect of members of the House.

On Tuesday afternoon of this week, the member for Edmonton East put a document in English only on the desk of each member. After speaking with my colleagues, I understood that it was a newsletter on the work the member for Edmonton East does in Turks and Caicos.

My remarks today are not about the content of the newsletter but the fact that the document was in only one official language instead of both. As we all know, the House takes respect for bilingualism in Canada and our two official languages very seriously. Documents cannot be tabled or distributed in the House if they are not in both official languages. If the simultaneous interpretation is not working in the House or in committee, business is interrupted until the

Points of Order

problem can be resolved. Although the document in question is not an official parliamentary document, I do not think that we can turn a blind eye when members fail to respect the importance of Canada's two official languages. That is totally unacceptable and, frankly, I consider it to be a serious lack of respect for francophone parliamentarians in the House.

All members of the House know that they need permission from their whip to distribute documents like that. I checked with my party whip and she confirmed that no approval was given to distribute the document in question. I also checked with the table clerks, who told me that the member for Edmonton East was putting the document on all of the desks himself. It is clear that the member for Edmonton East knew he was bypassing well-established protocols and showing a complete lack of respect for the bilingual nature of the House and Canada's official languages.

Mr. Speaker, I want to add that I know you may not have any specific recourse in this case. However, I find this situation very troubling. I did not want to let it go unmentioned, and I hope that you will clarify what you expect of members when it comes to respecting Canada's two official languages.

I would love to ask for the consent of the House to table the document in question, but since it is only in English and I respect the rules of the House and Canada's two official languages, I will not do so. I will, however, give you a copy of the document so that you can decide for yourself.

● (1520)

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, we have had questions about government documents, processes, briefings, and so on being in both official languages. Our government values the importance of providing documents and services in both official languages, both national languages for all members of the House.

What we are hearing about in this case is a particular document that a member had prepared for his constituents in the language he normally uses to communicate with his constituents. It is quite normal for many members to communicate in French if they have a predominantly francophone constituency or in English with a predominantly anglophone one.

However, the appropriate remedy for this situation, and we heard that the necessary, usual channels for approving the distribution of documents were not necessarily followed here, is that we ask the whips to take this matter up with each other and with the member in question, and perhaps remind all members of their caucuses of the appropriate rules and practices that we have in place governing the distribution of documents. This is best dealt with by the whips in that fashion.

Government Orders

The Speaker: I appreciate the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier raising the issue. As she and the government House leader mentioned, the principle of communicating in both official languages is well established in this chamber. As the government House leader alluded to, there are certain protocols that are adhered to in terms of what the pages will distribute on people's desks. This does not mean that members are not free to distribute things on their own if the goal is to notify members of events or keep them aware of what a member may be doing.

The advantage to the member of providing that in both official languages is that more members will be able to understand and appreciate either the notice of event or the work that he or she is doing. Therefore, the member in question may have failed to do that and may have missed an opportunity to communicate with francophone members of the important work he may have been doing on a particular file.

I do not know that it is something for the Chair to intervene on. If a member does not want to look at the material, he or she is free to not do so. However, I think it is important that members work within the established protocols for distributing materials on people's desks, especially since there can be a lot of them and it can accumulate quite quickly. It would be advantageous to all members in the House to remember that.

[*Translation*]

Some members speak only one of the official languages. It makes more sense for members to distribute copies in both official languages of their notice of event or whatever they want to communicate. This is an important principle. Members who use only one of the official languages are missing an opportunity to communicate with their colleagues.

I do not want to rule on this, but I think it is an important principle for members.

[*English*]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a recommendation for the whips, including myself, and that would be to remind our caucus of the accepted practice in the House when it comes to putting things on the desks. We know the rules, and we know the rules were not followed in this case. We will remind our caucuses.

The Speaker: I appreciate the helpful reminder from the whip and I will trust that the normal channels of the whips and the many tools they have available to them will help encourage members of all parties to communicate with their colleagues in a way that respects the principles of the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

The House resumed from March 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore

Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with my hon. colleague from Churchill.

As always, I am pleased to rise in the House today to talk about Bill C-5, which was introduced as Bill C-61 during the first session of the 41st Parliament, as members probably all know.

I would like to begin by saying that the NDP will support, at report stage, this bill to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act to enhance the safety and transparency of offshore petroleum activities.

These amendments would, primarily, create a new offshore workplace health and safety regime, which is a good thing. Bill C-5 addresses long-standing gaps in the legislation, as well as regulation-making authorities associated with workplace health and safety standards and how they apply to offshore petroleum extraction operations in the law. This is an important measure that the NDP has been seeking for some time.

Despite the federal government's refusal to implement recommendation no. 29 of the Wells Inquiry, Bill C-5 is a positive and necessary improvement to the current offshore health and safety regime because it places safety practices into legislation.

Bill C-5 is the culmination of over 12 years of negotiations, which started in 2001. In fact, I wonder what took the government so long to put these worker protection measures into law.

The bill also establishes a framework that clarifies the individual and shared roles of the federal government, the provincial governments, regulators, operators, employers, suppliers and employees. That is a lot of people, and I understand that the whole issue of the safety of our workers is rather complex and important, crucial even.

The bill is based on three basic principles.

First, offshore occupational health and safety laws must provide offshore workers with protection at least as good as that of onshore workers. That seems pretty basic to me. A worker must be protected regardless of where he or she works, whether offshore or onshore. No matter what environment a person works in, the conditions should be standardized and safe. No one wants to lose a colleague, a parent, a sister, an uncle or an aunt in a workplace accident. It is always tragic. During question period today, my colleague mentioned that we have already lost six miners in northern Ontario. That is six too many. It is the responsibility of all governments, federal and provincial alike, to ensure that our workers are safe.

Second, it is important to protect workers' rights: the right to know, the right to participate, the right to refuse unsafe work and the right to be protected from reprisals if they should blow the whistle on unsafe working conditions.

● (1530)

Third, it is necessary to support an occupational health and safety culture that emphasizes shared responsibility in the workplace.

Government Orders

New Democrats in the provinces in question had long been calling for these changes to be enshrined in law, but the Conservative government seemed reluctant to follow through. Nevertheless, we are pleased that this bill was introduced in the House.

However, it is disappointing that the federal government prevented us from making workers even safer by creating a stand-alone safety regulator.

I would like to quote the Honourable Robert Wells, who in a 2010 inquiry report on offshore helicopter safety said:

After a full study of the Transportation Safety Board's Report, I have concluded that not only should such an independent safety regulator be created, it should also be given a clear and unambiguous safety mandate. This need is more urgent in the light of the TSB Report.

Justice Wells recommended that, even in the event that the recommendation was not considered feasible, a separate and autonomous safety division be created within the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

Unfortunately, the government has no interest in creating a stand-alone safety regulator. I am not the only one saying so. When he was the natural resources minister in Newfoundland and Labrador, Tom Marshall said the same thing.

The NDP is determined to work in partnership with the provinces to achieve better results, something that seems very difficult for my Conservative colleagues to do.

Bill C-5 also authorizes the Minister of Natural Resources and the provincial employment ministers, in consultation with the Minister of Employment and Social Development and the Minister of Transport, to develop offshore health and safety regulations. In addition, the Minister of Transport would be required to develop health and safety regulations for offshore workers in transit, because the bill also applies to workers who are moving between offshore marine facilities or structures, and that is a good thing.

This bill is definitely a step in the right direction. It may not be a big enough step, but it is a step nonetheless. It would have been a bigger step had the Conservatives not refused to consider, for example, the entirely reasonable NDP amendment that would have included a mandatory review of the law in five years. This type of provision is found in a number of laws. It is quite acceptable to review a law every five years, because things change. In order to adapt to new conditions, the laws in force must be reviewed so that they can be strengthened and so that they are an appropriate response to needs. They have to be evaluated and amended, if necessary. We thought it was a very reasonable amendment.

• (1535)

The principle of this amendment was supported by a number of key witnesses and corresponds to the position taken by Justice Wells on this issue. We believe that our amendment is necessary, I will repeat, for due diligence and good governance, especially given the complex nature of the bill and the fact that it pertains to several levels of government.

Nevertheless, we will support the bill, which is a positive and necessary improvement to the current regime. Furthermore, it will protect offshore workers at least as well as onshore workers. That is

a good thing, and that is why I am pleased to rise in the House to give this speech in support of the bill.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously we are talking about a piece of legislation that pertains entirely to a specific part of the country. I am wondering if the member could speak to how the negotiations that took place and the benefits that will come from Bill C-5 may also be positive for the rest of the country and all Canadians.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that both provincial governments and the federal government have been involved. It takes a lot for the Conservative government to consult. It takes a lot for Conservatives to admit that they need to consult. In this case, fortunately, though it took some time, it was done, and it seems to have been done across sectors, with organizations.

The fundamental principle is important, and that is that no matter where a Canadian works, whether it be on the earth, in the air, on the sea, they should be given the same protections. There should be the same security standards offered to them so that we lose fewer workers in this country every year. We already lose too many.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-5, an act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other acts and to provide for certain other measures.

I am pleased to speak alongside my colleagues in the NDP in the House on this important bill, a bill that New Democrats support. We want to particularly recognize the hard work that was done by provinces in conjunction with the federal government to establish this bill. We want to note that despite the federal government's refusal to implement recommendation no. 29 of the Wells Inquiry, Bill C-5 makes a positive and necessary improvement to the current offshore health and safety regime by placing safety practices into legislation.

We as New Democrats are proud to support Bill C-5, as we have been calling for this strengthened regime for several years. We will continue to work with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador to further strengthen worker health and safety by working toward the creation of an independent, stand-alone safety regulator.

As well, we in the NDP support the collaborative efforts between the provincial and federal governments that produced Bill C-5. We believe that collaboration with provincial and territorial governments to produce such measures moves our country forward. This is definitely something that, sadly, the Conservative government does not do enough of.

We know that the federal government, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador will be passing mirror legislation through their respective houses. The provincial governments of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador have made a strong commitment to ensure the consistency of offshore regulation between the two jurisdictions.

Government Orders

Bill C-5 addresses long-standing gaps in legislation and regulation-making powers associated with occupational health and safety standards and their enforcement in Atlantic offshore oil development. The bill would amend the Atlantic accord to place the health and occupation safety regimes in legislation, which is extremely important. It is an important step forward that the NDP has called for in all relevant jurisdictions.

As I noted, however, the bill is not compliant with recommendation 29 of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry carried out by the Honourable Robert Wells. Bill C-5 does not provide for either an independent stand-alone safety regulator or an autonomous safety division within the petroleum boards. NDP efforts to provide for a review of the bill in five years, which could reopen the possibility of an independent offshore regulator, were unfortunately voted down by the Conservative government at the committee stage.

From our side, an NDP federal government would work with the provinces to put forward such measures in order to further strengthen the health and safety regime for Atlantic offshore workers. Nevertheless, we support this bill, as it is clear that it is well past due and is an important victory for the labour movement, for the former NDP government in Nova Scotia, and certainly for the NDP in Newfoundland and Labrador. They have been advocating for a legislated offshore safety regime for many years.

As I noted during my questions, it is clear that Bill C-5 is very much focused on the reality in the Atlantic, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as Nova Scotia, where offshore developments are an integral part of the economy.

However, as we know, in resource extractive industries it is workers who do the heavy lifting and put their lives and safety at risk day in, day out to produce the wealth of our country. As someone who represents northern Manitoba, a part of the country that depends in large part on resource extraction and on mining in particular, I am fully aware of the immense risks that people who go underground or work in smelters and refineries live with every day in the work they do. They do that work to provide for their families, contribute to their communities, and give Canadians the wealth and revenue that are so important in going forward.

• (1540)

It is particularly timely that we are talking about this, as it has been just 10 days since the National Day of Mourning, a very important day for all Canadians. It is a day when we take the time to mourn those who have died on the job, those who have been in workplace accidents, those who have been hurt and incapacitated in so many ways.

It is also a day when we take the time to strengthen our resolve to fight for the living, to make sure that we are talking about and acting on how we can make workplaces safer, how we can support health and safety regimes, and how we can ensure that unions have the support and the backing they need when pushing employers to step it up when it comes to health and safety.

It is very clear that we have a lot of work to do on this front. In fact, today my colleague, the member for Nickel Belt, made a very moving statement honouring the memory of two miners who were

killed on the job in Sudbury. It reminded us that yes, in Canada and in 2014, people die because of health and safety failures in their workplaces.

Despite the calls for action and despite the work on the ground to prevent these kinds of senseless deaths, there is a lot of work to be done. Sadly, corporations have been negligent in too many cases in our country when it comes to looking out for health and safety.

The NDP's argument has always been to stand in solidarity with workers, no matter what sector they work in or what part of the country they live in. We stand by them and fight beside them for regulations and laws that would hold employers accountable and would ensure that health and safety is not negotiable or a matter of choice, but is mandated and regulated.

We are very supportive of Bill C-5 because it would mandate health and safety for offshore workers in a way that would prevent loss of life and further tragedies like the one in the Atlantic some years ago.

It is clear that there is more to be done. We can build on the successes of Bill C-5 by continuing to fight for an independent offshore regulator.

It is also important to review this legislation and see how it is implemented and how it will serve the best interests of workers.

We are disappointed by the unwillingness of the government in committee to provide for these amendments to the bill. However, we do want to acknowledge the many people in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Nova Scotia who worked very hard to make sure that tragedies like the ones that they and their families lived through are prevented.

We all have something to learn and to strive for in ensuring that workplaces across the country are safe and that no one loses their life doing something as important as going to work.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Churchill. I found her arguments to be well reasoned. On a side note, I would also like to commend her for the excellent work that she does in her riding.

[*English*]

We have learned from the Newfoundland New Democratic Party that it is calling for the C-NLOPD, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, to be parallel to some extent with the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, but there might be a certain conflict of interest in that not only do the boards regulate the exploitation of offshore petroleum but they also have important jurisdiction in ensuring the safety of workers and in protecting the environment as well. The Newfoundland NDP is calling for those powers to be separated so that there would be two institutions instead of just one.

I am wondering if my colleague would have any comments along that front.

Government Orders

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who I know feels strongly about these issues as well, as he is in a region where resource extraction, and particularly offshore extraction, is a serious issue.

It is important that we hear the voices of those from Newfoundland and Labrador who are concerned about the conflict of interest that the companies are in and that we heed their calls for independent regulation and for clear safeguards when it comes to not only the health and safety of workers but also the environment.

We have seen too many cases in which companies claim to be self-regulating and are encouraged to be self-regulating, yet have track records that are not positive ones. Sadly, this is the pattern we see from the Conservative government. Independent regulation is critical, and it is certainly critical in making sure that workers are not at risk in their daily jobs.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her very interesting answer.

I would like to come back to the reasonable amendment proposed by the NDP involving an automatic review of the law every five years. This practice often comes up when bills are debated in the United States and then such provisions are included in the laws that are passed. However, this practice is not as often seen in Canada.

This practice should be used more often here, precisely because offshore oil and gas development is fairly recent in Canada. We do not have the expertise of other countries, and we have not really had a chance to look at what happened in the Gulf of Mexico, where all the problems occurred following the spill at the BP well whose name escapes me at the moment. We could learn a lot from that.

The United States regularly reviews its laws in order to make sure that they comply with the legal requirements regarding environmental protection. In Canada, we do this less frequently. The bill before us today proposes that we do so. Unfortunately the Conservatives rejected that proposal.

Does the hon. member have any other comments in that regard?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague.

We congratulated all the governments and entities that contributed to the development of Bill C-5. As the New Democrats have mentioned, we are disappointed that the government did not agree to our proposal to review the implementation of the bill every five years. As we know, the Conservative government does not proactively support facts or science. Unfortunately, we are seeing the same thing with this bill.

A review of the bill would ensure that workers are protected and that the bill is working. In five years, we could strengthen and improve the bill. Unfortunately, the Conservative government did not want to do that. However, the NDP will continue to call for such action.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

I am pleased to speak on behalf of Bill C-5 and to offer our party's support at report stage for the bill. Bill C-5 addresses long-standing gaps in legislation and regulation making powers associated with occupational health and safety standards and their enforcement, in this case particularly with respect to Atlantic offshore oil development.

The bill would amend the Atlantic accord to place the health and occupation safety regimes into legislation. We feel that this is an important step forward. The New Democratic Party has called for this in all relevant jurisdictions across our country.

It is important to point out, however, that the bill is not compliant with recommendation 29 of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador public inquiry into the offshore helicopter safety inquiry that was conducted by the Hon. Robert Wells. This followed in the aftermath of the tragedy so well known to Canadians. It involved the deaths of offshore oil workers on the Atlantic coast.

Bill C-5 also does not provide for either an independent stand-alone safety regulator or an autonomous safety division within the petroleum boards. New Democrat efforts to provide for a review of the bill in five years, which could reopen the possibility of these measures, including an independent offshore regulator which we believe is essential, were voted down by the government at committee stage, and that is regrettable.

A New Democrat federal government would work with the provinces to put forward such measures to further strengthen the health and safety regime for Atlantic offshore workers and, in fact, for all workers across the country from coast to coast to coast.

Nevertheless, we will support the bill at this stage as it is well past due and an important victory for workers and the labour movement that were instrumental in pushing this issue forward. Both provinces and both provincial New Democratic parties have also been advocating for legislative offshore safety regimes for many years.

By way of background, Bill C-5 is the culmination of over 12 years of negotiations, starting in 2001 between the federal government and the provincial governments of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. The proposed amendments to the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act aim to strengthen offshore health and safety practices in the oil and gas industry.

Bill C-5 seeks to fill a legislative gap created by the 1992 amendments to the Atlantic accord that separated health and safety issues, resulting in the provincial offshore petroleum regulatory agencies effectively enforcing health and safety issues contained in draft regulations.

Government Orders

The bill would put existing practices into legislation by placing authority and fundamental principles of occupational health and safety within the accord acts themselves. We believe this is an important improvement to the offshore occupational health and safety regimes that the NDP has called for in all relevant jurisdictions.

The bill would also establish a framework that would clarify the individual and shared roles and responsibilities of the federal government, provincial governments, regulators, operators, employers, suppliers and employees, the co-operation of which we believe is fundamental to improving occupational health and safety in our country.

The bill is based on three basic principles: first, that offshore occupational health and safety laws much provide workers with protection at least as good as those which exist for onshore workers; second, the protection of employee rights, the right to know, the right to participate, the right to refuse unsafe work and the right to be protected from reprisals; and third, support for an occupational health and safety culture that recognizes the shared responsibilities of the workplace.

Essentially the bill engages the issue of occupational health and safety, the standards that should be applied to the enforcement mechanisms that are so important.

Before I was elected, I worked for a trade union for 16 years and saw the essential work that trade unions did across the country in representing and empowering workers and in advocating for stronger health and safety protection for workers in all occupations. As legislators, it is our duty to respond to that by ensuring that Canadian workers in every industry have the highest standards in the world and have meaningful, effective enforcement of those standards, because standards without enforcement are meaningless.

A few weeks ago, on April 28, workers across British Columbia and Canada marked Workers Memorial Day. This is a worldwide day, an international day of remembrance and action for workers killed, disabled, injured or made unwell by their work. This day highlights the preventable nature of many, in fact, most workplace accidents and ill health.

•(1555)

This day was started by the Canadian Union of Public Employees in 1984. In 1985, the Canadian Labour Congress declared an annual day of remembrance. In 1991, the House, because of New Democrat initiatives, passed an act respecting a national day of mourning for persons killed or injured on the job, making April 28 an official day of mourning across this country.

Speaking of the Canadian Labour Congress, it appears today that we have a new president of the CLC. I would like to personally congratulate Hassan Yousef on assuming the presidency of that organization. I wish him well and I know he will do a wonderful job in carrying on the fine work done by previous presidents, including President Ken Georgetti.

Tomorrow we will be honouring Afghanistan War veterans on this Hill and they, in many respects, are workers as well. They are people who, through their occupation, put their health, lives and wellness on the line for Canadians every day. They pay for their commitment

sometimes with their injuries, illnesses and their lives, and it is not always physical. The psychological illnesses that are so well known through the trauma that our men and women in uniform are subjected to is something we will have a chance from coast to coast to honour tomorrow.

I would include our veterans, the heroes of our country, in the great pantheon of workers who ought to be covered and protected by this chamber, and every legislature across the country, to ensure that no workplace injury, illness or death is tolerable if we can prevent it.

There are a couple of people I would like to mention in British Columbia whose efforts over the years for occupational health and safety deserve mention in the House.

First, Jim Sinclair, president of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, has for decades championed the need for us to ensure that workers' health and safety on the job is protected.

Second, Tom Sigurdson, president of the British Columbia Building Trades, has also spent a lifetime both politically and in the labour movement to ensure that workers who get up in the morning and go to work have the right and expectation that at the end of their shifts they will come back to their homes and families.

This bill is symbolic of that as we seek to strengthen the health and protection of workers in the offshore oil industry.

Now, we do not have an offshore oil industry so much on the west coast, but we have a lot of workers off the coast of British Columbia. I hope the bill will serve as a template and reminder for all members of the House, including every member of Parliament from British Columbia, to ensure that we focus on the health and safety of those workers who go out on the Pacific Ocean and put their lives, health and safety at risk every day in order to feed their families and contribute to their communities and our economy.

We hear a lot about the needs of our economy and the need to ensure that we have a strong business climate. That is a particular priority of the government, which is laudable. However, we must also remember that no business and no economy runs without the labour and contributions of the workers who go to work every day and help to create the wealth, products and services that make those businesses profitable.

The New Democratic Party stands in contrast to the Conservatives because we believe that a balance between the interests of business and the interests of labour are not only an ethical and moral imperative, but the performance of our economy depends completely on achieving that right balance.

Government Orders

An economic approach that places the interests of business above and ignores the interests of workers is a policy that I believe will result in inefficient economic performance, and I think we are seeing that. Time and time again, I see examples where the government involves consultation of the business community. We saw that recently with the global market action plan when the Conservative government consulted over 400 stakeholders, not one of which represented a labour or work organization. It is this kind of lack of balance that is responsible for Canada's economy underperforming.

In 2015, Canadians will have an opportunity to select a different approach, an approach championed by the New Democratic Party which understands that a strong business sector, a strong labour sector and a strong government working together will create the most powerful and productive economy. That is what Canadians can look forward to in 2015.

• (1600)

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I could not resist but to get up for two reasons.

I thank my friend and colleague for his remarks, particularly talking about the tragic Cougar helicopter crash. A good friend and former air force colleague of mine, Tim Lanouette, was on that aircraft, which had a catastrophic failure. We have to ensure that lessons are learned from such incidents, as they are through Transport Safety Board investigations. The health and safety of our workers is important. I am glad the NDP sees that is at the heart of this bill.

I do have to comment on my hon. friend's final remarks about the global market action plan. He listed how many witnesses have been heard, and how many groups have been engaged. Would it not be fair to say that employers themselves, and we have heard from literally dozens of employers about how we need to grow new markets, also have the interest of their workers at heart?

By growing their businesses and becoming productive, it allows them to hire more, secure those jobs and hopefully raise the standard of living and salaries. Would it not be fair to say that consulting employers also addresses some of these concerns?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I would like to first offer my condolences to my hon. colleague on his experience of having lost a friend in that helicopter tragedy. It reminds us that no one in the House is untouched by the issue of workplace health and safety. I think we all have a family member, friend, relative or a member of our community who has been injured, made unwell or even tragically killed.

In terms of the second part of my friend's question, business is an important voice. It ought to be consulted. It plays a pivotal role in our economy and in all parts of the business of the House, but so does labour.

This reflects the fundamental difference between the view of my hon. colleague of the workings of the House and ours. I do not believe business can speak for workers anymore than I think workers can speak for business.

If I turned that logic around, I could say that we do not need to consult any business, that we should just talk to 400 labour

organizations, and that surely their interest in their employers and business would be sufficient to adequately reflect the interests of business.

I do not think that would be acceptable in the business community, and it ought not to be. Freezing out the voice of workers and labour in determining economic policies moving forward is equally misleading, misunderstood and misguided.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

In his speech he spoke about creating an independent stand-alone authority to handle offshore health and safety issues. Unfortunately the current government completely dismissed this recommendation.

Could my colleague tell us why this recommendation is so important to the NDP and how implementing such a recommendation could affect working conditions for our workers?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, the importance of having independent adjudicators and officers that help to negotiate what are often fields that have different interests is vital. That is no more important than in the case of occupational health and safety, where workers need an impartial arbiter on the issues. They need a place they can go that is trusted, where they can bring their concerns. If we are being honest in the House, this is often not possible within the workplace itself.

The Hon. Robert Wells, in the 2010 offshore helicopter safety inquiry, said this:

I believe that the recommendation which follows this explanatory note will be the most important in this entire Report....

I believe that the Safety Regulator should be separate and independent from all other components of offshore regulation and should stand alone, with safety being its only regulatory task....

I believe the Safety Regulator should be powerful, independent, knowledgeable, and equipped with expert advice, hence my following recommendations...

It is recommended that a new, independent, and standalone Safety Regulator be established to regulate safety in the...offshore [industry].

Hon. Robert Wells said that was the most important recommendation of the report. The government has not followed that advice, and I urge it to do so.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-213, an act respecting Lincoln Alexander Day.

Government Orders

[Translation]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Louis-Hébert, Quebec Bridge; the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, National Defence.

* * *

OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-5. This bill addresses long-standing gaps in occupational health and safety standards in Atlantic offshore oil and gas development.

The bill amends the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord in order to enshrine the occupational health and safety regime in law. This is an important measure that the NDP has long been calling for. This is a very important bill for workers who do dangerous work in Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore.

Not so long ago, these activities took place in shallow water close to shore. Now, we have oil rigs hundreds of kilometres from shore. It takes two to three hours to get to the rigs and back by helicopter. The work is done in extreme weather. It goes without saying that it is dangerous. These brave workers do this work to support themselves and their families. However, this sector also benefits Atlantic Canada's economy and the federal government.

As usual, bills like this come about after tragedy strikes. In this case, I am referring to the *Ocean Ranger* drilling platform, which sank off the shore of Newfoundland in 1982, taking 84 workers with it.

The royal commission that followed criticized the industry for problems with safety training and being lax with inspections. People believed that the government had implemented regulations to reduce risk. However, the offshore was never subject to provincial safety regulations.

There is a clear link between this tragedy and the one that occurred recently in Lac-Mégantic.

Prioritizing profit, the government let a company self-regulate. That decision led to tragedy, and the government betrayed the people's trust yet again.

Let us not forget the *Deepwater Horizon*. In 2010, neglect resulted in the death of 11 workers and the worst offshore oil spill in history. The Gulf of Mexico is still suffering the consequences of that incident.

In other words, we cannot pretend that will never happen again. The government must make laws. The NDP supports the federal-provincial collaboration that resulted in Bill C-5.

Bill C-5 is the outcome of over a decade of negotiation that began in 2001 between the federal government and the governments of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

However, I am disappointed that the Conservative government does not work with the provincial and territorial governments on other issues often enough. I am also disappointed that my colleagues opposite still seem to cling to a laissez-faire ideology that benefits corporations but puts our communities and the environment at risk.

Regulation in the offshore oil industry focuses on performance. In other words, the regulatory body drafts a plan and sets safety objectives, and companies decide how to go about achieving those objectives.

In contrast, the regulatory regime set out in Bill C-5 dictates both the standards and the means to achieve them. Compliance is mandatory. That is why I support this bill.

The New Democrats have been calling for this kind of power for years. However, the bill does not act on recommendation 29 of the Honourable Robert Wells' offshore helicopter safety inquiry. That inquiry was held after a helicopter crash that, as we all know, killed 17 workers.

● (1610)

The Wells report contained a number of recommendations, including the creation of an independent safety regulator. Bill C-5 does not provide for the creation of an independent and stand-alone safety regulator, nor does it provide for autonomous safety divisions within the petroleum boards.

It is disappointing that the Government of Canada did not act on this report even though Newfoundland, Justice Wells, the unions concerned, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour and many other stakeholders concerned about the offshore health and safety regime urged it to do so.

Thus, the NDP's efforts to ensure that the bill is reviewed in five years were rejected by the government at committee stage. An NDP federal government would work with the provinces to establish these measures in order to further strengthen the health and safety regime for Atlantic offshore workers.

Nevertheless, we will support Bill C-5 because it should have been passed a long time ago and it is an important victory for the labour movement. The NDP has been calling for a legislated offshore safety regime for years. Bill C-5 protects offshore workers at least as well as onshore workers. It also protects employees' right to refuse to work in dangerous conditions and to be protected from reprisals.

Government Orders

This bill is timely. In fact, Shell and BP are exploring along the Nova Scotia coast for the first time since the Gulf of Mexico spill in 2010. However, it is unfortunate that the federal government prevented the implementation of even better protection for worker safety by not creating a stand-alone safety regulator. The NDP is determined to work with the provinces to that end.

• (1615)

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague from Brome—Missisquoi for his excellent speech.

Does he think that there will be fewer offshore accidents or none at all as a result of this bill?

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. I want to point out that he does an excellent job in his riding.

To answer his question, I would say that this bill is a step in the right direction, but we could do even more to protect the public and the environment, which is very important. We proposed amendments. We want to pass this bill because it is a step in the right direction.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we will support this bill and that is very good. We are improving working conditions for offshore oil and gas workers.

However, there is something I want to understand. The government introduced a bill to improve occupational health and safety. However, the oil needs to be transported, put on trains and shipped all over the place for Canadians to be able to use it.

What does my colleague think about the government's approach to rail safety and the transportation of dangerous goods?

It is good to improve occupational health and safety conditions. However, what about our constituents who are in danger every day because of the dangerous goods being transported in rail cars and on tracks that this government has completely abandoned?

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île. She does fantastic work for her riding.

To prevent other catastrophes like the one that happened in Lac-Mégantic, the government must make the rules, not let companies do it. That applies to oil pipelines and trains because that is not their goal. As we have already pointed out, their goal is to make a profit. We want to make sure that people and the environment are protected. For all of those reasons, the government has to make the rules, not leave it up to the companies.

• (1620)

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, would the member for Brome—Missisquoi care to comment on the failure of the government to accept a recommendation and motion of an amendment to review our desire to have a stand-alone safety agency instead of the C-NLOPB? That was offered but refused. Do you know why the government would refuse such a review of this act and legislation to see how it was working?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I do not know, but possibly the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi might.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question, and I thank him for the amazing work he does in his riding.

I do not know what it is like to be in their shoes, but I think our friends opposite rejected a very reasonable amendment because they are not used to collaborating with the provinces and territories. Only by working together with the provinces will we succeed in providing adequate protection.

[English]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-5, an act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and other related acts. The bill has been a long time coming. It is a positive and necessary step forward to improve worker safety in the oil and gas industry in general.

My mind drifts back to the *Ocean Ranger* disaster. When I was a teenager living on South Mountain in the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, we did not have a TV, but my family was glued to the radio listening to reports of that tragedy on February 1984. There were 84 lives lost and no survivors. I know that the *Ocean Ranger* tragedy really prompted a hard look at how we regulate the oil and gas industry, especially offshore, but increasingly closer to shore.

For me, the *Ocean Ranger* tragedy was a dramatic coming of age event that really forged my first thoughts about what government does. It really helped a lot of Canadians make a connection between worker safety, the oil industry, and the importance of what government can do to make sure it protects workers and the public. This kind of tragedy cannot happen again.

I am glad we can support the bill and the work of the Newfoundland and Nova Scotia governments in putting this in place. I feel that the bill would go some way to improving safety for those who work in the oil industry and would make sure that we never again have a similar disaster.

The bill also shows what can be achieved when the federal and provincial governments work together to further the public good, something that happens all too infrequently under this government. In fact, I know that the government often refuses to talk to provincial governments about matters of such importance. However, in this case, it has been prompted to act.

I would like to expand my speech a little to comment on the attitudes of some of the companies involved in this industry, why this legislation may not go far enough, and why we need to improve or have even better regulation of the oil and gas industry in Canada in general.

Government Orders

Because I am from the west coast, representing the beautiful riding of Burnaby—Douglas, the examples I am going to use are from the west coast.

While Bill C-5 would increase safety in the oil and gas industry on the east coast, there is still much work to do on the west coast. As we know, two companies have applied to build two massive new pipelines through British Columbia. They are Enbridge and Kinder Morgan. These two companies plan to move almost two million barrels per day of bitumen-based crude oil by tanker through B.C. waters to foreign ports. This would mean approximately 600 new supertankers off the B.C. coast, with no extra protection.

The biggest oil port in the world is in Saudi Arabia. It moves about nine million barrels a day of oil. In combination, if Kitimat and Burnaby ports were to be expanded, we would be close to two million barrels a day of oil, which would move us within the top 10 exporting regions in the world, which is a sizeable expansion of our exports. In fact, although we are considering these new pipelines and an expansion of tanker traffic, the government is really going in the opposite direction of what it should be doing, and instead of improving safety measures on the west coast, it is putting British Columbians at risk.

For example, the Conservatives closed the Kitsilano Coast Guard station in February 2013, which was the busiest Coast Guard station in the country. The government also closed the Port of Vancouver monitoring centre, which provided eyes on port traffic. When we think we are going to be increasing oil tanker traffic to the extent the government seeks to do, this really seems to be going in the opposite direction.

Instead of closing Coast Guard bases, one would think we would be opening new ones, and instead of closing monitoring stations, one would think we would be expanding those facilities. Instead, we have gone in the opposite direction, making tanker traffic less safe on the B.C. coast rather than making it more safe. Actions such as closing these facilities cannot do anything but weaken safety on the west coast. It really seems absurd, considering that companies are proposing to move millions of barrels of oil by tanker.

These two pipeline projects are of course highly contentious and vehemently opposed by local communities, including the cities of Kitimat, Burnaby, and Vancouver and many other municipalities up and down the coast. Over 130 first nations have signed an accord against the two pipelines, citing safety as one of their main concerns.

• (1625)

It would appear that the only supporters of these pipelines are the Conservatives, who have stated on a number of occasions that they want to put in these pipelines, ram them through British Columbia.

The Liberal leader, on February 9, in the Calgary edition of *Metro*, stated:

I am...very interested in the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline that is making its way through. I certainly hope that we're going to be able to get that pipeline approved.

Here in the House, both the Liberals and the Conservatives are in overwhelming favour of these pipelines, where most British Columbians have huge concerns. Most of these concerns are related

to the safety issues, impacts on the environment, worker safety, and public safety in general.

New regulations are put in place because oftentimes the companies will try to get away with as much as they can, and it is up to governments to make sure that they are safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I certainly appreciate my fellow member from British Columbia, but I think he has gone off topic on pipelines, et cetera. I think he should be keeping in mind that this chamber is addressing the legislation that is before us, not other issues that may be quite important to the member but not necessarily pertinent to the issue here, so it is on relevance—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Rising on the same point of order, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I do think that Conservative members will have to tolerate speeches that are not on the point of the legislation when the Conservative majority has chosen to label the legislation with a title that does not match its content.

This bill is not about safeguarding our seas and skies, so if members choose to address the topic of safeguarding our seas, I do not think it can be called out of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): First of all, I recognize that the Standing Orders of this place do require that members address the matter that is before the House and that they keep their comments relevant to that. Having said that, as I have also said many times in the past, there is significant latitude allowed to members to talk about different aspects relating to the bill.

Finally, some of the commentary, if it relates to the substance of the matter, ranges into the issue of debate as opposed to a point of order.

The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your allowing me to continue my speech. I realize there is sensitivity on the other side of the House because of the Conservatives calling British Columbians radicals and trying to adjust legislation in any way that they can to force through their projects. However, disasters like the *Ocean Ranger* show us how important it is that we get these things right. I am afraid that the Conservatives have it wrong in terms of these pipelines.

Getting back to the companies, sometimes it is hard to see how these companies have the well-being of the public in mind. I will use another example from British Columbia.

In its submission to the National Energy Board, Kinder Morgan stated the following in its facilities application, volume 7, page 86, which I think gets right to the point:

Government Orders

Pipeline spills can have both positive and negative effects on local and regional economies, both in the short and long term. Spill response and clean-up creates business and employment opportunities for affected communities, regions, and clean-up service providers. This demand for services and personnel can also directly or indirectly affect businesses or resource-dependant livelihoods. The net overall effect

Again, this is a company that is talking about a positive effect when there is a spill.

—depends on the size and the extent of the spill, the associated demand for clean-up services and personnel, the capacity of local and regional businesses to meet this demand, and the willingness of local businesses and residents to pursue response opportunities...

It is unbelievable that we have an oil company putting forward a proposal for a new pipeline that goes on in its application to stress, to emphasize, that if there were a spill, a catastrophe, that it would be of net benefit to the local community. That is why we need strict regulation and strict oversight, and why we should not be rushing through with these projects just because a company sees an advantage if we have a disaster.

This outrageous statement by Kinder Morgan in its application has made it around the world and has made Canada a laughing stock. For example, this comment has made it to the *Rachel Maddow Show*, shown on MSNBC.

In defending the statement, Kinder Morgan stated that it is required by law to include such statements in its applications to the National Energy Board. It is saying that spills are regrettable, but when they happen, they are of positive benefit to the community, which is ridiculous. Then it is trying to backtrack and say that it is required by law by the NEB.

However, a spokesperson for the National Energy Board said that the company is misleading the public, and the National Energy Board instruction, "...does not say that we expect to see an assessment of the positive benefits of a potential spill. In this case (Kinder Morgan) has chosen to indicate that there will be economic benefits...of a spill or malfunction".

This is a very bizarre way to look at these projects. It is important to pass the legislation that we are passing here today because it keeps these companies in line and makes sure that public safety is at the forefront.

• (1630)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this bill is an example of what can be done when the government properly consults and works with the provinces. Could the member speak to this issue and perhaps mention how the NDP would approach legislation such as this going forward?

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and all the great work he does in the House.

As just one example of how the Conservatives are changing regulations in a negative way in this country, National Energy Board applications for expansions of facilities used to take two or three years. There was proper consultation with the public. They have changed that legislation to force the National Energy Board to squeeze all applications down to 15 months, and the National Energy Board, because of this, is no longer allowing oral hearings for these applications. People will no longer have a proper say on the

expansion of any kind of facility in Canada, whether it be a pipeline or other oil processing facility, which is the wrong way to go.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was not merely being facetious on the point of order earlier. I find it bordering on outrageous that a bill like Bill C-3 is called the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act. It is a deliberate attempt to mislead Canadians into thinking that this is an environmental law. The major environmental legislation of this country, and I speak as someone who practised environmental law, has been eliminated.

The "skies" part of this legislation deals with some administrative matters related to the investigation of air crashes. The "seas" part of this legislation deals with international treaties Canada has signed onto for some time for liability in the event of oil spills. Nothing about either is safeguarding anything.

I would ask my hon. colleague if he would comment on what a proper safeguarding our seas and skies act might contain.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, if the government was doing the correct thing, it would allow Canadians a proper say not just on expanding or building facilities but on a whole review of how it deals with the expanding oil and gas sectors in this country. The public, in general, is shut out, and of course, the government has to have meaningful consultations with first nations, which it is totally disregarding. In fact, this is causing all kinds of strife within British Columbia. It is very alarming, and in the long run, will not serve the country well.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have gotten used to the idea that our friends opposite want to deregulate everything, including the matter at hand. I would like to know why the Liberals did nothing to protect health and safety and the environment at offshore sites.

[English]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises a good point, and I thank him for all the great work he does in the House.

We have seen examples on both sides, whether the Conservatives are in government or the Liberals are in government, where they are willing to let businesses run wild and only act after there is some kind of tragedy. That is the wrong way to go. The way to get around this, of course, is to have proper reviews of legislation. If they are expanding a particular sector, they have to make sure it is done safely. Past governments have failed to do that, and that is why we need an NDP government, because it would do it right.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and pleasure to rise to debate Bill C-5.

Government Orders

I wish to thank my hon. colleague from St. John's East and my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for the tremendous work they have done in raising the issues with respect to this legislation and bringing the debate forward to the House of Commons.

As someone from the east coast, I am all too familiar with tragedy on our coastline, from ship disasters to the Ocean Ranger disaster off the coast of Newfoundland to the one a few years ago involving a helicopter crash just shy of St. John's where 17 people lost their lives.

This legislation attempts to ensure the safety and protection of not just the natural environment of the east coast but also the workers who work there. If it were done properly in collaboration with the provinces, businesses would get on board and it would be profitable for them.

Allow me to play a little dress-up now and read to the Conservative Party what the bill proposes to do.

Canada, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador agreed to join law reform negotiations in 2001 following the fatality off the shore of Nova Scotia in 1999. The provinces cannot enact the new law without federal agreement to make the same changes. Bill C-5 would provide regulatory boards with the operating authority to disclose relevant occupational and safety information to the public.

The bill would allocate overall responsibility for occupational health and safety to the operator. The employer would play an implementation and coordination role in this regard. Employees are to take all reasonable measures to comply with occupational health and safety measures. This one is a surprise and I do not know why the Conservatives would be against it. Bill C-5 would provide employees with the right to refuse to perform an activity that they have reasonable cause to believe is unsafe. The bill would afford employees protection from reprisals for reporting unsafe conditions.

Bill C-5 is timely legislation as Nova Scotians will see explorations off their coast by Shell and BP for the first time since the 2010 BP oil spill off the Gulf Coast.

Let me make a little sidebar comment.

On April 28, Canada's flags were lowered to half mast to pay homage to all of the people who went to work last year and died. Over 1,000 Canadians went to work and did not go home. Everybody in the House was mournful and very aware of the fact that workplace safety must be paramount in everyone's daily lives. We as members of Parliament and people we work with here are provided with security and the assurance that the House of Commons is safe and has good working conditions. If we notice something unsafe, we have the right to say something and have it corrected.

Why would the Conservatives oppose something that would enhance and protect workplace safety after standing so quietly and mourning the 1,000 Canadians who died in the workplace? We simply do not understand. Hopefully one day one of those Conservative members will explain to the House and to the working people of Canada and their families why they refused a clause of that nature.

Despite the federal government's refusal to implement recommendation 29 of the Wells inquiry, Bill C-5 is a positive and necessary improvement to the current offshore health and safety regime by placing safety practices in legislation.

New Democrats are proud to support Bill C-5. For several years now we have been calling for the regime to be strengthened.

New Democrats will continue to work with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador to further strengthen worker health and safety by working toward the creation of an independent, stand-alone safety regulator. The NDP also supports the collaborative efforts of the provincial and federal governments that produced Bill C-5. Unfortunately, the Conservative government does not collaborate often enough with the provincial and territorial governments to produce measures that would move our country forward.

We encourage the Conservatives to get into the game on this one and understand the importance of this legislation. We urge them to work with the provinces to get this done.

We would all like to see employment and growth in all sectors, including offshore or terrestrial areas.

We must do this with the highest standards of workplace safety and with the highest standards of environmental regulations.

I could not help but notice recently that the categorization of a certain whale off the west coast was changed. Why? It seems so timely before the possible approval of a pipeline in that area.

● (1640)

Why would someone change the classification of an endangered species? It could only be to make it more feasible or easier for an application to be processed.

I know these companies. They are not evil. They obviously want to make profits, grow their industry, and create jobs, and that is good, but at the same time, I am sure that a lot of these companies would like to have the highest of environment standards as well.

All that Canadians and those good folks in my former province of British Columbia are asking for is input. They want to be at the table. They want to have their voices heard honestly and fairly. They do not like to go to meetings to find a decision has already been made and they are just there for show, or in my case eye candy, but we will talk about that later.

The reality is that we cannot ignore the wishes and desires of the Canadian people. They are the ones who put us here. It is our job, and the regulator's job, to have proper and fair consultation and input with these folks before these major projects go on.

Government Orders

At the end of the day, I am not an expert on pilot whales, nor would I ever say I was, but I am very concerned about the environment. A lot of my friends work in the oil patch sector, and they are also concerned. They love what they do, and they make very good money at what they do. They leave their families for long, extended periods of time to work in the oil fields and then they come back. They also have children, and they are also concerned about the natural environment.

They are also concerned when a helicopter coming back from a rig crashes into the water. We found out that one of the aspects of the helicopter was that it did not have a 30-minute run-dry capacity. Recommendations came forward, but we still have not seen compliance on those yet. In fact, we may be purchasing helicopters for our military that may not have that capability.

I do not know why we would do this. We already had a tragedy, and in a small province like Newfoundland and Labrador, a tragedy of that nature affects everyone, and it affects all Canadians. These things do happen, but we can learn from those mistakes and make sure they do not happen again.

Government and the opposition should be working together to ensure the highest standards of safety and that protocols are in place to make sure that never happens again.

If it does happen again, who is ultimately responsible? Is it the company, is it the regulator, or is it the governments? It is probably all three, but explain that to a grieving widow or grieving children who have lost a loved one. Those are conversations we do not want to have.

If we can do it in advance, if we can move the safety issue forward in collaboration with the provinces and then again with industry, then we can exploit the resources we have on both coasts in a proper and environmentally friendly manner so that traditional fishing grounds, for example, can still be exploited, as well as other opportunities for future growth in our economy.

We cannot do that if we risk the environmental aspect of our terrestrial and aquatic systems. We simply cannot do that. We share the planet with the others.

In this I pay tribute to the late Farley Mowat, a great veteran, a great Canadian, and a great novelist who passed away today. He always said to all the politicians that we have to understand that although we are the human race, we share this planet with others. Those others do not have a voice, and those others—the whales, the birds, the fish, the trees, the plants—also share this planet with us as well. We need to ensure that just as importantly as we address workplace health and safety, we address these environmental issues properly.

We encourage the Conservatives to please get on board with Bill C-5 and pass it unanimously.

• (1645)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his speech, his compassion, and his commitment to the issue and to offshore workers. He managed to get a tremendous number of issues into one speech. I commend him for that as well, because it is a complicated matter.

I want to emphasize that the reason we are supporting this bill, despite the fact that it has some shortcomings, is that draft regulations governing offshore safety were in place for almost 20 years. Finally, after 10 years of negotiations and discussion, the bill came forward as a result of the hard work by the members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, and the two governments in co-operating on this bill. It is very important that it be passed with some urgency.

However, we did want to use the opportunity to talk about some of the shortcomings. One of them is the fact that it does not include the most important recommendation from the Honourable Robert Wells, which was to have a stand-alone safety regulator. He said this regulator should be powerful, independent, knowledgeable, and equipped with expert advice.

Can the member comment on the failure of the government to accept that a stand-alone regulator should be put in place?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. John's East for that important question, but it tends to be the typical Conservative response. The Conservatives do not like the idea of "completely independent from government". They will argue that it is an arm's-length agency, but they still want it to be within reach of them so that they control not only the budget but the messaging from that.

It is critical, from the Wells report and what my hon. colleague said, that we have an independent stand-alone person in this particular regard who is well financed and well equipped. Governments change all the time, but the fact is we want to ensure that this person has the tools to bring out the shortcomings to make everybody aware of what may happen and also make continued recommendations independent of the political world, to ensure the health and safety of all the people in this particular industry.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend this member for the wise words he has uttered in this place. He has served this Parliament for 17 years, and so he has an amassed wisdom of knowledge and also compassion. I have to underline his compassion. He talks to people in his riding constantly. He talks to them here. He is in constant contact with them and he has compassion for these people. When he talks about feeling the grief of someone who has lost a loved one, he knows what he is talking about because he spends time with them, looks at them eye to eye, and he is honest and compassionate in his approach.

Government Orders

The current government could learn quite a bit from this member, who is also the parliamentarian of the year, in terms of talking to Canadians and talking to the provinces. We know the record of the current government. Whether it be the inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women or the federal-provincial health accord, the Canadian health transfer, employment insurance reform, temporary foreign workers, Canada job grant, OAS, search and rescue, infrastructure, or police officer recruitment fund, we know that the Conservatives do not collaborate with the provinces and they do not talk to them face to face.

Can this member elaborate on how an NDP government would approach collaborating with the provinces?

• (1650)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, what a brilliant dissertation from my hon. colleague, a member of Parliament who will be here for many elections, I am sure.

It is very telling that the Prime Minister has never, in his eight years as Prime Minister, had a meeting with all the premiers at the same time. We have to ask ourselves why. However, I can assure members that the hon. leader of the NDP, I can almost guarantee, will have those meetings, not just on a group level but on individual levels to move this country in a forward and positive direction. That is what they are going to get when we form government in 2015.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. He is well informed and works hard in his riding. I think we can all learn from his work ethic.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-5. Oil and gas production is a hot topic in eastern Canada and eastern Quebec. People are increasingly aware that oil will be routed through eastern Canada and more oil deposits are going to be developed. The legislative framework needs to provide environmental protection and keep workers safe. We are not there yet.

This bill is a step in the right direction. That is why I am pleased to say that I will be supporting it at third reading. However, it does contain some significant flaws. I hope that over the coming years, months and even weeks, we will be able to resolve the problems that we are already anticipating.

I would like to point out several of those problems. We know that in eastern Quebec, the Gulf of St. Lawrence is a closed environment that is unlike any other. There is mirror legislation in Quebec, negotiated by the federal government and the Quebec government, that we need to pass so that Quebec will have its own offshore petroleum board. Quebec is still without a board because no decision has been made about the precise location of the border between Quebec and Newfoundland. It is a side issue, but I hope it will be resolved soon.

People in Quebec are closely following the agreements between the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board and the Nova Scotia board. The two provincial governments, as well as the federal government, will work diligently and give us ideas and solutions we can work with.

However, we have our doubts. The Gulf of St. Lawrence is shared by five provinces, half of Canadian provinces. It is always difficult to develop a legislative framework that five provinces can agree on.

We have seen that. My colleague raised that point recently in a question about the fact that the Prime Minister of Canada never meets with his provincial counterparts. In reality, he might be scared to meet with them about this legislative framework for the environment and worker safety in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Five provinces is not insignificant. However, this must be done. We must ensure that the gulf is protected.

Over the past 30 years, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board has done impressive work. However, we know that there are many shortcomings that the board must now address. The board has just released its strategic environmental assessment for the coming years. In its environmental strategy, this board also acknowledges these shortcomings where oil development in eastern Canada is concerned.

In his fall 2012 report, which was not released until spring 2013, the environment commissioner noted that there are insufficient oil spill response tools. Unfortunately, this was not addressed in the bill before us.

I want to come back to what these shortcomings raised by the environment commissioner mean. It is important that the people in my riding understand. For example, at paragraph 1.83 of his 2012 report, he says:

The Canadian Coast Guard has equipment for responding to oil spills from ships... the Coast Guard does not have a mandate to respond to spills from such facilities and so does not have the resources or equipment that might be needed to deal with a major spill. The Coast Guard does maintain a stockpile of dispersant, but, as noted earlier, current rules do not allow the use of this substance in Canadian waters.

• (1655)

We should think about this. According to the environment commissioner, the Coast Guard is not equipped to deal with spills, and what is more, use of dispersant is not even allowed in Canada. That is a rather major problem.

Something not mentioned in this report that I would like to point out is that the Gulf of St. Lawrence freezes in the winter. It is all ice. If there was a spill in the winter, we would be in a really difficult position and we would have a lot of trouble cleaning it up. We doubt the Coast Guard could clean up a spill in the wintertime.

Projects are going to be getting under way soon. There will be pipelines across Canada. There will be a pipeline all the way to Saint John, New Brunswick. There could be a terminal in Cacouna, Quebec. There is also a project coming to Belledune, where millions of barrels of oil will be shipped by rail every week. Right now, all of this is a concern for people in eastern Canada. What will happen if there is a spill?

Government Orders

Projects are moving forward quickly. When the environment commissioner tells us that there are shortcomings that have not been addressed, we need to think about whether the bill before us goes far enough to really allay the concerns of people in my region. Unfortunately, I do not think that most people in my region will be satisfied with Bill C-5 as it stands today. However, I think they will agree that it is a step in the right direction, at least in terms of worker safety.

I would like to come back to the issue of workers. The NDP finds it very hard to accept that the government prevented us from protecting workers even better through the creation of a stand-alone safety regulator. That was not done. In the bill today, we wanted to see safety measures that are independent of government. Hon. members will recall that half of the members of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, as well as the Nova Scotia board, are appointed by the federal government. This organization is very close to the federal government. It is not independent. We would like to see more independence, but unfortunately, that is not happening.

The NDP in Newfoundland and Labrador clearly said that it would like to see the powers of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board divided. It would like to see a separation of powers. The party has been calling for this for years and, unfortunately, the bill before us does not take this request into account.

The government would be well advised to negotiate better and take more time with its provincial partners to ensure that the legislative framework they negotiate is adequate. The government is unfortunately not taking the time to do that.

During the debates in committee here in Ottawa, the NDP proposed that this legislative framework be reviewed in five years. The United States tends to do that a lot, but it does not happen often enough in Canada. After a given amount of time, parliamentarians would automatically be required to make sure that the legislation is still adequate.

A number of witnesses in committee brought up the many flaws in the bill, so it would make even more sense to regularly review the legislation. We are talking about economic growth, and this would also help ensure that the offshore environment in eastern Canada is protected for future generations. I do not think that the legislative framework in front of us today goes far enough.

Once again, I want to point out that this bill is a step in the right direction. It is an important step, but it should be more extensive and exhaustive. Witnesses told us what we need to do, and we should listen to them.

● (1700)

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the same question. As I said, the bill is great because it improves working conditions for workers in the oil sector.

I would like to thank the government for recognizing the importance of occupational health and safety. However, as I said, the oil needs to be transported, put on trains and shipped across Canada so that people can use it.

What is the government's logic? For the first time since that major BP spill, there will be new drilling and exploration to increase Canada's oil extraction capabilities. Why not deal with our railways? Why put people in danger by transporting dangerous goods by rail? I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

Many people share that concern. Rail safety is another element, but one that is central to the bill before us. Oil will also be transported by sea and by rail. We know that the tremendous increase in the transportation of oil by rail in recent years has caused great concern, not to mention the Lac-Mégantic problem. There has been quite a significant increase in both western and eastern Canada. We definitely need a much more comprehensive regulatory regime for rail safety.

However, if we go back to the mandate of the Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia offshore petroleum boards, and also the soon to be established Quebec board, what we see is that oil will be transported by rail until it can eventually be transported by sea. The two are connected. We want a legislative framework that will protect people, the environment, the fisheries and future generations. We are not there yet. The government must adopt a legislative framework that is much more comprehensive than this one. Once again, we are headed in the right direction, but we have a long way to go.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one major surprise about the bill is that the government consulted the provinces. We know that the modus operandi of the Prime Minister and his entourage is not to consult the provinces, whether we are talking about the inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, the federal-provincial agreement on health care, the Canada health transfer, employment insurance reform, temporary foreign workers, the Canada job grant, old age security, and the list goes on.

Can my colleague describe the difference between the NDP and Conservative approaches when it comes to relations with the provinces and Canadians in general?

● (1705)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I will begin with relations with the provinces. As far as relations with Canadians are concerned, I will leave it up to them to use their vote in 2015 to express how they feel about the job the government has done over the past few years. I think that the Conservatives will not be happy with the result.

As we know, the Prime Minister of Canada does not meet with his provincial counterparts. This is a serious problem. The partnership that makes Canada a confederation seems to escape the government. Unfortunately, the consequence of that is that the provinces are always fighting with the federal government. That is no way to govern a country. All it does is create discord.

Adjournment Proceedings

In the bill, we want to see a legislative framework that reflects a partnership. For example, I would like the government to look closely at the strategic study by the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, which was released two days ago, and the study by Genivar in Quebec, released a few months ago. Their recommendations are quite interesting. Perhaps the government could learn a thing or two.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the recorded division be deferred until the end of the time provided for government orders on Monday next.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member has asked that the vote be deferred until Monday at the end of government order. It is so ordered.

The hon. member for Vancouver East is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations, and I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to point out that today is World Ovarian Cancer Day and that this week is Hunger Awareness Week.

Monday on TVA, in Quebec City, they asked the following question: Do you think that the Quebec Bridge will ever be completely repainted? Do you know the answer, Mr. Speaker? Over 2,148 people answered the question, and only 31% of them thought the bridge would be repainted someday.

The attitudes of the various parties involved in the Quebec Bridge file show a degree of cynicism on the part of the population, which those results reflect. Is the bridge destined never to be repainted, and will the matter have to go to court? I do not think so. It is always about money, about the budget. In a rich country, it all comes down to choices and priorities.

The Quebec Bridge will be celebrating its 100th anniversary just as Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary. This bridge, which will soon be 100 years old, is and will always be the world's longest cantilever bridge. Quebec should be and is proud of the bridge, and so should all Canadians. However, its sorry state has greatly tarnished its reputation. Not even the Eiffel Tower has received the accolades that have been bestowed on this bridge. It needs to be said.

For example, on May 23, 1987, Canadian and American engineers declared that it was an international historic civil engineering landmark. That is quite something. On January 24, 1996, the federal government designated it a national historic site. You would hope that with such designations, its maintenance would be routine. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

The federal government owned the bridge for 75 years, from 1918 to 1993. In 1993, it was sold to CN and two years later it was privatized. I would like to remind members that CN was a crown corporation at the time and was responsible for maintenance of the bridge, as it had been since 1923. We can see that CN and the Quebec Bridge have had a 91-year relationship, as of today. That is a long time.

Unfortunately, the bridge has been systematically neglected in recent years. For example, on November 22, 2005, auditor general Sheila Fraser said that Transport Canada needed to act to ensure the long-term viability of the Quebec Bridge. In 2009, the Delcan company said that repairs, which were planned for 1994 and 1995 and were not completed, should be started in the short term, otherwise the bridge could deteriorate. This was in 2009. Nothing was done. Some important parts have become corroded, and urgent and immediate action is necessary if we want to extend the lifespan of this historic bridge. That is what people were saying in 2009, and obviously nothing was done. Another report and nothing changes.

The government has a responsibility when it comes to public safety, heritage and tourism. It needs to accept its share of the responsibility.

● (1710)

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to respond to questions about the restoration of the Quebec Bridge.

The completion and restoration of the Quebec Bridge is important for Quebec, and we recognize that. It is also important for the transportation system and Canadian taxpayers.

Adjournment Proceedings

CN, as the owner of the bridge, is responsible for the restoration. Our government is taking steps to ensure that the restoration of the bridge is completed and that taxpayers are protected.

Our government recognizes that the Quebec Bridge is a vital transportation link that contributes to economic growth and long-term prosperity within the community, and indeed, within the region. The importance of the bridge is clearly illustrated by regular crossings by both freight and passenger trains, as the member would well know, as well as by thousands of cars and trucks. As a prominent landmark spanning the St. Lawrence, and as an historical symbol, the importance of the Quebec Bridge is truly unmistakable.

It is for these reasons that our government recognizes the importance of ensuring the completion of the restoration of the bridge.

To describe CN's important role in completing the restoration, I would like to reiterate once again that CN is the rightful owner of the bridge. In 1995, title of the Quebec Bridge was indeed transferred to CN. At the same time, CN received numerous other railway properties for a nominal fee.

Accepting ownership of the bridge meant that CN also assumed responsibility for its safety, maintenance, and operation. When CN assumed ownership of the bridge, the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec entered into an agreement with CN to support the railway in its obligation to complete a restoration of the bridge. The Government of Canada contributed \$6 million to that effort.

At the conclusion of this 10-year tripartite agreement, CN had not completed the painting, despite having spent the allocated resources. To see the restoration of the bridge completed, our government initiated legal action in 2006 against CN to ensure that it fulfilled its obligations and to protect taxpayers.

In this legal action, our government is seeking a court decision that will determine that CN has failed to meet its contractual obligations. In this way, our government is taking clear action to ensure that CN is held accountable for its obligations and that taxpayers' interests are protected. The trial is now under way.

I would like to conclude by noting that our government has given extensive support to public infrastructure since 2006. Economic action plan 2013 builds on our government's historic infrastructure investments made through the Building Canada plan of 2007, with \$70 billion for public infrastructure over the next decade. This includes the \$53 billion in the new Building Canada plan, the largest and longest federal infrastructure plan in our nation's history.

This program continues our government's focus on supporting projects that enhance economic growth, job creation, and productivity for all Canadians. Our government's commitment to the quality and level of Canada's infrastructure can be seen in our recent actions regarding the Quebec Bridge and our desire to protect taxpayers' interest and ensure the long-term viability of this key structure.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way just said that he wants to protect taxpayers' interests. The best way to do that is to start maintaining the bridge right now.

It is inevitable. The longer we wait, the more work will need to be done and the more it will cost, regardless of who is paying the bill. The responsible thing to do is not to wait until the trial ends. The responsible thing to do is to maintain the bridge and then send the bill to whoever loses the case. If the responsibility is shared, the bill should be shared.

There is a popular television series called *Game of Thrones* in which houses are battling for the iron throne. With the way the government is behaving in Canada today, that throne is looking pretty rusty. That is exactly what is happening.

Since the 1980s, the bridge has been left to deteriorate. It is a disaster. The bridge is part of Canadian heritage, something everyone is proud of, an image on a postcard. It must be maintained now.

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member opposite about the Quebec bridge, because we believe it is a vital piece of transportation infrastructure and a prominent landmark of significant historical importance.

CN received title of the Quebec bridge in 1995. At the same time, it was generously compensated through receiving ownership to numerous other railway properties. As owner of the bridge, CN also assumed responsibilities for the safety, the maintenance, the operation and the restoration of the bridge.

In addition to compensating CN through the transfer of properties, the government also committed an additional \$6 million to support CN in fulfilling its obligations for a major restoration of the bridge, which CN has failed to complete. In order to compel CN to fulfill its contractual obligations and that taxpayer dollars are not wasted, our government has taken CN to court.

The trial is now under way. Our view is that CN is responsible for completing the painting of the bridge to ensure its long-term viability.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about a question that I asked regarding Master Corporal Wolowidnyk and the fact that the government had flip-flopped on its agreement to halt his impending discharge from the forces.

The government offered the master corporal more time to transition to civilian life, but then suddenly pulled that option off the table. Family members of the corporal believed that once the media spotlight was off this member of the armed forces, who is suffering from PTSD and has attempted to take his life, by promising a slower transition to civilian life, the government's commitment would disappear.

Adjournment Proceedings

I asked a question about that flip-flop. I asked whether the government would start treating Master Corporal Wolowidnyk and service members like him with the respect and compassion they deserved.

This is a government that has made a practice of promoting an image of being a government that supports our troops, but when it comes to ill and injured soldiers, when it comes to soldiers who have passed away, that support has not been there. We have a number of incidents where families of former members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have passed away have had very disrespectful treatment.

For example, there was a soldier who had passed away and within a couple of weeks the soldier's spouse received a letter from the government asking for repayment of the rest of that month's pension because the soldier had passed away in the middle of the month and not at the end of it. That was a very hurtful letter, a reminder of the loss and the tragedy.

Another instance was this. Two years after a soldier passed away, the parents received a cheque for 1¢ for the final payout of benefits. That is a pretty painful reminder to a mother and father of the loss of their child.

There have been a number of these kinds of incidents, and the incident with Master Corporal Wolowidnyk is just one more in that series.

It is not just the soldiers who have fallen, who have taken their lives, or who are suffering from PTSD and are no longer with us that I am concerned about. This disrespect and lack of support has equally been for soldiers who are ill and injured.

I contend that the Conservative government has broken the sacred promise to provide troops with the support they deserve when they return from the operational theatre. This sacred promise was made almost a hundred years ago, during the First World War, by Prime Minister Borden.

● (1720)

[Translation]

This Conservative government has not kept that sacred promise made almost 100 years ago with regard to health care for military personnel.

[English]

The government has been failing to meet the demand for increased support for troops who were injured in Afghanistan. As we know, there were 40,000 troops deployed to Afghanistan; many of them came back injured and they deserve support for their injuries. However, adequate personnel were never hired to be able to support these groups. The current government has to rectify this situation and provide the support it promised.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member, although her question and the preamble to her question are fraught with a number of inaccuracies and do not recognize the record investments that our government has made in support of the brave men and women who have served and continue to serve our great nation.

First and foremost, I wish to thank Master Corporal Wolowidnyk for his service and his sacrifice. The government is committed to ensuring that our men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces benefit from the best possible health care available. The Canadian Armed Forces has made tremendous strides in recent years in supporting military personnel who suffer from deployment-related mental health conditions, and we are continuing to improve services. The Canadian Armed Forces' primary goal is always to return ill and injured personnel to duty and to provide them and their family with the care and support they need as they progress through recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

When, unfortunately, a member who is severely ill or injured can no longer serve, it is a priority for the Canadian Armed Forces to help facilitate that member's transition into civilian life. The transition support offered is tailored and flexible. An interdisciplinary transition team, including representatives from the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada, works with a transitioning Canadian Armed Forces member to build an individualized transitional plan. How long a transitioning member will be retained depends on the complexity of his or her transition needs, and it is based on criteria such as the severity of the illness or injury, psycho-social factors, and functional limitations resulting from the illness or injury.

When a member faces medical release, the Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans Affairs Canada, and other service partners offer services such as comprehensive rehabilitation, vocational services, health care, and mental health support. The transitioning member's progress against the transition plan is then jointly monitored by the Canadian Armed Forces member's nurse, case manager, and integrated personnel support centre staff. While I cannot address the specific case of Master Corporal Wolowidnyk, for privacy reasons, I can say that every effort is being made to ensure a positive transition for him.

The continued strength of the Canadian Armed Forces depends on its people. The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces and our government will continue to take care of military members and their families who so valiantly serve in our Canadian Armed Forces.

● (1725)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep saying they are doing enough, but soldiers, their families, and even the National Defence Ombudsman say they need to do a lot more. I trust the soldiers who say government is letting them down at the very moment it is needed the most.

The Conservatives have still not implemented the 36 recommendations of the 2009 national defence committee report on PTSD. They have not studied the report, and there is no evidence that there has been any analysis of that report to track its implementation.

Not long ago, more than 50% of Canadian Forces bases did not even have a psychiatrist, and 40% had neither a psychiatrist nor a psychologist. The families of these injured soldiers come to Ottawa to tell us that they are not getting the support they require. My recent access to information request uncovered the fact that Colonel McLean made a very strong case for the National Defence to hire uniformed clinical psychologists, and that was just not done.

Our military personnel deserve better. They deserve to be cared for after the front-line sacrifices they have made to preserve freedom in Canada.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite ought to do a little comparison of what the Liberals did in the 13-year period of darkness in terms of what they provided for our troops in comparison to what we have done since the election of our Conservative government under our current Prime Minister.

I would like to reiterate that we are committed to providing the best care to our CAF ill and injured personnel to help them through recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration. As I also stated earlier, if a member who is severely ill or injured can unfortunately no longer serve, it is a priority to facilitate his or her transition to civilian life.

Adjournment Proceedings

That said, we will continue to strive to improve care and support to military personnel suffering from deployment-related mental health conditions.

Again, I cannot address the specific case of Master Corporal Wolowidnyk for privacy reasons. I can assure members that every effort is being made to help him through a positive transition at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until Monday, May 12, 2014 at 11 a.m. pursuant to an order made Tuesday, May 6, 2014.

(The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.)

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