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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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•(1005)

[*English*]

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 three petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 56th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of committees of this House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 56th report later today.

* * *

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.), seconded by the member for Vancouver Quadra, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-512, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (confidence motion).

He said: Mr. Speaker, in an ongoing attempt to make this House more functional and democratic, I rise to introduce a bill to end the abuse of the convention of confidence in this House.

This bill would curb the excessive power of the Prime Minister to declare any vote a matter of confidence and to play chicken with legislation. It would also mean that budget and money bills are no longer confidence motions by default.

Only a motion that explicitly stated “that this House has no confidence in the government” would trigger a government to fall.

It would allow for a 14-day cooling-off period to re-establish confidence before Parliament would be dissolved. It would also mean the government would actually have to abide by its own fixed election date legislation.

I hope this would lead to greater government accountability, more empowered MPs and more co-operative governance.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 56th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier today, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, presented to the House on Monday, May 14, 2012, be concurred in.

I want to first say what an honour it is to rise again in this great chamber on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay. I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, particularly the excellent chair, the member for Sherbrooke, on the report regarding the changes to the Lobbying Act. This is work that was badly needed. On the whole, it was not too much of a partisan fight because we all, as parliamentarians, have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that the secret back doors for lobbyists are closed.

Routine Proceedings

Unfortunately, the issue of back-door lobbying does, however, remain a major problem with the government. I want to say at the beginning that we are not talking about honest lobbyists who meet with members of Parliament, because it is their job to begin and facilitate discussions on issues. There is nothing wrong with that. It is about the use of backroom access, the whole issue of who one knows in the PMO. These are issues we have to root out if there is going to be confidence that Parliament and government work for the people and not just for the insiders. Unfortunately, there have been numerous examples under the government, once again, where it is who one knows in the PMO.

In terms of what was studied under the Lobbying Act, there are a number of examples that are very concerning. I would like to raise a few of them as we look through the recommendations in the report. Certainly, one of the most disturbing is the role of Bruce Carson, who is now up on criminal charges for influence peddling. On June 27, 2012, Mr. Bruce Carson was charged by the RCMP on one count of influence peddling for his role in illegal lobbying through his friends in the Conservative Party.

The disturbing thing about Bruce Carson is that this is a man with a history of fraud convictions. This is a man who had already been convicted as a criminal and yet the Prime Minister invited him into his office as his most senior adviser. We see the ethics problems swirling around the Prime Minister and his judgment problems with supporting people like Patrick Brazeau, despite the numerous red flags that came up, telling us that Pamela Wallin's expense claims were perfectly acceptable, that he had personally seen them, and now she has had to resign in disgrace, as well as telling us that Mike Duffy showed real leadership in using the illegal cheque he received for \$90,000.

There are certainly questions about the judgment of the Prime Minister, but this goes back to the question of Bruce Carson, who was brought into the Prime Minister's Office as a senior adviser even though he had been convicted of fraud. Then Bruce Carson used that position as an insider to the Prime Minister to set up an illegal lobbying scheme with his young fiancée, Michele McPherson. Their scheme was that she was representing a clean water plan. We need clean water on reserves, but there is something very tawdry about the idea that these insiders were going to cash in on the need of desperately poor first nations for clean water.

Mr. Carson used his influence as an insider friend of the Prime Minister, so that when the former top chief adviser to the Prime Minister started making calls to people, they answered the calls. That is the difference between illegal lobbying versus legal lobbying, and it is one of the loopholes we tried to close. Under the Lobbying Act now, there is a certain threshold before people have to report their lobbying activities. I believe it is 25% of their time. If less than 25% of their time is spent lobbying, then they do not have to report it. When someone is an insider, all he or she needs to do is make a call. He or she does not have to spend 40 hours a week banging on doors, like all the run-of-the-mill lobbyists with their suitcases and PowerPoint presentations. All an insider has to do is make a call. That is the loophole we were trying to close.

Mr. Bruce Carson, convicted fraud artist and personal friend of the Prime Minister, got into the Prime Minister's Office. How did he get past the Privy Council or anybody around the Prime Minister? It

should have sounded alarm bells. Fraudsters should not be put in the position of having the ear of the Prime Minister. Then he stepped out. Once again, it is the issue of the revolving door, which we have tried to close as the lobbying loophole, so that people cannot just step outside and then call back in to their former pals inside. The closing of the revolving door is an important recommendation that we put forward to make sure that door stays closed, but it did not stay closed in the case of Bruce Carson.

● (1010)

He and his girlfriend tried to cash in through their friends in Indian Affairs. They were trying to call the former Indian Affairs minister to say, "Hey, we have a deal for you." What was at stake was over \$250 million, so they would have made a cool \$25 million. There is no real incentive for this illegal lobbyist to cough up.

This was another recommendation that the New Democrats brought forward and that the Conservatives opposed. We feel it is really important that the lobbying commissioner have the authority to be able to charge fines to those who do not follow the rules.

This is not to say that she is going to be going after all the honest lobbyists who are doing their run-of-the-mill jobs. It is about the illegal lobbyists. If they stand to make \$25 million, why would they come forward? This was all going to be done under the table. The Bruce Carson issue is certainly very disturbing.

Another really concerning issue in terms of insider influence in lobbying is Mr. Nigel Wright, the now-disgraced adviser to the Prime Minister. We have Bruce Carson, convicted fraud artist, key adviser to the Prime Minister. He was involved, and now he is up on influence peddling charges. Now we have Mr. Nigel Wright, the other key adviser to the Prime Minister who is involved in his own ethical problems with lobbying.

It is really important to look at this in terms of what has happened with Mr. Nigel Wright now. Mr. Nigel Wright is very well known in the business community, and that is perfectly fair. He is extremely close to Barrick Gold, extremely close to Barrick founder Peter Munk and a very close friend of Anthony Munk, his son.

Mr. Wright worked with Anthony Munk on Onex Corporation, the private equity investment giant. He took a leave of absence from that portfolio to go and work for the Prime Minister.

He was also on the board of directors of the Aurea Foundation, a charitable foundation set up by Peter Munk. Peter Munk has said that he would rank Nigel Wright among the mere handful of people he has met in whom he has complete trust. Have I also mentioned that he is the godfather to Anthony Munk's son? This guy is like family.

Routine Proceedings

The Conservatives were telling us that Nigel Wright is as straight as they come in terms of ethics and that we would never have to worry about Nigel Wright. In April 2012, our Prime Minister was down in South America. He was at the Summit of the Americas in Colombia in mid-April. Our Prime Minister, of course, likes to decide that he is a mini-Maggie Thatcher sometimes, so he stepped out at this conference and started shooting his mouth off about the Malvinas.

One has to wonder what the Prime Minister was thinking, going down to South America and deciding that he was going to start to wave Maggie Thatcher's legacy on the Falkland-Malvinas situation. He upset the Argentinians terribly. The Argentinians were very upset, and the president of Argentina asked herself what she was even doing there, listening to this guy. Then she left and started putting the screws to Canadian businesses in Argentina as a result of our Prime Minister, "Mr. I-know-everything-about-the-world, but I do not have any of the power to back it up".

One of the screws they started to put was to Barrick, which had a multi-billion-dollar gold operation that it was trying to get off the ground in Argentina. However, thanks to our Prime Minister and his decision to be a mini-Union Jack, Argentina was putting the screws to Barrick.

What did the Barrick people do? They called Nigel Wright. They called right into the Prime Minister's Office, because they knew Nigel Wright.

The Lobbying Act and the conflict of interest guidelines are really clear. No one is supposed to be able to just call their insider friends and say, "Fix it". Barrick called, not once, not twice, but three times. There was a meeting set up. There were phone calls made. Nigel Wright was the point person, the man who is the godfather to Peter Munk's grandson, the man whom Peter Munk said he trusts, out of a mere handful of people in whom he has complete trust.

Nigel Wright was playing this role of friend of the Munks, friend of Barrick Gold and insider to the Prime Minister. That is not the way ethical government is supposed to run. This is a government that promised government was not going to be run on who people know in the PMO.

If the alarm bells had gone off at that time, we might not be in the trouble we are in now with Mr. Wright, who may have written an illegal \$90,000 cheque that contravenes the Parliament of Canada Act.

•(1015)

Under the Parliament of Canada Act, anyone who offers compensation to a senator in a controversy before the Senate has committed an indictable offence. We are talking about a crime being committed out of the Prime Minister's Office.

We have a former criminal, Mr. Bruce Carson, who was in the Prime Minister's Office. We have Mr. Nigel Wright. Alarm bells should have been going off because of his role with Barrick and his insider influence in the Prime Minister's Office. Now we have found out that he has written a secret cheque to cover off a political scandal. Why was that cheque written? Senator Tkachuk said that the political scandal was hurting the Prime Minister, so once again Nigel Wright started to make calls. Instead of receiving the calls, he was

making the calls. He was making the calls to the Senate, which is completely inappropriate.

I have never had a lot of respect for what happens in the Senate, but the one thing I do respect is the separation of powers. However, we see that it is the Prime Minister's right hand calling the Senate to find out how they are going to shut down this problem. Senator Tkachuk dutifully changed an in camera report to protect Mike Duffy, and Nigel Wright cut the \$90,000 secret cheque.

We have been looking at the issue of gifts under the Lobbying Act and Conflict of Interest Act guidelines. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is actually saying that we need to drop the level of gifts to \$50. Of course, the Conservatives are hacking and coughing, because they are going to receive only \$50 gifts. What an outrage. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and the Commissioner of Lobbying have spoken about the issue of gifts and the influence gifts have.

When the Commissioner of Lobbying talks about gifts, I am sure she is thinking about box tickets to the Rogers Centre, like our friend from the St. Catharines area received, or perhaps an expensive bottle of wine. No one is thinking about \$90,000 even coming close to being a gift. In most places, \$90,000 would seem like a bribe. It is pretty staggering that the Conservatives would consider \$90,000 a gift.

Under the Lobbying Act and the Conflict of Interest Act, there are clear rules about accepting gifts. Gifts have to be reported. This is the other interesting thing that needs to be addressed. Mike Duffy pocketed the \$90,000 and apparently told the Senate, "Do not worry. I went to the bank and got a loan". If this were perfectly on the up and up, why would he not just say that he called his friend Nigel Wright? This man is a paragon of virtue. He wants to help the poor downtrodden trough-eaters. If one is on the streets and is one of those senators who has not been able to get the latest bottle of champagne, here is Nigel Wright who walks along and says, "Do not worry, because at my table, a place is set for you, and here is your \$90,000".

If Nigel Wright were doing that as his sense of public duty, the Conservatives would be crowing about it. These are not people who are quiet. No, that did not happen.

This is again an issue under the Lobbying and Conflict of Interest Acts, because gifts have to be reported. They pretended on the government side all last week that this was a gift and an attempt to be ethical. I thought I heard the word "heroic" used. That was some heroic gift. A \$90,000 secret payout was somehow heroic for the Conservatives. It was honourable, heroic and ethical, and now it is "disappointing".

If one reads the Conflict of Interest Act or the Lobbying Act, it is not disappointing to cut secret \$90,000 cheques; it is illegal. There are reasons it is illegal to pay off politicians. There is a reason rules are put in place.

Routine Proceedings

There are numerous other examples from the government showing why we need to clarify the Lobbying Act. This is interesting. We have studied the Lobbying Act and the Conflict of Interest guidelines, because there are actually two different sets of rules. There are the rules that cover the lobbyists, and those who are lobbied have a different set of rules.

The present Minister of Labour was in a little foofaraw of her own when a number of lobbyists started selling tickets for her fundraiser. These are major ethical issues. It is not as though lobbyists just showed up at her fundraiser, because that happens when a fundraiser is held and people buy tickets. Everyone cannot be screened. However, lobbyists were taking her tickets and selling them. Of course, these guys were in the cement industry, and they thought this was a good way to curry some favour with the minister.

• (1020)

The Commissioner of Lobbying found that these three lobbyists had breached the act. Karen Shepherd said that in the three cases, the lobbyists were in breach of the Lobbyists' Code of Conduct. She concluded that Bruce Rawson did not register lobbying activity on behalf of two clients. The commissioner found that Will Stewart and Mike McSweeney created an apparent conflict of interest by conducting fundraising activities for a federal cabinet minister whose department they were lobbying.

Our present minister is the one who was hiding in a sleeping bag. When they invited him out to a major weekend to discuss major deals, he went off and slept in his sleeping bag. I was thinking that he must have been the only guy who ever went to that mansion and brought a sleeping bag. However, that was his line. We were supposed to fall for that. He was in his sleeping bag. He was not being lobbied.

Karen Shepherd found that these guys were selling tickets to her political fundraiser. I am sorry. They cannot walk around saying, "Hi. We are friends of the minister. Will you give us 250 bucks?" and then go to the minister and say, "Listen. We sold all these tickets for you. Things should be cool. Let us sit down and maybe talk about our plan".

We have rules about that. Canadians are fed up with this kind of backroom buddy system that has fed and nurtured the Conservative Party for so long.

The interesting thing is that these two men were found to be in breach of the Lobbying Act, yet the minister was under the conflict of interest guidelines, and she was cleared.

If I am the lobbyist who sold tickets to her fundraiser and was smacked, I would think, "Wait a minute. I sold the tickets for her. She collected the money. She is in the clear. I am not. Why is that?" I am sure the folks back home are wondering the same thing. It is because we have different rules for ministers than we have for lobbyists. Under the rules for ministers, she did not personally benefit. They did not buy her a car; they paid for her political fundraising.

Now, the lobbying commissioner has been very clear. There are problems with this view, because there is the issue of apparent conflict of interest. The government likes just the words "conflict of interest".

The issue of apparent conflict of interest is very important. What we are talking about is that because she did not exactly personally gain from the fact that her riding association was raising money to get her re-elected, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner said that she did not know if she exactly received a benefit. That leaves me scratching my head. Politics is about political favours being paid at these fundraisers. The lobbying commissioner was really clear that the minister was receiving a benefit.

As New Democrats, we have asked the government to work with us to clear up this loophole. Let us ensure that we have a clear set of rules so that the issue of "apparent" is added to the guidelines for conflict of interest. Ministers would be responsible if people were selling tickets to their fundraisers. That is the issue.

We are not going to do "gotcha" moments and go back over their fundraising lists. Certain people do pay in. Sometimes it is rather sketchy. They were selling the tickets.

We see the difference in the government now. When it came in in 2005-2006, I remember the present foreign affairs minister saying that they were going to shine the light into the dark places. He said that one day when I was asking him questions about the infamous Bev Oda.

Now, Bev Oda crossed as many lines as one could cross. The very first line Bev Oda crossed was before she was the heritage minister. At that time, major reviews were going on before the CRTC. Some of her friends in the broadcast industry held a fundraiser for her in their office. They held the fundraiser. They sold the tickets, and she collected the money. The present Minister of Foreign Affairs made her give the money back. That was the Conservatives in 2006. He said that they were going to shine the light into the dark places.

Going forward to 2013, we do not ever hear about them shining lights anywhere anymore. In fact, they are systematically taking the light bulbs out of Ottawa and making this place as dark as it can be. Folks watching from back home are going to see that our Prime Minister has been skipping out, hiding out, refusing to answer questions on Nigel Wright. Nigel Wright has gone for the high jump. One has to run after him at four in the morning to try to get him while he is jogging to get an honest answer, and we still are not getting an answer.

They are taking the light bulbs out, when they promised to shine a light on the darkness in their activities. This is why the New Democrats have pushed the issue of lobbying and conflict of interest.

Routine Proceedings

•(1025)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Timmins—James Bay for the points he has just made. I was elected following that election of 2005-2006, and I recall the promises that were made. In fact, my own election occurred because there were questions raised about the previous member. We talked about honesty. We talked about shining that light in those places it needed to be. What I would call into question now are the activities of the government.

One of the questions the hon. member raised concerning Mr. Carson, Mr. Wright, Pamela Wallin, Duffy and Brazeau was with regard to the vetting of those particular individuals. If we are to shine a light on anything, we have to shine a light on the vetting process and the very clear errors in that process. We had a DUI case and previous assault involved. It is very clear that there was no honest vetting done. That calls into question the relationship between the PMO or the Prime Minister and these individuals. Why would they bypass it?

Here in the House we have had debate shut down 36 times. We cannot talk about issues in an upfront way and place before Canadians the concerns we have.

I would ask the member to comment on that lack of a vetting process.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, because what we are talking about here, as the stench of corruption is now coming right out of the Prime Minister's Office, is the incompetence around the Prime Minister and his fundamental lack of judgment.

On December 22, 2008, a day that will go down in infamy for really dumb pork-barrel decisions, the Prime Minister chose Pamela Wallin, Mike Duffy and Patrick Brazeau. At the time, it was known that both Pamela Wallin and Mike Duffy were not even eligible to sit in the Senate. That was no problem for the Prime Minister. He has never paid much attention to those things. The other red flag was Patrick Brazeau. There were numerous red flags around Patrick Brazeau, and they were raised. There were issues of misspending and sexual harassment. At the time, the Prime Minister's Office said that anyone who had a problem with Patrick Brazeau was a political ankle biter. The Conservatives stood by him and sent him out on the fundraising circuit. Then when they dumped him under the bus, they said they were disappointed.

Just two weeks ago, the Prime Minister stood and praised Mike Duffy for showing leadership. Here is a guy who refused to pay any money back and received a secret payout from the Prime Minister's Office, and they said that was leadership.

Just a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister stood in the House and said that he personally reviewed Pamela Wallin's expenses and would stand by them. I am very interested to see what her expenses say, because this is about the judgment of the Prime Minister.

I did not even get to Bruce Carson, the convicted fraud artist the Prime Minister hired.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for his speech because I believe that it is indeed important.

However, I was one of those people who campaigned in 2006 and were defeated because the Conservatives went around everywhere presenting themselves as the white knights of transparency, honesty and the right way of doing politics. When I look at what is happening now, it feels like déjà vu, except that we are dealing with a different political party. Before, it was the Liberals, now it is the Conservatives.

I am surprised by the silence on the benches around and behind the Prime Minister. For the most part, those people went into politics because they believed they would do things differently.

By doing nothing more than applauding for the Prime Minister, are they not complicit in his incompetence, to say the least?

•(1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I remember being in the House with my hon. colleague when she was on the Liberal side. At that time we were on the New Democrat side. We watched as the Conservatives made that promise to Canadians that they would clean up Ottawa, and many Canadians thought that they would, because certainly people were disgusted with the kind of corruption that had gone on under the Liberal watch over 13 years.

What we are seeing here is different. We are talking about corruption that is coming out directly from the Prime Minister's Office. They are not rogue operators, not people who are on the sidelines working for the party; these are people within the Prime Minister's Office. This is where the corruption is coming out.

I look at some of the Conservative backbenchers who still believe in ethics, and they are scratching their heads alongside the rest of Canada, wondering it how was that a Prime Minister who promised so clearly that he would clean up Ottawa allowed himself to be surrounded by the same kind of insiders and decided that he would start defending the perks and entitlements of people like Mike Duffy rather than defending the interests of the taxpayers.

I think most Canadians are certainly let down. If I were a Reform Party Conservative, I would be very let down at this point, because the stench and the corruption that is coming from the Prime Minister's Office needs to be answered. Hiding out in Peru or hiding over in Langevin Block on a Monday, not showing up for work and leaving the backbench of the Conservative Party to explain to their people why their government is now the most corrupt government in Canadian history is certainly a sad situation.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague from Timmins—James Bay has pointed out, this is also a question of judgment. It is a question of the judgment of the Prime Minister.

I think it is worth noting that while scandals are engulfing the government, another close ally to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance is also engulfed in his own scandals, and that is the mayor of Toronto.

Routine Proceedings

I am wondering if my hon. colleague could comment on whether it is important to draw that connection and remind Canadians that indeed the mayor and the Prime Minister are political allies and friends, and whether he may find it useful to remind Canadians that this is a question of judgment on the part of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that the first time Rob Ford got himself into trouble was on the issue of lobbying. He was misusing his office for lobbying for his pet project. It was amazing that the right-wing base attacked people who stood up on integrity, and said that it was no big deal that he was breaking the rules because he was Rob Ford. That is the right-wing mentality. As long as they break the rules it is okay. If anyone else breaks the rules, they will throw the book at them.

We are seeing a Prime Minister who closely allied himself with Rob Ford and Doug Ford. I have to say, being in this House, I am certainly glad I am taking on Mike Duffy right now and not Doug Ford, because otherwise I might be swimming with the fishes.

The issue is that these people have brought their office down to a level of degradation that is humiliating. There is a level of honour that a person has to have as a public official, regardless of political background. People have to have a sense of honour and code, that they are there to represent the people and not turn it into this barbaric circus of meanness and sideness and insider influence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised a very interesting point. He spoke about actual conflict of interest as opposed to apparent or perceived conflict of interest. What is odd is that conflict of interest itself is a perception. The very existence of the term is a matter of perception.

I can accept a very expensive gift, but even if I do not change my opinion about an issue there is a perception that the gift could influence me. The government does not seem to understand that. Even though we consider ourselves honest and capable of making decisions without being influenced by all the friends and other people who come to the office—that point was clearly made by my colleague—there is still that perception.

I would like him to comment further on the fact that it is about time the Conservatives understood that conflict of interest is real, even though they are telling us not to worry, there is no conflict of interest. As long as the perception remains, Canadians cannot trust the Conservatives.

• (1035)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, the issue of the apparent conflict of interest when we are dealing with public duties is very important. This is the standard the public expects us to have.

We will make mistakes. Everyone in this House will make mistakes over the years. Some of them will be issues of judgment. We cannot be on top of everything at all times. We have to take responsibility for our mistakes, number one, but we also have to understand that even if we think it is sort of okay, maybe it is loosey-goosey or maybe other people do it, the issue is the appearance. If there is an appearance of a conflict of interest, that is the standard that they are bound by.

We have seen with the government that it has set this limbo bar of ethic accountability and it keeps lowering it each time. As long as one of the government members can slip under that bar, it says that is the standard.

That is not the standard of ethics that this Prime Minister promised. He promised to set a clear standard, and that standard is, when there is an apparent conflict of interest, if it looks like it is wrong, it is wrong.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings on the motion at this time. Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, May 22, 2013, the debate is deemed adjourned.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting. The House will now continue with the remaining business under routine proceedings.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

ABORTION

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by more than 500 Canadian residents who are calling upon the House of Commons and Parliament to enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

NUCLEAR FUEL PROCESSING LICENCE

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, several months ago now, the members of my community in Davenport awoke to the news that for 50 years, there had been a nuclear processing facility operating in close proximity, in fact right across the road from many of my residents of my community, and no one knew of its existence. Whereas the licence for this nuclear facility clearly stated that they were to have pursued a comprehensive public engagement program with the community, this has never been done.

This petition calls on the government to reopen the licence so the community can have its due say and follow due course in this process.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of a number of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They are raising concerns about the closing of the Canadian Coast Guard Maritime Rescue sub-centre based in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, and asking that the centre be reopened, its staff reinstated and full services restored.

This is a matter that has long been outstanding. People have not forgotten the government has been downgrading search and rescue services across the country.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1283, 1286, 1288, 1291, 1294, 1297 and 1299.

[Text]

Question No. 1283—**Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

With regard to the government's Special Federal Representative on West Coast Infrastructure: (a) what are the terms of reference for the Special Representative's mandate; and (b) what is the Special Representative's budget?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the special federal representative's mandate can be found on the Privy Council Office's website at <http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/oic-ddc.asp?lang=eng&Page=secretariats&txtOICID=&txtFromDate=2013-03-15&txtToDate=2013-03-31&txtPrecis=Special+Federal+Representative&txtDepartment=&txtAct=&txtChapterNo=&txtChapterYear=&txtBillNo=&doComingIntoForce=&DoSearch=Search+%2F+List&viewattach=27554&blnDisplayFlg=1>.

With regard to (b), the special federal representative on west coast energy infrastructure will be paid a per diem within the range of \$1,200–\$1,400. Support will be provided by Natural Resources Canada using existing resources.

Question No. 1286—**Mr. Marc Garneau:**

With regard to the required public consultation process by Canada Post following the announcement of the possible closure of a post office location: (a) how many times has the public consultation process taken place with citizen input received and responded to by mail, email or attendance at a public meeting; and (b) on how many occasions, after public consultation, has action resulted in an outcome other than the closure of a location?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), since the implementation of the Canadian Postal Service Charter in September 2009, the public consultation process has taken place 33 times.

With regard to (b), after public consultation, action has resulted in an outcome other than the closure of a location on zero occasions.

Canada Post regularly reviews its network of post offices to address issues such as population, housing and business development, as well as the shopping patterns of Canadians and finding ways to improve operations, enhance the customer experience, remain competitive and provide relevant postal service for all Canadians.

As part of the public consultation process, Canada Post carefully reviews all the feedback received as well as surrounding postal network coverage before making a final decision. The ultimate goal is to ensure the service Canada Post is providing is appropriate and meets its customers' postal needs.

Question No. 1288—**Mr. Matthew Kellway:**

With regard to the section of the Economic Action Plan 2013 starting on page 106 entitled "Creating Jobs by Building Equipment for the Canadian Armed Forces in Canada" and the estimate quoted in this section from the February 2013 Jenkins report of \$49 billion in Industrial and Regional Benefits (IRB) obligations that foreign prime contractors are expected to accumulate as a result of defence procurements by 2027: (a) does the government concur with the estimate of \$49

billion in IRB obligations as a result of defence procurements by 2027; (b) if not, what is the government's estimate of IRB obligations as a result of defence procurements by 2027; (c) what specific defence procurements does the government's estimate of IRB obligations pertain to; (d) for each specific defence procurement included in the government's estimate of IRB obligations, what is the estimated dollar value (i) of the acquisition, (ii) of operation and maintenance, (iii) of total life-cycle costs, (iv) of the expected IRB obligations; and (e) what documents, reports, or other relevant information were provided by the government in the drafting of the February 2013 Jenkins report with regard to the planned acquisitions?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Government of Canada is committed to working with Canada's defence-related industries to better leverage military procurements in support of Canadian jobs, economic growth and the competitiveness of these industries, particularly in regard to innovation and technology development. With this objective in mind, it has received the Jenkins report, including the industrial and regional benefits, IRB, context described therein. It is currently examining the various recommendations and supporting analyses.

The Jenkins report provides an overview of potential economic opportunities related to planned major acquisitions under the Canada First defence strategy. In support of this analysis, the report estimated that \$49 billion in IRB obligations will accumulate by 2027.

As indicated in annex 3 of the Jenkins report, this estimate was calculated based on two key elements: data on planned major acquisitions and current IRB obligations, which was sourced from the Department of National Defence and Industry Canada, and assumptions that were based on observed patterns from past defence acquisitions projects.

As noted in the Jenkins report, the resulting estimate of \$49 billion could only be considered as a rough estimate given substantial uncertainty on the annual rate of IRB fulfillment over the planning period of 2012-2027.

The validity of the estimate, and its interpretation, must therefore be understood within that context. At this time, and subject to the context, purposes and assumptions of the Jenkins report, this estimate is deemed to be reasonable.

With regard to (b), IRB obligations are part of contractual commitments, and for projects already under contract, specific obligations are listed on the IRB website at http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/042.nsf/eng/h_00017.html.

As IRB obligations apply only to contract values rather than project values and will form part of any negotiated contracts, the government cannot determine IRB obligations that will apply to planned procurements. Therefore, the government cannot provide an estimate of IRB obligations that will be accumulated by 2027.

With regard to (c), as per the response to part (b), the government cannot provide an estimate of IRB obligations that will be accumulated by 2027.

With regard to (d), as per the response to part (b), the government cannot provide an estimate of IRB obligations that will be accumulated by 2027.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (e), two lists related to planned acquisitions were provided: Capital Equipment—Future Procurement—Beyond 2016, and Capital Equipment—Potential Contract Awards—Short Term, 2013-2015 estimated.

These lists were prepared by the Department of National Defence and were valid as of October 2012.

Question No. 1291—**Ms. Megan Leslie:**

With regard to fossil fuels: (a) who has overall responsibility within the government for monitoring and reporting on Canada's progress against the G-20 commitment to rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies; and (b) what steps has the government taken to ensure that support of the fossil fuel sector is not contradicting or impeding policy objectives related to the environment and sustainable development?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Department of Finance has overall responsibility within the government for monitoring and reporting on Canada's progress against the G20 commitment to rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

With regard to (b), first and foremost, not only has the government never introduced any tax incentive favouring the oil and gas sector, but it has also formally committed to rationalize and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies along with other G20 countries.

In support of that commitment, the government announced in 2007 and 2011 the phase-out of all tax preferences for oil sands producers relative to the conventional oil and gas sector. Indeed, due to the government's action, the Income Tax Act does not include any tax preference specific to oil sands producers. As part of Economic Action Plan 2012, the government continued Canada's efforts to meet our G20 commitment by phasing out the Atlantic investment tax credit for the oil and gas and mining sectors.

Moreover, the oil and gas sector faces the exact same general corporate income tax rate as all other sectors of the economy. Each year, the oil and gas sector pays billions of dollars in taxes, tax revenue used by governments to pay for health care and other social programs that Canadian families depend on. Furthermore, the oil and gas sector plays an important role in our economy, providing job opportunities for Canadians in communities across the country. The government will continually look for ways to further support global environmental commitments and eliminate inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

Beyond the government's recent steps outlined above to remove fossil fuel subsidies available in the oil and gas industry, it is also taking action through the tax system to encourage clean energy investments. Principally, the government has extended and expanded the scope of the accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation equipment in recent years.

For instance, in 2011 the government expanded the incentive to include equipment that generates clean electricity using waste heat, while in 2012 it expanded the incentive to include a broader range of bioenergy equipment. Building on these measures, Economic Action Plan 2013 further expands eligibility for the incentive by including a broader range of biogas production equipment and equipment used to treat gases from waste.

Question No. 1294—**Mr. Ryan Cleary:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans: (a) how many commercial salmon licence holders remain in Newfoundland and Labrador; (b) when was the last time a buyout for commercial salmon licenses was instituted; (c) what has been the total cost to date of commercial salmon licence buyouts for the East coast of Canada by province; (d) is the department considering another buyout; and (e) what is the likelihood that the commercial salmon fishery will reopen?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), there are 57 licence holders remaining in Newfoundland and Labrador whose licences were never retired.

With regard to (b), the last commercial salmon licence retirement programs were announced in 1998, for northern Labrador and Quebec.

With regard to (c), the federal government offered a series of salmon licence retirement programs for Atlantic Canada and Quebec dating back to the early 1980s. The federal government spent \$53 million to retire commercial Atlantic salmon licences. The costs were as follows: Newfoundland and Labrador—\$41,700,000; Nova Scotia—\$3,500,000; Prince Edward Island—\$52,000; New Brunswick—\$4,700,000; and Quebec—\$2,900,000.

With regard to (d), there are no further salmon licence retirement programs planned for any part of Atlantic Canada or Quebec.

With regard to (e), no opening of the commercial salmon fishery is planned at this time.

Question No. 1297—**Mr. Hoang Mai:**

With regard to new bridges over the St. Lawrence river: (a) what is the specific purpose of the \$14 million in table 3.3.2 of Budget 2013 and what is the breakdown of the costs; and (b) with respect to the \$124.9 million to build a bridge-causeway between Nun's Island and the Island of Montreal in Chapter 3.3 of Budget 2013, what is the breakdown of the cost?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the \$14 million identified in table 3.3.2 of budget 2013 reflects accrual costs of the temporary bridge-causeway to replace the Nuns' Island Bridge. The total costs of the bridge-causeway construction, \$124.9 million, will be amortized linearly over the expected lifespan of the bridge-causeway.

With regard to (b), the preliminary breakdown of the \$124.9 million to build the temporary bridge-causeway cannot be shared at this time as the breakdown reflects the value of contracts to be awarded through public tenders. Sharing the breakdown at this point would jeopardize the upcoming competitive processes.

*Government Orders***Question No. 1299—Mr. Scott Simms:**

With respect to Canada's National Parks: (a) what is each park's specific set of policies on the use of snowmobiles and other motorised off-road vehicles within the park's boundaries; (b) for what reason is each policy in place; and (c) what studies have been conducted on any economic, environmental, cultural, or other effects of these vehicles within the parks, when used both within and outside the bounds of the policies?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) and (b), use of snowmobiles and other motorized off-road vehicles is restricted in Canada's national parks, except in specific circumstances where use associated with law enforcement, public safety or other administrative activities may be permitted, where use is associated with traditional aboriginal harvesting activities, where there are specific provisions permitting use within a park establishment agreement, and where limited area-specific recreational use of snowmobiles may be permitted.

Use of snowmobiles and other motorized off-road vehicles is subject to the provisions of the National Parks Highway Traffic Regulations and must be conducted in accordance with legislative requirements outlined in the Canada National Parks Act and the Species at Risk Act. Additionally, use must adhere to direction within the corresponding national park's management plan, including zoning.

With regard to (c), all use of snowmobiles and other motorized off-road vehicles within national parks is conducted in accordance with national park legislation, regulations and operational policies where, if permitted, such use is deemed to not adversely affect wildlife, vegetation or terrain. Prior to permission being granted for such use, background studies are undertaken to assess wildlife, ecosystem and cultural resources considerations to ensure that there are no adverse environmental or cultural effects associated with the proposed activity.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1278, 1295 and 1298 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

[Text]

Question No. 1278—Hon. Ralph Goodale:

With regard to infrastructure in Labrador: (a) has the federal government at any time since January 1, 2009, received from the government of Newfoundland and Labrador any proposals, requests, or other documentation in support of funding for the following projects or proposals, namely (i) Nain Airport, (ii) Port Hope Simpson Airport, (iii) other airports or airstrips in Labrador, specifying which airports or airstrips, (iv) a new ferry or ferries for the Strait of Belle Isle ferry service, (v) a feasibility study concerning the construction of a highway from central to northern Labrador; (b) when did the federal government receive any proposals, requests or documentation referred to in (a); (c) which department or departments have received any proposals, requests or documentation referred to in (a); (d) what federal funding share is the provincial government seeking on the part of the federal government in respect of the projects or proposals enumerated in (a); and (e) what has been the

response of the relevant federal government department to each of the projects or proposals enumerated in (a)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1295—Mr. Ryan Cleary:

With regard to Transport Canada and Marine Atlantic Incorporated: (a) by how much has the price of a round-trip ferry crossing, both personal and commercial, increased since 1986 for both the Argentina to North Sydney and the Port-aux-Basques to North Sydney runs; (b) what were the increases on a yearly basis from 1986 to 2013 for personal and commercial crossings for both the Argentina to North Sydney and the Port-aux-Basques to North Sydney runs; (c) what other fees have been added to both commercial and personal ferry crossing fares between 1986 and 2013; and (d) how many days were the new vessels the MV Blue Puttees and MV Highlander docked due to weather during the 2011-2012 season?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1298—Mr. Brian Masse:

With regard to the automotive and manufacturing industry in Canada, what has the government done to attract new automotive and manufacturing investments since 2006?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

TECHNICAL TAX AMENDMENTS ACT, 2012

The House resumed from May 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act and related legislation, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking at third reading on Bill C-48. It is largely a housekeeping bill that implements technical matters that have been introduced previously. Most of the measures that are contained in this bill were recommended by the Auditor General.

The Liberal Party supports Bill C-48 and we would like to see it passed quickly. The overarching theme of the bill is the need for clarity and certainty in the administration of Canadian law. That is certainly something that the Liberals support and we see it as an important function of the government in its service to Canadians.

I would like to spend a bit of time speaking about how this bill and taxes, since the bill is about tax changes, are serving Canadians' needs. I would like to make some comments from my perspective, not only as the member of Parliament for Vancouver Quadra, but also as a former businesswoman from a business that became international in its scope.

Government Orders

As a business person for 25 years, my understanding of one of the key imperatives of service is to continually improve the quality of service to those we wish to serve. In business shorthand, we could say that people are looking for faster, cheaper and better service. Who would not want that? Who would not want the goods and services that are provided to them to be provided more quickly, in a less costly manner and at a higher standard of quality?

Faster, cheaper and better are what people expect. Are we getting that from the Conservative government with respect to taxes and tax changes? Certainly, this bill is not an example of faster service. In fact, this is the third time that some elements of this technical tax bill have been introduced since 2001. It has taken far too long to bring this bill to the House. Some of these tax measures have languished in draft form for nearly a decade. For example, the provisions in part 3 of this bill, which deal primarily with reorganizations of and distributions from foreign affiliates, were first released on February 27, 2004 and we are now in May 2013.

What happens when tax measures take such a long time? Many of these measures were introduced by the Conservative government a number of years ago. These measures were introduced with a great deal of fanfare and then never actually brought into force because of delays. It does bring the question: Why wait so many years and then lump everything together in this 955-page bill, rather than give the kind of certainty that citizens of this country deserve and expect?

In fact, in meeting with the small business community as the critic for small business, I have heard feedback about the kinds of frustrations and costs that are incurred through not having had this bill earlier. There is a great deal of confusion when the government announces a certain tax change but does not actually take the steps to put forward the bill to make those changes law. The kinds of costs that small businesses will incur in having accounting and professional and legal consultations to help them understand the implications of these measures that have not actually been made into law are preventable. The bill could prevent confusion and expense for the business community. It has actually been a form of red tape on our small businesses that it has taken so long for the bill to be put forward.

●(1040)

Now that the bill has been put forward, I want to comment on the government's ability to apply its laws regarding taxes and to serve the needs of Canadians and small businesses with respect to the vast complexity of the tax regime in our country.

The Conservative government tends to put forward literally dozens of boutique tax measures that are not supported as part of a clear, simple and effective tax system but more as tax measures that are clearly designed to attract votes from one segment of the population or another. As a result, we have a much more complex tax system than we had before.

Does the Canada Revenue Agency have the resources to assist people in finding their way back to the quality improvement mantra of having faster, cheaper and better service? Is the government providing that to Canadians who are struggling with tax complexities? My answer would be no.

●(1045)

[*Translation*]

The overarching theme of the debate on Bill C-48 is the need for clarity and certainty in the administration of Canadian tax laws. However, the government's ability to respond to this major need is threatened by the Conservatives' cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency.

The Conservatives targeted the CRA in budget 2012 by reducing the agency's funding by \$253 million per year. In addition, budget 2013 provides for further cuts to the agency, amounting to \$61 million per year. The cumulative cuts to the CRA therefore total \$314 million annually.

Even before the cuts were implemented, the CRA had trouble issuing advance tax rulings in a timely manner. The government's goal is to inform taxpayers of advance tax rulings within 60 days. This may be an acceptable timeframe, but the agency now needs 106 days, on average, to provide such rulings to taxpayers.

[*English*]

We are seeing that the cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency are making its service far slower and certainly not faster, as we would expect in the business community. The business community expects an organization to continue to improve its service, so its service could be faster, cheaper and better. If the government had been providing service in private enterprise, it would have failed and gone out of business long ago because of these unfortunate reversals in the speed and effectiveness of service. We have now gone from 60 days to 106 days for serving customers' information needs with respect to changes in tax laws.

I had meetings with former Yukon member of Parliament Larry Bagnell, who has been advocating for many years for services to citizens in Yukon. The one and only CRA office for Yukon used to be in Whitehorse, but that has been closed, so people living in Yukon no longer have a single agent to talk to in person when filing or asking questions about their taxes. How frustrating for people. That certainly is not better service; it is in fact far worse service.

People can go online to try to connect with this huge agency and get service, but many people in Yukon do not have access to the equipment or the high broadband Internet to do that. Many would have to drive for many hours to get to a place where they could engage the CRA to help serve their information needs.

I appreciate the work that our former colleague and MP, Larry Bagnell, has done on behalf of constituents in the Yukon. Even now that he is no longer a member of Parliament, he has become a voice for their needs.

Government Orders

I am not sure where the current member for Yukon stands with respect to the closure of the CRA office in Whitehorse. I will not comment further on that. However, this does have huge implications for people, especially for low-income, less educated people living in remote communities and for seniors, all of whom used to use this business office on a regular basis.

We have a pattern here of service not being faster but slower, and it certainly is not better. Is it cheaper?

Taxes are important as part of a sustainable society. Canadians by and large accept that taxes are positive because they help to purchase public goods that we need for our society, whether those goods are environmental safeguards, programs that create equality of opportunity for Canadians, or tax regimes that reduce income inequality. "Taxes" is not a four-letter word to most Canadians.

However, what Canadians expect and deserve is honesty from their government about their tax regime. They expect competence, transparency and honesty, but since 2010 there have been new, hidden tax increases that exceed the new reductions each and every year.

That is not what the current government has been promoting in terms of its image to Canadians. The Conservatives have not been honest and forthcoming and transparent about the fact that they have been increasing taxes on Canadians each and every year since 2010, and these are not minor tax increases. In fact, if I go back to an analysis of these tax increases, we would see that in budget 2010 there was a set of tax increases. There was a set of tax decreases, of course, but the net impact would be to increase taxes by \$729 million over five years from the measures announced in budget 2010. That is almost \$1 billion in tax increases.

Did the Prime Minister go forward and say this is how they are going to pay for goods and services, by increasing our taxes? I did not hear that from the Prime Minister, nor did I hear that in the budget speech from the Minister of Finance.

As well, there are impacts on small businesses in each and every one of these years in terms of increased taxes, meaning less money in the pockets of the men and women in small business who are the engines of job creation in our economy.

Let us look at budget 2011. In budget 2011, again there are hits on small business. In fact, the individual pension plan program is seeing, over five years, \$75 million in reduced funds in the pockets of people who are utilizing that tax-planning tool. However, the key here is that the bottom line in budget 2011 is \$2.168 billion in net tax increases over five years. It is over \$2 billion.

What about budget 2012? Here we saw a huge undermining of the well-being of the small-business community in terms of extra taxes on employees' profit-sharing plans and over \$1 billion less in support for the research and investment tax credit, the SR and ED tax credit regime in this country. That is more than \$1 billion taken out of the support that the government was providing for good public policy reasons.

Why should government support scientific research and development? It is because scientific research and development provides, by and large, a public good. People in small business

cannot afford to invest in research that soon becomes available to all of their competitors without having some support through this tax credit. That is how it is for the public good. The government supports something that becomes a benefit for all of society, and that is much of what happens with small business research and development.

● (1050)

However, that tax credit was reduced by over \$1 billion for a net increase in taxes, as announced in the budget, of \$3.547 billion. It is over \$3 billion more out of the pockets of Canadians and small businesses, thanks to budget 2012.

In budget 2013, once again we have tax increases that exceed the tax reductions, this time to the tune of \$3.3 billion. This is a big-tax government.

The challenge Canadians have in even understanding what the government is doing is that there is no transparency and no honesty here. There are hidden tax increases that now have a cumulative impact of almost \$10 billion over the period covered by these announcements. It is cumulatively \$10 billion dollars out of the pockets of Canadians and small businesses.

Who knew that? This is something the government has kept hidden. Is that cheaper service? No, government is actually costing taxpayers almost \$10 billion more cumulatively, without actually revealing that it is doing that.

Why has the Conservative government felt a need to increase taxes with these incremental net increases of \$10 billion, as I have laid out and as expressed in budgets 2010 to 2013? Could it be that since the Conservatives took office, annual federal spending under the Conservative government has risen to \$280 billion, which is an increase of more than 30%? That is certainly not providing faster, cheaper and better service. It is very much more expensive service.

This is a government that inherited a \$13 billion budget surplus in early 2006, but within a matter of a few years we were running deficits, and the government continues to run an annual deficit this year of \$26 billion. There may be a change when the budget is balanced, but it may take a long time.

These tax increases hurt middle-class Canadians and small businesses. We have spoken at large and at length about the impact of the increase in tariffs on Canadians, which is driving them across the border to get goods cheaper. We have talked about how tax increases are hurting our tourism industry, an industry that used to be rated seventh among countries for international visits but that has dropped to 18th in international visits. This is hurting our tourism industry. We now have a \$14 billion tourism deficit.

There are many comments I could make about how these hidden tax increases have hurt our economy and our small businesses, but I will give one last indication of the impact this government has had on small business.

Government Orders

In the last five years of the previous Liberal government, small and medium-sized businesses created over 460,000 jobs, but in the first five years under the Conservatives, the overall net number of jobs created by small and medium enterprises was negative. The number actually fell by 10,000 jobs.

Therefore, we do not have faster, we do not have cheaper, and we certainly do not have better service from the Conservative government. In fact, the spending choices the government is making with these tax increases are not supported by Canadians. Economic action plan advertising alone has cost \$113 million, and I know that Canadians would rather that money were used for student summer jobs. Every second these ads for the economic action plan air during Hockey Night in Canada is another second that another young Canadian does not get the support that he or she previously enjoyed to have a summer job. Every second we are losing a job for youth.

I am happy to answer questions on how I see the government's spending choices as being part of this failure to provide faster, cheaper and better service to those the government was elected to serve, the Canadian people.

• (1055)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I take my role in the House very seriously. Earlier today, in discussion of the concurrence motion, I attempted to make humorous comments about the very serious situation facing the Ford administration in Toronto. That is simply not acceptable.

I would like to retract those comments and apologize for making any unsubstantiated comments or potentially leaving a false impression regarding the very serious issues that are facing the City of Toronto and the Ford administration.

• (1100)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the member's comments on how the government's tax regime is affecting tourism.

We have dropped from seventh or eighth place in the world as most visited by international visitors to 18th. We understand the cutbacks to the Canadian Tourism Commission have forced it to cut advertising for tourism in the United States, which is a major drawing market for us in Atlantic Canada. It will impact our tourism industry, our seasonal workers and our economy.

Could the member elaborate further on how some of those hidden taxes by the government have impacted tourism? I know airport fees is one. What others might the member elaborate on?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, this is certainly an example of worse service by the government.

Tourism employees and owners across the country, including in my riding of Vancouver Quadra, are suffering from mismanagement by the government. As the member mentioned, there are high taxes on airports that are driving consumers to shop for flights in the United States, including from Vancouver Quadra. In Vancouver, Bellingham and Seattle are seen as frequent choices of where to fly from, rather than Vancouver airport.

This has cost the Canadian economy 8,900 local jobs, \$500 million in wages, over \$1 billion in GDP and more than \$2 billion in economic output. That is just the high taxes on airports.

Surprisingly, we no longer provide a GST rebate to tourist visitors to Canada. Therefore, that makes us a higher-cost destination in another way. That is also deterring international visitors from coming to Canada.

Why is the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism not defending this industry, which has been so mismanaged by the Conservative government?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that one of the driving forces in job creation is small businesses. Small businesses have the greatest potential in the generation of jobs and new employment.

My question for my colleague is in regard to performance. We need to recognize that the Conservatives have failed in supporting small business, especially if we contrast that to the days of Paul Martin or Jean Chrétien when small business was a priority and its growth was encouraged, which led to the creation of tens of thousands of jobs.

Things have changed under the Conservative-Reform government. Could my colleague provide some comment on just how things have changed?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's advocacy on behalf of small businesses in his community. Small businesses are a huge driver of the economy and the success of new Canadians who have come to Canada.

I want to go back to my comments about taxes and if taxes are competently applied to the public good. Canadians, by and large, support contributing their share. At the same time, there are occasions when taxes need to be reduced.

The small business tax rate, for example, under the Conservative government, has been reduced by only 1%, and a huge part of that 1% reduction is being clawed back through a small dividend tax credit change in the 2013 budget. Some \$2.34 billion will come out of small business pockets due to this dividend tax credit change over the course of five years.

How does that help small business owners reinvest in their companies, grow their companies and bring them up to technological advances? They will have \$2.34 billion less to do that. This is in the context of a decrease in the large corporate tax rate from 22% down to 15%, at the cost of \$60 billion, yet small business owners saw only a 1% reduction, which was then pretty much clawed back.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her contribution to this debate and ask her a very simple question.

Government Orders

As members of Parliament, should we not be focusing on promoting a more regular process for this kind of modernization of the income tax laws? Indeed, perhaps we should reduce the scope of such bills by making more regular updates. Instead of waiting 10 or 13 years to modernize our laws, should we have a more regular process to ensure that parliamentarians do not always have to consider 950-page bills, as we are doing today?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Clearly the current process is not working. I mentioned that in my comments.

It has taken over 10 years to make a few changes to the Income Tax Act. There is indeed a need for a formal process, but what is at stake here is the government's competence. Usually, governments are more competent than this Conservative government. It is normal procedure to introduce a bill like this more often, say every two or three years, yet that has not happened for many years. This is not acceptable and has to improve.

[*English*]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on a few comments my colleague has made about the question of choices a government makes.

In my riding of Ottawa South, there are 3,250 small businesses. They could have one, five or 50 employees, but they are the backbone of our local economy and the Canadian economy.

I want to ask the member about the choice the government is making about advertising. One of the things I hear from small business owners is how offended they are when they see hundreds of millions of dollars of advertising on TV about some kind of economic action plan, yet their small business taxes are increasing.

Could the member comment on that in terms juxtaposing the government's priorities, self-promotion versus helping to strengthen small businesses?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I concur 100% with my colleague's comment. Every day in my role as a small business advocate, I hear that these hundreds of millions of dollars of self-promotion are a grievous insult to the small business community. At the same time, we had the minister looking to put major new taxes and fees on small businesses in the historic Rideau Canal zone in the Ottawa area, which has since been reversed thanks to members such as that member, who spoke up on behalf of his constituents. That is just one example.

Another example of the government taking money out of the pockets of small businesses while spending it on self-promoting ads is the increase in tariffs. This is a government that has set a priority that apparently does not include small business, which is the heart of our economy and our communities. It is difficult to understand why it does not get it.

• (1110)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this very important discussion today. I want to speak to the matter of taxes generally and why both tax legislation and a well-functioning tax system are so important to Canadians. Well-functioning is key, and I am very

happy to hear my colleague across the way say a mere few minutes ago that it is not working the way it is, so I will appreciate her support of the bill when it comes to a vote.

All of this is underlined in today's legislation, the technical tax amendments act, 2012. As most Canadians appreciate, creating jobs and growing our economy is top priority for our government and the main objective of Canada's economic action plan. Since being elected in 2006, our government has been working on a number of important fronts to create optimal conditions for sustained growth. Indeed, we are making it easier for Canadian employers and entrepreneurs to successfully compete in the global economy and to make it more attractive for others to invest in this country.

The end goals here obviously are more jobs for Canadians and a healthy and thriving economy, and that "low tax in Canada" brand is getting noticed around the world. Indeed, here is what John Chambers, CEO of Cisco Systems, a major global technology company, recently had to say about Canada's economic leadership on an American television program entitled *Charlie Rose*:

The number one country in the world to do business is which one? It's Canada and that was a surprise to me when I first started seeing this occurring several years ago, but they have a government that partners with business to solve issues.... They are willing to work together to create an environment to say, "What does it take you to keep your jobs here or bring more jobs here?"

Key among those strategies that we are employing is our government's low-tax plan for jobs and growth that has made Canada a great place to invest. It began in 2007, when our Conservative government passed a bold tax reduction plan that started us down the road to branding Canada as a low-tax jurisdiction for business investment. At the same time, our government also encouraged the provinces and territories to collaborate in supporting investment, job creation and growth in all sectors of the Canadian economy by establishing low combined federal-provincial corporate income tax rates.

Today, we have made substantial progress toward that objective, which has lowered the federal business tax rate to 15%. Also, in 2012, the last of the provincial general capital taxes was eliminated. This follows the elimination in 2006 of the federal capital tax and the introduction in 2007 of a temporary financial incentive to encourage provinces to eliminate their general capital taxes.

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There are other key measures that we have taken since 2006 to fuel job creation and spur our economic growth. They include implementing a temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage additional hiring by this vital sector; reducing the small business tax rate to 11% and increasing the amount of income eligible for this rate to \$500,000; supporting manufacturers by introducing a temporary accelerated capital cost allowance rate for investment in manufacturing or processing machinery and equipment, and extending it; eliminating tariffs on imported machinery and equipment and manufacturing inputs, to make Canada a tariff-free zone for industrial manufacturers by 2015; improving the ability of Canadian businesses to attract foreign venture capital by narrowing the definition of taxable Canadian property, thereby eliminating the need for tax reporting under section 116 of the Income Tax Act for many investments; and much, much more.

The fact is that our government's low-tax plan is working, and the world is increasingly noticing, as the quote from John Chambers clearly indicated. As a result of these and other tax changes, Canada now has an overall tax rate on new business investment that is substantially lower than any other G7 country and below the average of the member countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. That is both an incredible achievement and a draw for investment. It has proven invaluable in helping Canada skirt the worst of the global recession.

• (1115)

Let me quote at length what the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters had to say about Canada's low-tax advantage and our Conservative government's business tax cuts, and I am quoting directly:

If federal tax rates had not been reduced, Canada's unemployment rate would have exceeded nine per cent in 2009 during the recession. Today, our unemployment rate would be higher than that of the United States, with about 200,000 fewer Canadians working...

Investment meanwhile has also increased. Canada's business sector invested \$25 billion more in capital assets last year than in 2007, and \$50 billion more than at the depth of the recession in 2009. Investment in industrial machinery and equipment, which has been given an additional boost by the rapid depreciation that the federal government has made available to manufacturers, has risen 12 per cent since 2007, and has jumped by 37 per cent since the end of the economic downturn....

It's time we get the facts on the table. Business investment has been a key driver of economic and job growth over the past five years, and lower taxes have contributed significantly to that growth.

This is a significant advantage for Canada in the global economy and will be a key contributor to Canada's long-term economic prosperity, and we are not going to stop there.

Canada's economic action plan is continuing our efforts to preserve this country's advantage in the global economy, to strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers, seniors and families, and to provide the stability necessary to secure our recovery in an uncertain world. Canada weathered the global economic and financial crisis well compared to a lot of countries, particularly when we compare it to most other developed nations.

As the *Toronto Sun* noted in a March 2013 article:

Since the Tories took over, no other G-7 country has surpassed Canada in per capita job growth. Canada has added 1.5 million net jobs since 2006.

...Canada is in good shape compared to all the other industrialized countries of the West.

Nevertheless, Canada is not immune to the global challenges that emanate from beyond our borders, especially in Europe and the United States.

That is why I was extremely pleased to note that our government has stated clearly that this is not the time for dangerous new spending that would increase deficits or raise taxes, like those proposed by the NDP with its dangerous carbon tax proposal.

We have heard time and time again in uncertain global economic times such as these that the most important contribution the government can make to bolster confidence and growth is to maintain our sound fiscal position. That means maintaining our focus on fostering prosperity for Canadians and their families by growing the economy and helping to create high-quality jobs. In other words, we have to do everything we can to keep taxes low for Canadian families and businesses and also make the tax system predictable for taxpayers. That is exactly what we would do through today's legislation, the technical tax amendments act, 2012.

As members know, the Auditor General released her study in the fall of 2009 on the existing backlog of outstanding income tax legislation, a backlog that this legislation seeks to address. While outlining the delay in addressing the current backlog of outstanding income tax amendments, the Auditor General also made some important observations about the impact of not dealing with this issue in a timely manner, an impact with far-reaching implications.

Among the many negative effects for taxpayers caused by the uncertainty of the backlog of outstanding income tax amendments, the Auditor General's report identified higher costs of obtaining professional advice to comply with tax law; less efficiency in doing business transactions; inability of publicly traded corporations to use proposed tax changes in their financial reporting, as they have not been substantively enacted; and increased willingness to engage in aggressive tax planning.

Therefore, we will applaud this government for taking action to finally end this more than a decade-long backlog and the Office of the Auditor General for its report that really helped crystallize this issue for parliamentarians.

• (1120)

Furthermore, the Auditor General made a series of recommendations to help deal with this issue going forward, and as we stated at the outset, we agree with each of her recommendations.

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For instance, the Auditor General recommended that the Department of Finance use an integrated and consistent process for recording, tracking and prioritizing all technical issues for possible legislative amendment. We agreed, and we moved to consolidate the system of the Department of Finance for ensuring that technical issues are documented and catalogued consistently, and that this system is maintained and kept up to date.

The Auditor General also recommended that the Department of Finance regularly develop and release draft technical amendments, including those that arise from comfort letters, so that taxpayers and tax practitioners know what changes will be made and can provide input. Again, we agreed, and we formally committed to bring technical amendment packages forward for consideration where appropriate, notwithstanding the fact that the prior technical amendments had not yet been adopted by Parliament.

In fact, this past December, the Department of Finance released a package of draft legislative proposals for public comment relating to a number of technical changes to the Income Tax Act and the income tax regulations.

Since there is only one level of taxpayer, we must work together to ensure Canada's taxpayers are treated with respect and taxes are kept low. An important way to keep taxes low is by returning to balanced budgets. We must recognize that balanced budgets are important for what they make possible and what they avoid.

Reducing debt frees up tax dollars that would otherwise be absorbed by interest costs. These dollars can then be reinvested in the things that matter most to Canadians, including lower taxes. Reducing debt keeps interest rates low, encouraging businesses to create jobs and invest in the future. It preserves the gains made in Canada's low-tax plan, fostering the long-term growth that will create more and better paying jobs for Canadians.

Canadian tax reductions that play an important role in supporting economic growth are those that enable businesses to invest more of their revenues in their operations. Such investments boost efficiency and productivity. It is this productivity growth that allows businesses to hire additional workers or offer higher wages in order to expand production and earn more profits.

Our government is committed to lower taxes for all Canadians. That is why we have introduced broad-based tax relief, with more than 150 tax reductions such as lowering the GST from 7% to 6% to 5% and introducing the landmark tax-free savings account.

Our strong record of tax relief is saving the typical Canadian family of four more than \$3,200 each year. That is great news for Canada and great news for taxpayers. When we make these cuts, not every taxpayer benefits, but when we get an overall average savings of \$3,200 per year, that means a lot to young families especially, and I have a lot of those in my riding, as many members do.

What is more—as is demonstrated in today's legislation, the technical tax amendments act, 2012—our government has been aggressive in closing tax loopholes used by a small group of taxpayers to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. I even hear there are some people in this House who have been using those loopholes. We will close them.

Ensuring tax fairness helps keep taxes low for all Canadians and their families, not only a select few. This is very important and reflects the feedback we have received from Canadians, who have consistently told us that they want a tax system that is both simpler to understand and comply with and ensures everyone pays their fair share of the national tax bill.

That is exactly what our government would deliver with this legislation. Put simply, this legislation would help ensure everyone is treated equitably under our tax laws.

Among the measures in the bill are enhancements to the Income Tax Act to better target and simplify rules relating to non-resident trusts. There are also modifications to rules to simplify and make more equitable the taxation of Canadian multinational corporations that have foreign affiliates.

In short, this legislation would close tax loopholes, crack down on tax avoidance and create greater fairness for all taxpayers.

● (1125)

I want to reiterate and stress in no uncertain terms tax fairness is a basic principle that our government is committed to upholding. We are proud to build upon it here today. I hope my friends across the way share our commitment. Who among us could oppose action to improve the integrity and fairness of the tax system? Who among us would oppose closing loopholes that allow a few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share of tax? No one on this side of the House.

In all fairness, no one likes to pay taxes, but anyone who looks at it with a dose of reality at all realizes that without taxes we could not enjoy our standard of living, health care and all the things that sometimes we all take for granted.

Since 2006, our government has introduced more than 75 measures to close tax loopholes and ensure that taxes are fair for all. By ensuring this integrity, we help make our tax system even more attractive for new business investment, which is a key goal of our government. The fact is that we want to make sure the world knows that Canada is open for business and is the best place to invest.

In closing, tax reductions brought in by our government are allowing individuals and families to keep more of their hard-earned money and are improving incentives to work, to save and to invest, while also contributing to the government's long-term economic agenda. What is more, once the federal budget returns to balance, we have committed to building on our record with additional broad-based tax relief.

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Ensuring tax fairness through today's legislation helps keep taxes low for all Canadians and their families. This will help keep our economy strong and lead to a better quality of life for every Canadian. I encourage all members to support the legislation before us today and to help create a better tax system and greater fairness for all Canadians.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the floor talked about creating jobs here in Canada. Jobs for whom? Are they jobs for temporary foreign workers? How many jobs were created for temporary foreign workers last year?

I know my colleague is not going to answer that, so I will answer that for him. There were 300,000 temporary workers allowed into country. We believe that, yes, we need skilled workers. We need highly skilled workers for jobs when we cannot find the workers here. However, last year, as we have seen through scandals throughout the last year, 300,000 temporary foreign workers were allowed into the country. My question for my hon. colleague is this: how is the government going to fix that broken immigration system that allows for unskilled workers to be imported into Canada?

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, we all know that many members from across the way, and I am not sure if my colleague who just asked the question was one of them, did ask for favours under this program because it benefited jobs and businesses in their ridings. At the same time, we know that with every program, from time to time there are people who literally lie awake at night trying to figure out ways to abuse a program that is there for good reasons. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and the Prime Minister have committed to fixing that program, and we will.

The member who asked the question may have come in halfway through my speech, but I did use a quote in my remarks from an organization that talked about the number of real jobs that we have created in our country. We will stand second to no one when it comes to job creation.

• (1130)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound's remarks with interest. I know that he himself is a small business person and certainly has the interests of his businesses in his community at heart.

However, despite the PMO talking points behind his speech, the fact of the matter is that the Conservative government is doing a poor job. Growth has flatlined. We are lagging behind a number of our important competitors. Youth employment is stuck at high rates that are double that of other Canadians. The number of people out of work is still more than 200,000 persons higher than it was when the government first came in. Additionally, 25% of graduates are underemployed.

It is not working. I pointed out some of those of factors, as did the member for Ottawa South, who talked about taxes on businesses in his community.

My question is this: which economists would have advised the government that reducing the GST and then increasing EI payroll taxes by almost \$10 billion, as well as adding other tax burdens around dividends and R and D credits to compensate for the GST reduction was the right trade-off for the economy? My understanding

is that the GST was not supported by the economists, and these taxes on small businesses are definitely having a dampening impact on our economy, growth and jobs.

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member brings up the GST, because it was her former leader who declared back in 1993 that he was going to get rid of the GST, in order to get on the good side of the public, I guess we would say. Of course, we all waited for 10 long years, and that never happened. Almost immediately when this government came to power in 2006, we moved the GST from 7% to 6% and not too long after to 5%. I am glad to hear that she supports the direction in which we are going on that.

It has been over a decade since Parliament last passed a comprehensive package of technical income tax amendments. The member who just asked the question declared in her remarks half an hour or so ago that the system is not working. We all know that. The government knows that, and that is why we are all here today debating this bill. We will certainly appreciate her support on it at the end of the day.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for his comments on the technical tax amendments act. Indeed, my colleague is very wise. Everyone would be better served if we could just get rid of this backlog of technical amendments.

I wanted to ask him today about something really important to me as the member of Parliament for Oshawa. He talked about Canadian manufacturers and exporters and their support for us and our government. There have been so many challenges facing manufacturers, especially in Ontario.

I wonder if I could get his comments on the different approaches. We have a Liberal government in Ontario that put in a green energy program with feed-in tariffs and we have seen recently how horribly this has affected our economy. It has driven up costs for manufacturers, small businesses and everyone in the province. They have lost at the WTO. It has just been a horrible disaster.

I would like to ask my colleague in his wisdom if he could contrast our plan as a government to lower taxes to continue investing in manufacturers and exporters versus the opposition's plan. He mentioned the topic of taxes. We see from the opposition consistently that they just want to raise taxes and bring new ones in. He talked about the carbon tax and also the \$50 billion in unfunded promises from the opposition.

If he could comment on how that is going to affect manufacturers, and contrast the two approaches, it would be beneficial to us here in the House.

• (1135)

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, the member for Oshawa is the best member that Oshawa has ever had, and I thank him for the great question.

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I do not have enough time here today to talk about the amount of taxes or the will to add taxes that the opposition members would like to see. As we all know, the New Democrats have never seen or heard of a tax they would not like to put in, and the Liberals, when they are in, have never seen a tax that they have not put in, and we all know what that does to young families.

I have three young sons trying to get started out, and I can tell members that lower taxes help them to raise their families and get a better start in life, not the opposite. It is the same with small businesses.

In my riding, agriculture and tourism are probably the two biggest industries, but small businesses and small manufacturing businesses are what we have there. That is our trademark and what makes our riding. Although we had some problems through the recession, the same as most ridings did, our small business owners were able to cope, with the lower taxes and tax rates that this government has put in. It is the only way, long-term, that businesses can do it. If we do not create a climate where government can let businesses compete and be profitable on their own, we are not doing our job.

We have had nothing but praise from small business owners on this, and that is why we are going to continue in that direction.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to inject some numbers into this debate.

The hon. member said that reducing debt keeps interest rates low, yet when the Conservative government took office, the debt was \$480 billion and it is now \$605 billion. The Conservatives have added \$125 billion of debt to Canada.

He said that reducing corporate tax rates is important so that there is money to invest in the corporate sector, yet Mark Carney, the outgoing Bank of Canada governor, said it has \$500 billion sitting on the sidelines. Unemployment is higher today than when the Conservatives took office.

The hon. member said the number one focus is on economic growth. I wonder if he can tell us what Canada's economic growth has been over the last six years, in percentage terms. That is what I really wanted to know. Does the member know the answer to that question?

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, the amount of feedback that I talked about in my opening remarks, from representatives of different organizations who certainly support the cuts to business taxes, and the number of net jobs that we have created over recent years, say it all. My hon. colleague can ignore those comments and numbers all he wants, but the reality is that they are out there. We have had great support for a lot of things we have done in our budget, and that is why we are going to continue in that direction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Contrary to what we just heard, while the government is trying to make up stories about a non-existent carbon tax, Bill C-48 has to do with actual tax-related issues.

This is not a platform for Conservative members to invent stories. No, this is a very important process. We are looking at how the system will change, as well as at the implementation of certain procedures and recommendations that came out of letters sent by the Minister of Finance, communications with accountants, for example, and pre-budget consultations.

We certainly support the various measures in the bill. As a result, we will be supporting the bill today at third reading.

However, a number of aspects of the overall process are problematic, and some issues have to be given due consideration. We were given 1,000 pages all at once. People will wonder how we can support what is basically a 1,000-page omnibus bill after we opposed the omnibus budget bills introduced in the past year. The answer is simple. The difference today is that we are discussing a bill that deals with the same subject, namely, various related acts. This is not like what happened last year. For example, Bill C-38 covered employment insurance reform, environmental protection and so on. For that reason, we do not have a problem with this bill.

What does bother us about the omnibus nature of this bill is that many of these measures have been dragging on for over a decade. We are not the only ones saying so. The former Auditor General also commented on the situation in her 2009 report. At that time, she pointed out that there were 400 measures that had not yet been enacted. These measures were proposed in comfort letters from the Minister of Finance or previous finance ministers in recent years, but none of them had been legislated.

I will explain how this works for the benefit of our viewers. Unlike with other bills, tax-related measures such as these are initially implemented through comfort letters in order to expedite their application. However, the House of Commons must later pass a bill to truly finalize these measures.

What the former Auditor General meant was that 400 measures had been proposed but that the House had not yet passed legislation on them. Bill C-48 contains only 200 of these 400 measures, so there is still a great deal of work to be done.

I mention this because the former Auditor General is not the only one who raised this problem. Various members of the business and accounting communities have also done so. They have testified before the Standing Committee on Finance and written letters to the Minister of Finance and the various MPs who have held that position in the past 10, 12 or 13 years, while these measures have sat on the shelf.

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These people have said that it is not good for the business community, small businesses or people who have to deal with the tax code or the tax system. There is a great deal of uncertainty. The finance minister tells them that certain measures are going to be implemented but then the government waits 5, 10, 13 or 15 years before it passes legislation on these measures.

This creates a certain amount of uncertainty, which is not good for the economy, or for business people and individuals who are trying their best to understand issues that are already quite complex. Very few people outside the accounting community can really stand up and say that they truly understand the entire tax code. It is extremely complex. Fortunately, we have accountants who can help us to understand it. However, they are the ones who are saying that this somewhat haphazard approach is causing them problems.

• (1140)

Although we support these measures and therefore the bill, I believe that this process and this debate highlight the fact that the process needs to be reviewed and made faster.

If the minister is going to promise measures to business people, accountants and everyone concerned, those measures need to be passed in a timely manner, which has not happened in the past. Another issue that was raised is the fact that a number of measures are being passed at the same time. We need to avoid that.

As I explained, this omnibus bill is less problematic than the budget implementation bills. However, to wake up one morning to all these measures and so many related tasks will create a lot of work for accountants, business people and the public, who want to understand how the government manages the taxes they pay. It is important to make the process easier, and that is what the government should be focusing on.

As I already mentioned, we need to look at how the world is currently evolving. Tax season brings with it television ads encouraging people to buy tax software. People are making money off that, which is fine. I am not out to attack or criticize them. However, let us put ourselves in the shoes of someone who is not a tax expert. In my opinion, if the government simplified the process and made it more efficient and easier to comprehend, the public would be in a better position to understand how the system works. People would be more inclined to trust the government and how it spends taxpayers' money.

Just look at the current climate: people do not have a lot of faith in how their elected representatives are spending their tax dollars. This would be a step in the right direction and a good way to regain the public trust. Of course, this is not the ultimate solution. However, the government should have a closer look at this issue, and that is what the bill before us proposes.

I am not a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, but I had a chance to read the testimony given at that committee. It is quite interesting, because it shows just how out of touch past Liberal governments and the current Conservative government have been with reality as expressed by various accountants' associations during pre-budget consultations. They stated repeatedly that the government really needs to re-evaluate the situation.

The bill contains measures that have been under discussion since 1998. The time frame is completely absurd. If I were a small business owner who had to pay taxes and was trying to understand these measures, I would see that some of these measures were supposed to have been incorporated into our tax law in 1998 or 2001. It is 2013, and they have not yet been incorporated.

These measures are not yet part of the legislation. I see that as a serious problem. The process really needs to be re-evaluated. Every political party in the House would agree to that. Furthermore, members of the Standing Committee on Finance could examine it.

I will close on that point, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak to the process, because although we support the bill, this has really highlighted some of its flaws. I think we need to use this debate as an opportunity to address these flaws and find ways to improve the system. We should not have to do this every 15 years, nor should we have to add hundreds of tax measures at the same time. A more appropriate approach would be better for taxpayers, entrepreneurs and accountants, to name a few.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I now invite questions and comments from my colleagues.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague, who obviously has done a great deal of study on the bill.

The issue we are talking about here, in terms of this massive omnibus tax legislation that would bring the code up from many years, going back, as my colleague pointed, to 1999, is the fact that it is being done in an atmosphere in which the government is actually shutting down debate. The bill has been sitting there, but we have not done our job in the House of Commons of fully debating it.

When people back home wonder how we could possibly lose \$3.1 billion, I would say to them that when we have a government that has numerous pieces of very technical information pushed through the House so that it cannot be debated, that is how we end up making mistakes.

I would like to quote Thomas McDonnell, one of the tax lawyers who spoke on the bill. He said that the changes run to well in excess of 900 pages. Further, he said:

[I]t will be passed without...informed debate in the House. Most parliamentarians voting on it will admit that they have not read it, let alone tried to fully understand the consequences of voting for (or against) it. This is not how Parliament is supposed to deal with one of its essential functions—the raising of revenue. It's sad to say it, but I don't think most of our parliamentarians understand this aspect of the role of Parliament, or, if they do, have the courage to go to the wall in defending it.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what he thinks of the failure of the Conservatives, particularly the Conservative backbenchers. They tell us that they want to stand up when it's on a woman's right to choose, but when it is about the obligation of Parliament to vet bills on raising revenue from taxpayers, nobody on that government side is interested in looking at the issue fully and having a full debate so that we understand what the issues are and protect the taxpayer.

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• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for the quote he just shared. That is precisely the problem.

When they move a time allocation motion to shut down debate, they sometimes accuse us of wasting time on bills that we support.

This bill is a perfect example. We support it, but as my colleague said so well, this is a good opportunity to study something that is very complex and important for taxpayers in every one of our ridings. We have an opportunity to debate the bill and I must admit that I am no expert on the subject matter. Nevertheless, having the opportunity to share my point of view on this bill allowed me to study the issue and understand the concerns that have been raised.

Even though we support the bill, we must point out any major flaws on behalf of our constituents, the people we represent. Missing out on this opportunity is simply unacceptable, but that has happened to us some 30-odd times since the 2011 election. It is unacceptable, shameful and unfortunate and we are seeing it more and more from this government.

As my colleague said so well, when it comes to the taxpayers' money and complex tax issues, losing this opportunity to study and debate this issue is truly unfortunate. It is too bad that there are not more people across the way who share this opinion.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He spent a few minutes briefly going over the economic consequences of having a very complex tax system. Adding measures that are hard even for experts to understand and making frequent changes to the system can make it even more complex.

How detrimental is it to the economy when businesses and individuals have a hard time navigating our laws and our tax system?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question, which is exactly what we are asking ourselves here today.

If we look at the measures themselves, some of them will work for the people and for businesses, for the very people we represent. However, the problem is the impact they have on the economy. That is what people told the Standing Committee on Finance during pre-budget consultations. They pointed out that waiting 10, 12, 13 or 15 years for the government to incorporate promised measures creates a climate of uncertainty that is not good for the economy.

I must say that it is a bit ironic for a government that claims to manage the economy so well to foster this climate of uncertainty. That is why we are raising this issue today. The government may not be so great at managing the economy after all. This issue is proof of that.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Chambly—Borduas for agreeing to share his time with me. I am very grateful.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-48, which is a step any government would need to take in order to update our Income

Tax Act. It is a relatively complex law. To begin, I would like to point out that I am not a tax expert or an accountant. I did study the bill, which is about 950 pages long. I did not read the whole thing because, unfortunately, I ran out of time this morning. I do understand the broad strokes of the bill, however.

As a parliamentarian, I must say that it is always disappointing to be faced with bills of such scope. I would be surprised if a single one of my colleagues has read the entire 950 pages, one by one, and knows exactly what is in this bill, unless they happen to be one of the public servants who wrote it. It is always disappointing to see such massive bills, which no average person has the time to read or reflect on. We are asked to vote on these kinds of bills, as was the case for budget implementation Bills C-38 and C-45, which were 400 pages each.

They were mammoth bills, like today's. I must say that these are important and useful measures. They have their purpose, but it is important to mention that more frequent updating could have at least made things easier for MPs. We would not have had to read 950 pages today if tax laws had been updated more frequently over the past 10 years.

The most recent technical bill of this nature dates back to 2001, and it is now 2013. As a result, some things have been dragging on for over a decade and need to be changed for the better. This bill is not flawed, but before going into details, I wanted to point out that a bill of this size is problematic for MPs and prevents them from doing their job properly.

With a 950-page bill, we need to wonder whether the government has done a good job. Why did the government wait so many years to introduce it? Why not introduce it earlier? More frequent updates would have helped. That point was raised several times in committee. I did not have the opportunity to be there, but I read the transcript.

As the member for Sherbrooke, I agree with the principle of having a clearer system and more frequent updates to allow for more effective management, particularly for businesses and individuals who do their taxes each year and must comply with fairly complicated legislation. The Income Tax Act must be one of Canada's largest pieces of legislation at hundreds of pages long.

Of course, the NDP believes that we must fight tax avoidance and tax evasion while preserving the integrity of our tax system. That is why we support the changes proposed in this bill, for they are meant to address issues that allow tax avoidance. This is not a mammoth bill like the budget implementation bills, Bill C-38 and Bill C-45, but still, it is nearly 1,000 pages long. There is a difference though. This time, these are very technical measures that we supported and that we will support again at third reading.

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These changes are important. I would like to talk about the major changes, so that the viewing public can understand what they mean.

● (1155)

Part 1 of the bill deals with offshore investment fund property and non-resident trusts in accordance with proposals announced in budget 2010 and August 2010. These measures will ensure the taxation of Canadian residents' worldwide income from all sources.

Part 1 will therefore update the legislation in order to guarantee the integrity of the tax system and prevent tax avoidance. Of course, the NDP supports this change in order to try to keep our tax system as clear as possible. The NDP also wants to make tax avoidance impossible in any way, shape or form.

We realize that the existing legislation has some loopholes that people can use to avoid paying part of their taxes or to evade taxes in other countries. This fight will never end. People will always try to find ways to get around the law. Unfortunately, that is just how society is; some people will always try to abuse the system. As legislators, we must ensure that these people are punished or amend the legislation so that these things never happen again.

Parts 2 and 3 of the bill deal with taxation of corporations with foreign affiliates.

Part 4 deals with something important that I wanted to address as well, and that is bijuralism, an important aspect of our Canadian legal system. In Quebec we have civil law and the rest of Canada has common law. These are two different types of law. Part 4 deals with this situation that can sometimes be unclear and cause confusion.

It is therefore important in the Canadian context that these legal systems be respected in our federal laws, laws that apply to the entire country. There are differences between civil law and common law when it comes to real property, personal property and joint and several liability. The bill addresses these issues and clarifies them for individuals and businesses that have to deal with these differences.

Most of the changes are based on the specific circumstances of people in industry. In their testimony, they made their case to the legislators and the government to have the changes made. As the member for Sherbrooke, I pay taxes every year like everyone else, but I cannot put myself in the shoes of those whose tax circumstances are different or who are part of a business, for example. It is therefore important to have their comments so that we, as legislators, can change things that are flawed. Obviously, nothing is perfect.

In closing, I take issue with the size of the bill and the fact that the government waited so long to introduce such a technical bill. I am in favour of having a clearer, more precise process that is used more frequently so that the necessary changes can be made more quickly with smaller bills that are easier for parliamentarians to understand.

● (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my friend who just spoke talked about the length of time it took to get to this piece of legislation. In 2009, the Auditor General identified 400 technical changes that should have been completed at that point. She commented that this went back to 2001,

when the Liberals were in government. Questions were raised about why the Liberal government failed to pass regular technical changes at that time.

Obviously, we have 1,000 pages before us today addressing only 200 of the 400 technical changes required. Oftentimes these changes slide into the system, even though they are not law yet, which makes things complicated. They are complicated for citizens and tax lawyers who are trying to deal with it.

Is the member aware of any plans on the government's part to start putting in these technical changes with a certain regularity?

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

I hope that in the future there will be a plan and that the government will be more alert and focused on making significant technical changes to the tax system on a regular basis.

As the hon. member stated, 400 changes were proposed by the Auditor General of the time, but only 200 of them were included in the bill. There is still work to do. That said, if all of these changes had been included, the bill would have been 2,000 pages long. This is how the Conservatives do things.

I would prefer that these changes be made more often. They should also be shorter and more understandable to the average person, who expects to be able to understand tax law in order to properly obey it.

Of course the ultimate goal is to make all this clear to Canadians and to businesses, who have to file their tax returns every year and understand why they pay taxes, why they have such and such a credit or why they are in such and such a position.

In my view, these changes should be introduced as often as possible for the sake of clarity, to enable Canadians to be better informed.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, do you see quorum in the House? I do not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I believe that there is quorum in the House.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Malpeque.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was just like watching ants come out of an ant hill as we asked for a quorum. Members are almost like the Prime Minister; they are in hiding over there today.

Government Orders

In any event, we are talking about the bill and various areas of tax relief. I wonder what the hon. member thinks of the fact that the government continues to reduce taxes to the corporate sector to the point that companies are sitting on about \$560 billion of cash. They are not using that money to increase productivity, to create jobs or to develop new investments in technology. Is that not an area the government should be looking at to bring in revenues? The fact is that the tax system is out of balance, and the corporate sector is not pulling its weight.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question, but I will not comment on who is or is not present in the House, since we are not allowed to do so.

However, I will respond to his very important question about corporate taxes. Our corporate taxes are among the lowest in the world, and businesses are sitting on hundreds of millions of dollars.

The NDP's position has always been very clear. We believe in encouraging businesses to create jobs. Even though we may give them hundreds of millions of dollars in tax credits, these businesses sometimes do not create a single job. For example, a business in Ontario moved to another country after receiving millions of dollars and completely abandoned the jobs created in Canada.

When we give corporate tax credits, especially to multinational corporations, we should demand that they create jobs. If they do not create jobs, they should not be entitled to this money.

I think that is a rule of thumb for the government: businesses that receive tax credits from this government must create jobs, or else they are not entitled to that money.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to our government's low-tax plan for jobs and growth and how this important tax legislation, Bill C-48, the technical tax amendments act, 2012, would fit into that plan.

Through Canada's economic action plan, our Conservative government is continuing to create jobs and grow our economy. We are doing this while keeping taxes low and sticking with our prudent and responsible plan to return to balanced budgets in 2015.

I would like to remind all members of the House that our fiscal responsibility and aggressive debt reduction has placed Canada in an enviable fiscal position. While other countries continue to struggle with debt that has spiralled out of control, Canada is in the best fiscal position in the G7. In fact, Canada's net debt to GDP ratio is the lowest level among G7 countries by far.

While the NDP and Liberals want to engage in reckless spending, our Conservative government is on track to return to balanced budgets in 2015. Our plan to get back to balanced budgets is working. In the past two years we have already cut the deficit by more than half. Economic action plan 2013 builds on these efforts to reduce government spending by announcing an additional \$1.7 billion in ongoing savings. Overall, measures taken by our government since budget 2010 will result in total ongoing savings of roughly \$14 billion.

Unlike the NDP and Liberals, our Conservative government will not raise taxes on Canadian families and businesses to balance the budget.

Today we have legislation before us that, while technical, will help our government achieve this objective and help make the tax system more predictable. The bill would amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act and related legislation to close tax loopholes and create a stronger and fairer tax system for all Canadians.

The bill contains proposals that have been previously released for public consultation on numerous occasions for many years. In fact, many of the proposals in the bill reflect the feedback that government received from Canadians and aim to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of tax and is treated equitably under our tax laws. Simply put, when everyone pays their fair share, tax rates can be kept low, something that benefits all Canadians.

I would like to take a moment and speak to some of the very important measures in the bill and their purpose. Although the legislation is quite technical in nature, I will be brief in my overview of the bill.

I will commence with part 1 of the act, which would modify the provisions of the Income Tax Act dealing with the taxation of non-residence trusts. These changes reflect the proposals initially publicly announced back in the winter of 2010, as well as from the feedback received from public consultations held the following summer.

Part 2 and 3 deal directly with the taxation of Canadian multinational corporations with foreign affiliates, implementing changes, some of which date all the way back to 2004, that will make Canada's tax system more fair and equitable, not to mention easier to administer.

As is the case with the majority of measures contained in the bill, these changes are again the result of extensive public consultations.

Part 4 of the bill deals with the concept of bijuralism. More specifically, it contains amendments that would ensure that the bill will function effectively in both the common law and the civil law. This means that amendments dealing with certain private law concepts, such as right and interest, real and personal property, life estate and remainder interest, tangible and intangible property and joint and severable liability, will accurately capture both common and civil law in both official languages.

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Part 5 of the bill focuses on fairness for taxpayers by setting out a number of measures to close tax loopholes, ensuring that all Canadians pay their fair share. Specifically, the bill would close tax loopholes related to specific leasing property, ensure that conversion of specified investment flow-through trusts and partnerships into corporations are subject to the same rules as transactions between corporations, prevent schemes designed to shelter tax by artificially increasing foreign tax credits and, finally, implement a regime for information reporting of tax avoidance transactions. Taken together, these measures would help crack down on tax avoidance and ensure that everyone paid their fair share.

• (1215)

These measures, taken in conjunction with our government's recent action to curb tax avoidance in economic action plan 2013, affirm our continued commitment to making the tax system more fair and equitable for all Canadians, a subject that I will expand on in a moment.

At the same time, part 5 also includes a number of important but technical changes that are designed to ensure that the income tax system functions in accordance with its underlying policy intent. Many of these changes are relieving in nature and would address issues identified by taxpayers in the course of working through the application of the income tax rules to their own situations.

Part 5 would also implements an income tax amendment relating to the enactment of the Fairness for the Self-Employed Act. This would extend the personal income tax credit in respect of employment insurance premiums to apply also to such premiums paid by self-employed individuals.

Part 6 of the bill would implement technical improvements to the GST-HST, including relieving the GST-HST on the administrative service of collecting and distributing the levy on blank tape imposed under the Copyright Act.

Part 7 provides for administrative changes to the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act.

Finally, part 8 contains some housekeeping amendments to ensure coordination between provisions of the Income Tax Act, the Jobs and Growth Act, 2012 and the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act.

All of these parts have been examined in great detail at the finance committee, where they received the support of all parties.

In my time remaining, I will just highlight that the underlying goal of all the measures in this legislation is to simplify the tax system, make it easier to comply with and administer and to create more fairness for all Canadian taxpayers.

The overwhelming majority of hard-working Canadians and business owners pay their taxes. They do so willingly and honestly. Others, shamefully, try to skip out on their taxes and avoid their fair share and, eventually, suffer embarrassing and costly legal ramifications when they are caught.

However, honest Canadians expect their government to manage their tax dollars with respect and that they be asked to pay their fair share and not a penny more. Our government fully understands that sustaining a voluntary tax system rests on the foundation of tax

fairness. It is a simple concept and one that we on this side of the House grasp and support.

The fact is that we cannot expect taxpayers to continue to pay their share if they see that others are not. Tax fairness is a basic principle that our government is committed to upholding and we make no apologies for doing so. We are proud of our record and we are building upon it. In fact, that is precisely what this technical tax amendments act, 2012, would do.

Indeed, several witnesses who appeared at the finance committee as part of its study earlier this year noted how today's legislation would improve tax fairness for all taxpayers. For example, Mr. Greg Boehmer of Ernst & Young remarked, "It's very clear that this legislation is aimed at fairness". Mr. Lorne Shillinger of KPMG echoed this sentiment in regard to Bill C-48, saying, "It's preserving the integrity of the tax system and it's time to get this bill passed".

Ensuring everyone pays their fair share means tax rates can remain low and our government can ensure that Canada's fiscal house stays in order. Balancing the budget and reducing debt means that tax dollars that would have otherwise been absorbed by interest costs are freed up. These dollars can then be reinvested in the things that matter most to Canadians, like lower taxes. This is what Canadians expect and deserve.

As I mentioned earlier, our government is committed to improving the integrity and fairness of Canada's tax system by closing loopholes that allow few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share of tax. Consistent with global efforts to close tax loopholes in their respective tax systems, measures introduced by this government will protect hard-working families that play by the rules, reaffirming the government's ongoing commitment to tax fairness.

• (1220)

Indeed, since 2006, and including the measures announced in economic action plan 2013, our government has introduced over 75 measures to improve the integrity of the tax system.

If I might take a moment, I would like to highlight some of the many measures in economic action plan 2013 that will work to close these tax loopholes, address aggressive tax planning, clarify tax rules and combat international tax evasion.

First and foremost, economic action plan 2013 announced the stop international tax evasion program. This new program would allow the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, to pay individuals with knowledge of major international tax non-compliance a percentage of the tax collected as a result of information provided.

Other measures would include requiring Canadian taxpayers with foreign income or properties to report more information and extending the amount of time CRA had to reassess those who had not properly reported this income, as well as streamlining the process for the CRA to obtain information concerning unnamed persons from third parties, such as banks, and requiring certain financial intermediaries, including banks, to report their clients' international electronic funds transfers of \$10,000 or more to CRA.

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Our Conservative government's record on strengthening tax fairness is clear. I am sure all members agree on closing loopholes. Permitting a select few businesses and individuals to skip out on paying their fair share of tax is simply unacceptable. Most Canadians would be shocked and disappointed if any elected member would tolerate tax evasion. For this reason alone, I hope I could count on the support of the members opposite in passing this very important legislation.

That is not all. In addition to ensuring the integrity of our tax system, our government continues to work hard to ensure that the tax system remains competitive so we can continue to attract new business investment into the Canadian economy. Canadian tax reductions that play a particularly important role in supporting economic growth are those that enable businesses to invest more of their revenues back into their operations. Indeed, our government has reduced the small business tax rate to 11% and lowered the federal business income tax rate to 15%.

Over all, since 2006, our low-tax plan has resulted in \$28,600 in savings for a typical small business, or almost 35%. Savings like this allow small businesses to make investments in their local communities, be it through new machinery, new equipment, a new location or, even better, hiring more people.

Not only that, it is this productivity growth that allows businesses to allow more workers and offer higher wages to Canadians in order to expand production and become more successful. In fact, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters agrees with this assessment. It said:

Reducing business taxes creates jobs, boosts investment, makes Canada more competitive and puts more money in the pockets of the Canadians...business tax cuts are critical drivers of the Canadian economy...

Moreover, since July 2009, over 900,000 net new jobs have been created, the strongest job creation record in the G7. What better indication than this to show that our low-tax plan is working?

Clearly, our government is committed to lower taxes for all Canadians. These are just some of the examples of our government's commitment to keeping taxes low for Canadians. Indeed, since 2006, we have cut taxes over 150 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years. We cut taxes in every way government collects them, from personal taxes, consumption taxes, business taxes, excise taxes and much more. In fact, our strong record of tax relief has meant savings for a typical family of four of over \$3,200 in 2013. Furthermore, we have removed over one million low-income Canadians from the tax rolls altogether.

Unfortunately, the NDP and Liberals continue to vote against these tax savings measures that help Canadian families and Canadian businesses. The tax legislation before us today would help to further our government's objective of keeping taxes low and the tax system predictable.

• (1225)

One wonders if the NDP and Liberals would support a piece of legislation that supports that plan. As I hear hon. members speaking today, it sounds as though the official opposition is going to, for which I thank them. I hope they will support it and not fight closing tax loopholes that only benefit a select few.

Why would anyone oppose ensuring that everyone pays their fair share of tax? I hope that all the members opposite will see the merits of this legislation and show their support for it by giving it swift passage.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been a small business person myself. As a business person, some certainty is required.

The Conservatives have waited nine years to bring this bill forward to bring certainty to businesses and individuals and Canadians. What have the Conservatives been doing over the last seven years that prevented them from bringing this legislation forward? They certainly have not been fixing the Senate; we know that from the scandals in the other House.

The member talks about the government lowering the tax rate over the last six years. The tax rate for corporations, their friends, has been lowered. There is no denying that. However, if we look at the other side, the government has had the largest deficit in the history of this country during the last couple of years. Not only that, the debt has grown by billions of dollars.

My question is for the member. The Conservatives have lowered taxes, but who is going to pay the debt they have created? Who is going to pay the deficit the government has created?

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member was listening to my remarks, but we have made 150 changes in recent years for tax fairness in budgets, et cetera, and there has been some great work done on regulations by the scrutiny of regulations committee, but some of these proposals have been around for a long time, so I would like to make a proposal to the member today.

I will go to my House leader, and perhaps he will go to his House leader, and ask that in every Parliament, perhaps every quarter of the year or every six months, we bring in a technical tax amendment bill. I am sure the members on this side of House will agree to sit until midnight in a periodic fashion to get that done.

We have been sitting until midnight the last couple of weeks and we are prepared to do it the next couple of weeks to get bills through this House. That is important to us.

The deficit has been cut in half, and the deficit will disappear by 2015. That deficit was created purposely, as the member may remember. I do not know if the member was in the House in 2008, but we faced a worldwide crisis, the worldwide recession, which was the worst recession since the 1930s.

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That deficit was created purposely to fight that recession. It worked, with 900,000 net new jobs created, 90% of them full time. Now it is time to balance the budget again and get back to paying down the debt as the government did in 2006 and 2007, when it paid down \$30 billion of debt.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought it was an interesting proposal when the member suggested that he go to his House leader and that member could go to his House leader and maybe they would come to some sort of an agreement.

It would wonderful if the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons felt it was somewhat important to negotiate in good faith. I suspect that if he made that leap of faith, we would probably see bills being debated and passed in a more orderly fashion. Time allocation would not be necessary.

I want to pose a question. The Liberal Party supports the bill and has indicated its support for the bill for some of the very reasons the member talks about, issues such as tax evasion and tax avoidance. I suspect more than 98% of members of Parliament would be voting in favour of the legislation, because we see the merits of it.

Where I take a little exception is when the member, in his presentation on the bill, talked as if the Conservatives were not increasing taxes. In reality, in the last number of budgets there have been net tax increases to Canadians of tens of millions of dollars. A good example is the most recent one in regard to the number of tariffs. A tax is a tax.

Would the member not agree that an increase in a tariff is in fact a tax increase to our middle class and to all Canadians?

• (1230)

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, the member's point is well taken. When we change bills and bring forward sections in the budget for tax fairness, there will be situations in which some people will pay more taxes. Those would perhaps occur when a business operator had created a corporation or by aggressive tax planning was not paying as much as a competitor in a similar business was, simply by changing the paperwork and how they file their taxes.

That is what this bill is designed to address. It is designed to address people who are not paying their fair share. Yes, there would be new revenues from this bill, although that is not the purpose of the bill—the purpose of the bill is tax fairness—but there would be new revenues.

The amendments proposed in the bill have been discussed over years of repeated consultations. The bill has been before Parliament since last November, so any member who wanted to examine it or examine the issues has had many months to do so. The opposition members have had over 200 days to examine and debate this bill.

We have had days of debate at the finance committee. On the government side we can all sub into committees, and any member can attend any committee at any time. If members have specific concerns, they can sit in on the finance committee and examine the bills closely. That is what committees are for. They do a clause-by-clause examination of the bills.

Canadian taxpayers have been waiting for these technical amendments. They are overdue, and we should pass this bill quickly.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech in the House this morning talking about tax fairness. It is a very important issue right now. It is particularly important that we as a government recognize that tax evasion and tax cheats have to be clamped down on, and as a former businessperson, I also recognize that tax loopholes have to be closed.

I agree with my colleague as he discusses tax fairness. I wonder if he could address the balance between tax fairness and tax reductions and the benefit that these bring to the economy of Canada.

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, regarding tax reductions, we do have 900,000 net new jobs in Canada since the summer of 2009, when we were starting to come out of that terrible recession, but we have a lot more than that. Businesses are actually holding on to a lot of capital right now; they are ready to explode in investment.

However, we have a slowdown in our largest trading partner, which is the United States of America. Americans buy basically 70% of everything we produce in Canada. To deal with that slowdown, we are proposing free trade agreements. We are pursuing free trade with 50 countries, and the deal that is closest to fruition is the European free trade deal, which would mean about 80,000 jobs in Canada. Where would those jobs come from? It would mean Canadian businesses investing to expand into foreign markets, so it would mean about 80,000 jobs and about \$1,000 of net income to the average family in Canada from free trade. That is just one free trade deal, and there are many more.

We are well positioned for growth, and if the American economy continues to grow as it has been, our growth is going to accelerate as well. The tax picture has created an environment where we are ready for growth, and an explosion of growth is due.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people on different sides of the House can have philosophical differences on what the best policies are to stimulate the economy, but I want to look at some numbers.

The Conservatives' philosophy starting in 2006 was to cut taxes, particularly on corporations. Their theory was that these tax cuts would stimulate growth, but in those six years under the Conservative watch, the debt of Canada has gone from \$480 billion to \$605 billion. That is \$125 billion of additional debt added to Canada, a 25% increase in debt.

In terms of corporate taxes, the idea was that if they cut taxes to corporations, it would leave more money in the hands of corporations and the corporations would then invest it. The outgoing Bank of Canada governor, Mark Carney, has recently stated that there is \$500 billion of dead corporate money sitting on the sidelines that has not been invested in Canada because those tax cuts were broad-based and they were not tied to creating jobs in this country.

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Finally, I want to talk about unemployment, which is higher today. If we talk to people in communities across this country, they will tell us that there are more temporary jobs and more part-time jobs, but there are not the kinds of good-quality career jobs that used to typify jobs created in the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s.

Based on the numbers for the debt and the deficit, which is the highest deficit in Canadian history and is run by the current government, does my hon. friend consider those to be signs of the economic success of the Conservatives' philosophy?

• (1235)

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the \$500 billion that businesses are sitting on. We cannot legislate businesses to start spending money. We have to create a climate in which they want to spend money, and that is exactly what we have done. As we pursue free trade agreements and open markets across the world, these businesses are going to start investing more and more.

However, creating 900,000 new jobs is not something to play down. These are 900,000 people who went home to their families and said, "I got the job". Jobs relieve financial pressures in those homes and people are then able to pay their mortgages. Some of these people also start businesses.

We are poised for tremendous growth in Canada. We have had growth and we will have more growth, but the reality is that we are dependent on trade. We are a trading nation and we always have been. The economy of our largest customer is in trouble; it is starting to come back, but the best way to avoid being in that position in the future is to pursue free trade with many other countries, such as those on the Pacific Rim, which is what we are doing. I believe our future is very bright.

With regard to Canada's debt, if the member looks forward in the financial documents in the budget, he would see that the debt will start to go down in a few years, which is exactly what we were doing from—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. member's time has expired.

The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Québec.

Unfortunately, Bill C-48 is a story of failure. It is the story of our tax laws that have never been updated. This bill is currently over 1,000 pages long, which is a significant number. Although the previous member's speech was excellent, if I were to ask him to quickly summarize the content of these 1,000 pages, he would be hard pressed to do so. It would not be easy. I will not ask him to do so, but I tip my hat to anyone in the House who can tell me that he has a perfect understanding of Bill C-48, the bill on which we are going to vote. Understanding a 1,000-page legal document about taxes is quite a feat.

There is a backlog of 400 technical amendments. Bill C-48 will address 200 of them. The other 200 will not be resolved, mainly because they are outdated and no longer necessary. The law is so old that the regulations are no longer relevant. In 2006, we wanted to

close a tax loophole affecting airlines. The airlines took advantage of that loophole and are now increasingly making use of tax havens. What was proposed in 2005 and 2006 has therefore lost its relevance because the law is too old. For five or six years, there was a tax loophole that was not closed. That is unfortunate.

This situation dates back to 2001. I understand that our Liberal colleagues are not always present, but I hope that they will wake up. They were in power in 2001. The boom in tax loopholes occurred under the Liberal government. It was actually quite embarrassing. With regard to shipping companies, the finance minister at the time had the House pass a bill that allowed him to avoid paying taxes. His shipping company no longer had to pay very much in taxes to Canada.

An hon. member: That was when the Liberals were in office.

Mr. Alain Giguère: Yes. The Liberals were in office.

The Conservatives have not done much better. They were in power in 2007. They have had six years to introduce a bill to make technical amendments to the tax law. For a government that claims to be tough on crime, that is pretty bad from the perspective of regulation-making, red tape and bureaucracy. What is more, it is never-ending.

We will support this bill because we no longer have any choice. We have to do so. We also believe that the government should amend the tax law every year in order to update it so that everyone can understand it.

This is a complex 1,000-page bill that tries to reduce a backlog of 400 technical amendments. This means that as soon as a problem comes up, the accounting bills start piling up. An accountant does not come cheap.

It can also be expensive for a company that is teetering on the brink and wondering whether or not this law applies to it. In theory, ignorance of the law is no excuse; however, the law is unintelligible to the average person, and unfortunately, Canadian tax laws are no exception.

In 1917, Canada's first tax law, the Income Tax Act, was 50 pages in length. Those 50 pages covered everything.

• (1240)

Now, there are tens of thousands of pages of jurisprudence and as many doctrines. We can get a sense of our tax situation. It is clear why many business owners are telling us that their businesses are overburdened with accounting bills.

Taking over 10 years to make formal changes to the law opens the door to risky operations and aggressive tax planning. It opens the door to tax risk. A company may be able to pay a tax expert \$500 an hour to solve tax problems, but the average person cannot. That is a problem.

The more complex tax laws are, the more they benefit the rich. People who do not have the means to hire a tax expert do not have the means to open a foreign bank account, build a family trust or incorporate in order to evade taxes. That is a problem.

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We are talking about tax fairness. Obviously, this is still not the case. Unfortunately, I think we will have to wait until 2015 for a change like this.

However, I need to hammer home three main points and mention that the NDP by no means disagrees with this bill. In spite of everything, we feel that we need to fight tax avoidance and tax evasion, while preserving the integrity of our tax system. In short, our tax system needs to fulfill its main function, which is to enable the Canadian government to have the revenue it needs to cover its expenses.

At close to 1,000 pages, this document is a perfect example of an omnibus bill. If the government had done an act-by-act study, for example, of the GST act, the Income Tax Act and the legislation on certain trusts, it could have reduced the number of pages and members could have had a clearer idea of what is involved.

However, with this 1,000-page document, as I have said, I challenge any Conservative member to rise and say that he or she will vote entirely in favour of this bill because he or she understands it completely, has read it in full and knows it inside and out.

As we can see, a great many volunteers from the Conservative Party are rising and saying enthusiastically that they understand the bill. Actually, that number is a big, fat zero.

The business community is being penalized with similar changes. Our economy is also being penalized. Not only does this let people avoid paying tax, meaning that those who do pay have to pay even more, but those who pay more tax have to pay for an accountant and a tax lawyer on top of that. What joy, what luck. To think that this government claims to be effective.

There are some important parts to this bill. Part 1 covers non-resident trusts. That is very important because it is a significant tax loophole. Parts 2 and 3 deal with the taxation of foreign corporations. Globalization has enabled companies to transfer their profits to tax havens. We need to put an end to that practice. Part 4 is essential. Canada has common law, but Quebec has the civil code. This type of bijuralism requires us to correct the situation.

Clearly, this bill had to be drafted and, to be effective, this exercise should be carried out every year. An NDP government will commit to that.

I will yield the floor to my hon. colleague after questions.

● (1245)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech in which he framed some of these issues around justice and fairness in the tax system and then extrapolated beyond that to discuss a more fair and balanced Canada.

Today is World Hunger Day. Scanning some of the media attention, I note that in Ontario, post-secondary schools, universities and colleges have food banks on campus. This, to me, is an indictment of whatever the government has to say about its economic progress.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would comment on that in the context of the debate today.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, what economic progress is he talking about?

There are more unemployed workers today than there were before the recession and even during the recession. There has been absolutely no progress made. They say they created 900,000 jobs, but they are forgetting about the 600,000 jobs lost during the recession. That leaves 300,000 jobs. What is more, jobs that paid \$25 to \$30 an hour have been replaced with jobs that pay \$12 or \$13 an hour. Is that economic progress?

Average Quebecers have been impoverished. They have too much debt and now have to rely on food banks. With much of the Canadian population living so precariously, we cannot talk about economic growth.

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's excellent speech.

I still cannot fathom what Auditor General Sheila Fraser wrote in her fall 2009 report. She said that no income tax technical bill had been passed since 2001. I would point out to the House that it is now 2013.

Can my colleague explain why no income tax technical bill has been passed since 2001 even though it is now 2013? Quite frankly, that is unacceptable.

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple and most unfortunate.

Tax fairness has never been a priority for the Liberal government or the Conservative government. Tax unfairness does not bother them in the least. That is why it took them more than 12 years to introduce tax legislation. Everyone knew it, there were red flags, and yet they did nothing. It is not because they did not know or could not do anything about it, but simply because they did not want tax fairness.

● (1250)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very heartfelt speech.

He quickly mentioned that very complex tax laws benefit the wealthiest, who can afford to pay tax experts and accountants. The middle class cannot necessarily afford to pay such experts, and therefore they pay their taxes. There is no getting around it, since they cannot afford to pay a tax expert.

My colleague is an expert who has studied taxation and law. Could he talk about how complex laws often benefit the wealthiest?

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, American multi-billionaire Warren Buffet said that it makes no sense that his tax rate is lower than that of an entry-level secretary at his company.

That is tax inequity. That is the problem with our tax laws. People say that when the rich get richer, they reinvest their riches. Well, unfortunately, under the George W. Bush regime in the U.S. and the Conservative regime in Canada, the idiotic application of this theory does not work.

Government Orders

The investments are just not there, since wealthy people do not reinvest in their own country simply because it is good to them; instead, they invest their money wherever they will make the most money. Clearly, in this case, they decided that that place was not Canada.

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the House in support of Bill C-48 at third reading.

This is a rather large bill that is more than 1,000 pages long. I just want to point out that Bill C-48 looks like a mammoth omnibus bill. It is a two- or three-inch-thick brick with more than 1,000 pages.

Last year, we had the mammoth Bill C-38. Then we had the mammoth Bill C-45. Now we have Bill C-48, which is extremely large and complex. What is more, the font is quite small. It is very hard to read and very complicated.

It makes many technical changes to the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, and other legislation. This topic may seem very technical and unappealing to many people, but these changes are often necessary and can have a significant impact on the Canadian economy. The majority of the measures proposed in this bill have already been in place for many years, but the bill makes them law.

Unfortunately, the massive size of this bill shows that there is still work to be done to convert similar technical changes into legislative measures in a timely fashion. Failure to update our tax code on a regular basis makes it hard for Canadians, business people in particular, to find any clarity in our tax system. We must also look at the growing complexity of tax law and focus on the need to simplify it over time.

The more complicated the system, the more flaws it contains, and the more room there is for loopholes. When that happens, then there are bound to be people who will take advantage. That is why it is important to simplify everything.

On that subject, I would like to quote the 2012 pre-budget submission from the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada:

[We] strongly believe that the key to sustained economic recovery and enhanced economic growth lies in the government's commitment to tax reform and red tape reduction.

CGA-Canada went on to make two recommendations. First, it recommended modernizing Canada's tax system to make it simple, transparent and more efficient. Second, it proposed implementing a "sunset provision" to prevent future legislative backlogs.

The government has been very slow to legislate technical amendments. In a report tabled about four years ago, in 2009, the Auditor General at the time, Sheila Fraser, pointed out that the Department of Finance Canada had a backlog of at least 400 technical amendments that had not been enacted. Here is what her report said:

No income tax technical bill has been passed since 2001.

It is now 2013. That means that two previous governments have been asleep at the switch, and for a considerable amount of time. Today's majority government has been in power for nearly a decade,

yet an income tax technical bill has not been passed. What is it doing? We do not know.

Sheila Fraser's report goes on to say:

...the government has said that an annual technical bill of routine housekeeping amendments to the Act is desirable...

Yet we know that nothing has been introduced since 2001. They are not doing what the Auditor General suggested:

● (1255)

...an annual technical bill of routine housekeeping amendments...has not happened. As a result, the Department of Finance Canada has a backlog of at least 400 technical amendments that have not been enacted.... If proposed technical changes are not tabled regularly, the volume of amendments becomes difficult for taxpayers, tax practitioners, and parliamentarians to absorb when they are grouped into a large package.

At one point, people said that Beta videocassettes were the future. We no longer use videocassettes. We are making technological advances. The same thing applies to taxes. It is time for us to get up to date.

Obviously, the size of this bill and the long period of time that passed between the introduction of the previous technical bill and this one show that this process still needs improvement.

On another topic, the NDP thinks that we need to combat tax avoidance and tax evasion, while preserving the integrity of our tax system. That is why we support the changes that this bill makes, particularly those aimed at reducing tax avoidance.

However, we also believe that much more needs to be done to truly address the problem of tax evasion.

According to some estimates, the Canadian tax system is losing between \$5.3 billion and \$7.8 billion in revenue a year to tax evasion alone. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists recently acquired a long list of individuals from all over the world who are holding billions of dollars in tax havens. According to the consortium, approximately 450 Canadians are on that list. We are not just making this up. We need to find out where all of this money is going.

What is more, according to the information that was recently published by Statistics Canada on foreign direct investments, Canadian investments in the top 12 tax havens worldwide exceeded \$170 billion, which is equivalent to 10% of Canada's GDP.

It is true that the majority Conservative government is capable of losing track of \$3 billion earmarked for public safety. As a result, it may have difficulty understanding what I am saying about tax evasion. I understand since the government has trouble implementing its own budget.

One of the main reasons why wealthy Canadians and large corporations want to put their money in tax havens is to simply avoid paying their fair share of taxes. That means billions of dollars in lost tax revenue for the federal government and fewer new jobs in Canada.

Government Orders

The government boasts that it has announced new investments to combat tax evasion, but unfortunately, this new money totals just one-quarter of the \$113 million that this government has spent since 2009 to advertise its budgets.

Furthermore, the government has made some \$250 million in cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency. These cuts led to the loss of about 3,000 jobs within that department.

The government is cutting the jobs of the people who are supposed to be working on combatting tax evasion. The Conservatives want to reduce the size of government—cut the red tape, as they say—but at what cost? They do not realize that sometimes we have to rely on the people who are able to help us. I do not think the Conservatives truly understand how important it is to combat tax evasion.

In spite of the government's lack of conviction, we believe that Bill C-48 will have a positive impact and will help discourage tax evasion.

In conclusion, the sheer size of this bill shows that the government must be more responsible in managing the tax system. More specifically, the government must ensure that it periodically passes legislation on proposed tax measures. Failure to do so creates uncertainty for business people, jurists and tax experts, and makes it nearly impossible for parliamentarians to do their jobs when they are faced with bills as big as the one we have today.

I must point out how important it is to focus on compliance to guarantee the integrity of the tax system.

The NDP believes that we must eliminate tax loopholes and work harder to combat tax havens. This government is tired and it is time for a change.

● (1300)

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate my hon. colleague on her speech on a topic that is certainly not easy for everyone to understand.

My question is one that might be asked by anyone who, like me, is following events by watching the headlines and who sees that, on the one hand, the bill encompasses tax notices of the past 10 or 11 years and, on the other hand, the government is still looking for \$3.1 billion.

Will this reassure the general public?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his intervention.

I do not think this will be reassuring. In fact, nothing this government does is reassuring. I have said it before and I will keep repeating it: nothing has been done since 2001. Come on. That is embarrassing. This is a shameful time for the Parliament of Canada. Here we are and nothing has been done since 2001. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have done nothing.

All parliamentarians should be ashamed to face Canadians and say that unfortunately we did not understand that this needed to be updated. We did not understand that tax measures needed to be introduced, that we needed to walk the talk and that we really had to

tackle these issues. That is what the members opposite do not seem to understand.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her passion and the conviction she always brings to debate.

She was talking about fiscal responsibility and the lack of proper economic management on the government's side. We have a situation, for example, in my city in Toronto, where about 50% of all workers cannot find stable full-time jobs. That is an economic failure on the part of the federal government.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would comment on that and on whether she sees similar situations like that in her city of Québec.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak for my entire region, the Quebec City area, which has experienced devastating job losses. I am particularly thinking of the Canadian Coast Guard, Parks Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Staff cuts have been made everywhere. Then the government tried to claim that services would remain the same and nothing would change. This is simply not true.

For example, the Canada Revenue Agency, which is also in my riding, lost 3,000 employees specializing in the fight against tax evasion. These are people with a particular skill, who do this particular job for the government and for all Canadians. In a few years, the government will be greatly surprised that these measures have not worked out.

Are the Conservatives wondering why? Because government jobs were cut, that is why. We know it; everyone knows it. Now the Conservatives must understand it too. This is how we will be able to act for all Canadians.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I started as a young tax specialist, I was told—funnily enough—to interpret the law my way, namely in the manner most favourable to my client. I was told I should then contact various Revenue officials and send the file to the one who was most likely to agree with me. That is how it was, and how it still is, unfortunately.

The law is so complex that if you talk to different officials, you will get different answers. Will this bill change that?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe it will change anything because the necessary investments are not being made.

I do not know how many times I have seen a minister rise in the House and deny that there is a problem. They say that they invested a little money and that the problem will work itself out. I am sorry, but that is not the case. That is not how it works.

Government Orders

I do not know a lot about taxation, but I know enough to say that investing a little money will not make the system work. It takes competent people, such as legal and tax experts, people who specialize in their field. We have to trust them and believe in the work they do, not eliminate their jobs. It is important to understand that. It is fundamental.

[*English*]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to contribute to this very important discussion on Bill C-48, the technical tax amendments act, and on our government's low-tax plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Our government, through Canada's economic action plan, is creating the winning conditions for all businesses, and the people they employ, to compete in the global economy and to continue to create jobs. We are always looking to improve on this record while, at the same time, controlling spending by federal bureaucrats and maintaining the government's commitment not to raise taxes or cut transfers to Canadians and other levels of government.

Canadians understand the importance of living within their means, and taxpayers expect the government to do the same. That is why our Conservative government is committed to managing public finances in a sustainable and responsible manner, a commitment that underpins our plan to return to budgetary balance by 2015. It is this responsible financial management that put Canada in a position of strength when it came time to combat the global recession.

From 2006 to 2008, our government paid down over \$37 billion in debt, thus enabling our government to implement the stimulus phase of Canada's economic action plan without leaving our country, like many other countries, in a vulnerable fiscal position. As a result, Canada weathered the global economic and financial crisis well, particularly when compared to all other G7 countries. In the words of the noted economist Don Drummond, there is not a single developed country in the world that would not kill to have our position.

To this day, the global economic environment remains fragile. The euro area is still in recession, and uncertainty regarding U.S. fiscal policy continues to weigh on growth prospects.

While Canada's economy is expected to continue growing at a modest pace, we are not immune to external developments. In these uncertain times, we all know that the absolutely most important thing any government could do is bolster confidence and growth and maintain a strong fiscal position.

This brings me to the subject of my address today, Bill C-48, the technical tax amendments act. This is a broad and complex topic, so I will keep my remarks focused on three basic points.

I will begin by describing the highlights of Bill C-48. I will explain how it bolsters tax fairness for Canadian taxpayers. Finally, I will discuss how it maintains the competitive nature of the Canadian legal jurisdiction.

We have legislation before us today that takes further action to strengthen Canada's tax system. We must ensure its swift passage. I urge all my colleagues on the other side of the House to get on board and help us ensure tax fairness for all Canadians, just as members of the finance committee did earlier this year.

As Mr. Lorne Shillinger of KPMG said, "Whatever the process is of getting this bill enacted, stick to it, full speed ahead".

I could not agree more. Let us pass this legislation so that all Canadians benefit.

As an overview, let me note that this bill will amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act and related legislation to close tax loopholes and create a stronger and fairer tax system for all Canadians. The bill contains proposals that have been public for many years and was the subject of numerous, wide public consultations. Therefore, the bill is not new to the House. I want to note that the proposals in the bill represent the feedback from those numerous public consultations. Even better, they all aim to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of tax and is treated equitably under our tax laws.

As the legislation is quite technical in nature, I will be brief in my summary of its highlights.

● (1310)

In part 1 of Bill C-48, our government proposes enhancements to the Income Tax Act to better target and simplify those rules relating to non-resident trusts, taking into account comments received during those public consultations I was speaking of.

Parts 2 and 3 relate to the taxation of Canadian multinational corporations in respect of their foreign affiliates. Once again, our government consulted extensively with the public and stakeholders on these proposals with the objective being the creation of a fair and more equitable international tax system.

Part 4 of Bill C-48 would ensure that the tax rules work well under both common and civil law.

Part 5 of the bill would close tax loopholes and create greater fairness for taxpayers. Indeed, this portion of the bill would implement a number of integrity tax measures from 2010, on which we have consulted widely, to address any issues that may exist.

These particular measures would, first of all, close tax loopholes relating to a specified leasing property. We have heard that before in this House. Second, they would ensure that conversion of specified investment flow-through trusts and partnerships into corporations would be subject to rules similar to those for transactions between corporations. Third, they would prevent schemes designed to artificially increase foreign tax credits in order to reduce tax. Finally, they would implement a regime for information reporting of tax avoidance transactions. These are very important. Taken together, these measures would help crack down on tax avoidance and ensure that everyone pays their fair share of tax.

Part 5 also includes a number of technical changes that are designed to ensure that the income tax system functions in accordance with its underlying policy intent. Many of these changes would address issues identified by taxpayers themselves in the course of working through the application of the income tax rules to their own situations.

Government Orders

I cannot stress enough how important it is that this legislation be passed. Implementing these technical changes responds to both the 2009 Auditor General's report and the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Auditor General's report highlighted the importance of implementing technical amendments to give certainty to taxpayers and to the Canada Revenue Agency. The report recommended that technical measures be released on a regular basis. Indeed, Ms. Vicky Plant, Principal in the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, said this to the finance committee: "Mr. Chair, when the Department of Finance determines that some changes have to be made to the Income Tax Act, it is important that legislative changes be tabled in the House of Commons promptly".

With this legislation, our government had done so. The report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I just mentioned that once technical bills have been tabled, it is up to Parliament to ensure that they are passed.

It is not only the standing committee that feels that it is important for Parliament to pass this legislation. I will read a few quotes from tax experts who appeared at the finance committee earlier this year and pleaded for the swift passage of Bill C-48.

Kim Moody, of Moodys LLP Tax Advisors, said: "[O]ur firm supports the passage of Bill C-48... [I]t is important to get it passed".

Greg Boehmer, of Ernst and Young, said: "[W]e greet Bill C-48 with a sense of relief and hope to see its speedy passage".

Andrew Kingissepp, of Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt LLP, said: "I would encourage all parties to enact this proposed legislation into law at the earlier opportunity".

I again implore my colleagues across the way to ensure that Bill C-48 passes swiftly. It is critical to the integrity of the tax system that we do just that as parliamentarians in this House.

• (1315)

Not only does Bill C-48 respond to the above-mentioned reports, but it achieves other goals as well. Part 5 implements an income tax amendment relating to the enactment of the fairness for the self-employed act. It provides a tax credit in respect of employment insurance premiums paid by self-employed individuals. Part 6 of Bill C-48 implements technical amendments to the GST-HST, including relieving the GST-HST on the administrative service of collecting and distributing the levy on blank media imposed under the Copyright Act. This is very important.

Part 7 amends the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act to provide for technical changes concerning tax administration agreements. Finally, part 8 coordinates amendments that ensure that the tax amendments in Bill C-48 interact properly with all other legislation. As all of the measures in the legislation have been examined in greater detail by the finance committee, I wish to emphasize that the underlying goal of this legislation is to simplify the tax system, make it easier to comply and administer, and create more fairness for all Canadian taxpayers.

Ensuring that everyone pays their fair share helps to keep taxes low for everyone and it improves incentives to work, save and invest. It attracts companies to our country. It attracts business in Canada. This is very important. Allow me to quote Mr. Larry F. Chapman, executive director and chief executive officer of the Canadian Tax Foundation, who stated to the Standing Committee on Finance earlier this year:

Bill C-48, the Technical Tax Amendments Act, 2012, the so-called tech bill, is a massive piece of legislation...but it represents 10 years of repairs and maintenance in updating the Income Tax Act and the Excise Tax Act.

When members opposite stood in the House and showed the massive tax act bill, this is what this gentleman was referring to. It is a massive piece of legislation and represents 10 years of repairs and maintenance in updating the Income Tax Act and the Excise Tax Act.

He further stated:

Its passage is important to all Canadians... I want to emphasize it again. Its passage is very important to all Canadians.

They are awaiting its passage in Parliament, waiting for parliamentarians to do the right thing.

All of us as taxpayers are obligated to provide a portion of our hard-earned incomes to fund health care, social programs and other vital services to Canadians. We do so willingly and honestly, asking only in return that governments both manage our tax dollars wisely and ask no more from us than our fair share. Canadians can count on our government to do both.

I hope all members in the House who were elected would commit to that basic fundamental principle of paying their fair share of taxes. It is troublesome when we hear of members who have not done that. Broadening and protecting the tax base supports the government's efforts to return to balanced budgets, responds to provincial governments' concerns about protecting provincial revenues on a shared tax basis and helps give Canadians confidence that our tax system is fair.

As part of the government's continuing commitment to keep taxes low for Canadian families and to ensure the integrity of the tax system, I am happy to report that economic action plan 2013 proposes a number of measures to close tax loopholes, address aggressive tax planning, clarify tax rules and reduce international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. Members on all sides of the House have mentioned this. The government is committed to closing tax loopholes that allow a select few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share. Ensuring that everyone pays their fair share also helps to keep taxes low for Canadian families and businesses, thereby improving incentives to work, save and invest in Canada.

Government Orders

● (1320)

Since 2006, including measures proposed in economic action plan 2013, the government has introduced over 75 measures to improve the integrity of the tax system. The government is taking steps in economic action plan 2013 to improve the integrity of the tax system in several ways, such as further extending the application of Canada's thin capitalization rules to Canadian resident trusts and non-resident entities; ensuring that the lost pools of trust cannot be inappropriately traded among arm's-length persons; enhancing corporate anti-loss trading rules to address planning that avoids these rules; ensuring that derivative transactions cannot be used to convert fully taxable ordinary income into capital gains taxed at a lower rate; eliminating unintended tax benefits relating to leveraged, insured annuities; and eliminating unintended tax benefits relating to leveraged life insurance arrangements, commonly known as the 10/8 arrangements.

These are but a few of the improvements that are being proposed here today. In addition, economic action plan 2013 will provide the Canada Revenue Agency with new tools to enforce the tax rules to reduce international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance such as extending the normal reassessment period by three years for taxpayers who have failed to report income from a specified foreign property on their annual income tax return and failed to properly file the foreign income verification statement known as form T1135. This does happen quite legitimately sometimes, but it has to be addressed. Other tools include revising of form T1135 to require reporting of more detailed information; streamlining the process for the CRA to obtain information containing unnamed persons from third parties such as banks; requiring certain financial intermediaries, including banks, to report to the CRA their clients' international electronic funds transfers of \$10,000 or more; and announcing the CRA's new stop international tax evasion program that will pay rewards to individuals with knowledge of major international tax non-compliance.

While ensuring its integrity and fairness, our government continues to work hard to ensure that the tax system remains competitive so that we attract new business investment in the Canadian economy that creates jobs that Canadian families depend on. Lower taxes play a particularly important role in supporting economic growth by enabling businesses to invest more of their revenues back into their operations. These business investments in machinery, equipment, information technology and other physical capital will boost Canada's productivity and help Canadian businesses grow and create more jobs.

As we all know, our government's tax changes have greatly improved Canada's business environment and tax competitiveness. Canada now has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7. Our government recognizes that low taxes increase the productive capacity of the Canada economy as well as Canadian living standards. It is this productivity growth that allows businesses to hire additional workers or offer higher wages to expand production and earn more profits.

Our government is committed to lower taxes for all Canadians. That is why, since coming to office in 2006, we have introduced broad-based tax relief such as lowering the GST rate from 7% to 5% and introducing the tax-free savings account. In total, we have

introduced more than 150 tax relief measures. Canadians at all income levels are benefiting from tax relief introduced by our government, with low-income and middle-income Canadians receiving proportionately greater relief. Indeed, more than one million low-income Canadians have been removed from the tax rolls. Our strong record of tax relief is saving the typical Canadian family of four more than \$3,200 a year.

The legislation before us today takes us even further toward this tax fairness objective. Once again, I encourage the NDP and Liberals to support this important legislation and to help create greater tax fairness for all Canadians.

● (1325)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about how having the lowest business taxes in the G7 allows businesses to hire. Could she explain this to all the young people in Toronto and across the country who cannot find any kind of permanent job? In fact they are relegated to an endless cycle of unpaid internships and short-term contract employment. In Toronto right now the official unemployment rate for young people is above 15%, but we know that the unofficial rate is well above that. It is over 20%. What can the member say to young people about the government's abysmal record on job creation for young people? It is in the statistics. It is not in the speaking notes, but the stats are there.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is obviously very concerned about his riding. Therefore, I would hope that he would give new hope to those young people who are looking for jobs and tell them that now, in spite of the economic climate globally, our country is the most sought after country in terms of economic climate in the world. There are 900,000 net new jobs that have been created.

I think it is a really good idea not to say to our youth that our country is no good and nothing is going right in our country when actually it is the envy of the world. Those 900,000 new jobs are very important for these young people and they can get out and get them.

● (1330)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party is going to be supporting the passage of this bill, and we indicated that at second reading.

Average Canadians look at tax avoidance or tax evasion as a serious issue that needs to be addressed. The bill, in principle, by its passage would go a long way in dealing with that issue. Our constituents want to ensure that there is a sense of fairness to our taxation policy and it is one of the reasons that we feel it is important to pass the bill in a timely fashion.

Government Orders

My question to the member is regarding the frequency of having legislation of this nature come before the House. There is concern about the length of time since it was amended in the past. We would like to think that we would not see that kind of gap in the future. Does she have some thoughts about what would be an appropriate time for passage of future changes to legislation of this nature?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, this started in 2001 when the tax fairness plan and loopholes were first looked at. As I said in my speech earlier, the fact of the matter is it has taken years to work with this. We were not actually in government in 2001. There was another government here. It takes a long time for governments to close all these loopholes that have been long-standing.

When we do a piece of legislation like this we want to do broad consultation. Broad consultation was done on this and there were things found that had to be addressed that no one had ever thought of. Therefore, with the finance committee and others culminating with this examination, this big bill has arrived now in Parliament, and it is very important that we get it passed very quickly.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that if anyone is watching, they are wondering why it has taken so long for this to happen. The fact that this bill is 1,000 pages long proves just how negligent this government is and how negligent previous governments were.

That brings me to two other questions. Who benefits from this being so complicated and that we need experts to figure it out? Who would benefit from it being simple and clear? Obviously, their negligence was not an accident.

This government, and perhaps the one before it, wanted this to remain complex and wanted to foster confusion for as long as possible, so that those who can afford to make use of tax experts would have an advantage.

What does my colleague think?

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, as the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada said, as they welcomed the passage of Bill C-48:

As the last technical income tax bill was passed by Parliament in 2001, a significant backlog has accumulated that must be addressed. The Government has consulted on the majority of these measures in recent years and now is the time for action.

The fact of the matter is that our government has consulted widely. It did start in 2001 before we were in government, but the ball was picked up because it had to be picked up. These tax loopholes had to be addressed.

As the member says, the bill is 1,000 pages long and it has now taken 200 days in this Parliament to pass it. When members opposite are talking about the speedy passage of this bill, one way that would be helpful is for all members opposite to support this bill and get it passed.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech on Bill C-48 which, as she said, is quite long.

I would like to know if, as a parliamentarian, she thinks it is a good idea to have a bill that is about 1,000 pages. I would also like to know if she has read it. If she has, that means that when she votes on it, she will be voting with a full understanding of the situation, and she will know what she is voting on.

If she has actually read it and fully understands the content, I would like to know which measure in this bill she prefers.

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, to be perfectly honest, I will not begin to say that I have read the 1,000 pages thoroughly, but I can say that I have gone through it and studied the parts that are very relevant to me.

I know I have been kept abreast of the consultations that have been going on. I have also been kept abreast of the issues that have popped up when companies and individuals have not paid their fair share of Canadian taxes.

I also know how important this bill is. Simply because we are coming out of a recession is one very important aspect. Every single honest Canadian is paying taxes, as we all are in this Parliament. Everybody, whether they are very wealthy or very poor, must be honest Canadians as well, or honest people who pay Canadian taxes.

Having said this, it has been a long consultation, a long process. It has been 200 days in this Parliament. I think as parliamentarians we can sit back and say it is a big thick book and we cannot get into it until sometime next year, but Canada is waiting. Canadians are waiting for the results. Canadian taxpayers are waiting to ensure everybody is paying their fair share of taxes. We need to do that.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if any of my law faculty colleagues from long ago are watching right now, they will probably be sniggering because they will remember that tax law was not my favourite field. I would add that it was not the favourite field of many law students.

However, it is probably the subject that affects people's everyday lives the most. People always talk about the long arm of the government and how it finds all kinds of ways, each more imaginative than the next, to reach in and take what we earn with the sweat of our brow. Sometimes it does that under what is called the Income Tax Act. At other times it does so by means of hidden taxes, which are highly valued by the Conservatives, with charges levied on all kinds of things.

Government Orders

We pay our share every day and our money flows in many ways into the government's coffers. Many people will obviously wonder why I am rising to discuss Bill C-48. I am doing so because it has an impact on everyone's life. It has an impact on the lives of the people in my riding, Gatineau. That is as true for small businesses as it is for big businesses, but it is also true for individuals. They pay every day through the GST, and barely a month ago they did through their income tax returns, so this is not the easiest subject.

Earlier I flipped through the act and thought back on marvellous memories of my time at the law faculty and on the Income Tax Act, just from looking at a few sections of the act. I wondered why legislators were incapable of coming up with anything simpler.

I was listening to the member on the other side of the House who spoke before me. Several questions were put to her, all asking the same thing: why are we making technical amendments in 2013 that should have been in place since 2001? Let us get something straight. This is technical, but Bill C-48 is already in force by means of comfort letters.

People must understand that, from the moment the mean taxman decides that something must be done, it is done, even if it is not yet included in the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act or related legislation. From the moment a comfort letter is signed, the government takes that money from our pockets. This will therefore make little change to people's lives, but it will be much easier to access because it will finally be in the act. Comfort letters are all well and good, and they say what they say, but they are not always clear.

For individuals, our tax system is based on voluntary assessment. In other words, we rely on average Canadians to file their tax return by April 30. If they are lucky, and Revenue Canada does not ask them to produce various documents, they can use the short form. In fact, it is not over yet. Even for people with some training in taxation, it is not very straightforward.

As the Auditor General said, this is not like other bills, where we have seen three versions die on the order paper as a result of an election or prorogation forced by the Conservative government, whose agenda disappeared as if by magic. In this case, the work just was not done. The work was also not done by the Liberals, since the previous legislation dates back to 2001. Auditors general have been calling on the legislators of the House for ages to do something about this more quickly.

• (1340)

In this way, the public could immediately see the changes to the legislation.

In my opinion, the Conservative response to this matter does not stand up. The legislation has not had previous incarnations, nor has it taken a great deal of time, nor is it the opposition's fault. That is absolutely not the case.

It has taken them this long to produce Bill C-48 and finally listen to what the Auditor General was telling them. What she was telling them was rather serious and blunt. She noted that there were more than 400 technical amendments, and there are barely 200 in Bill C-48.

In her fall 2009 report she said:

No income tax technical bill has been passed since 2001. Although the government has said [as quick as the devil] that an annual technical bill of routine housekeeping amendments to the Act is desirable, this has not happened. As a result, the Department of Finance Canada has a backlog of at least 400 technical amendments that have not been enacted, including 250 "comfort letters" dating back to 1998, recommending changes that have not been legislated.

If proposed technical changes are not tabled regularly, the volume of amendments becomes difficult for taxpayers, tax practitioners, and parliamentarians to absorb when they are grouped into a large package.

This is true, whether you are a New Democrat, a Liberal, the sole member of the Green Party or one of the few from the Bloc Québécois. This is true for everyone, including the Conservatives.

In the 1991 Report of the Auditor General, chapter 2, the Auditor General expressed some concerns that income tax comfort letters were not announced publicly. We are talking about chapter 2 of the Auditor General's report from 1991. In response, the Department of Finance Canada stated that:

...the government intends to release a package of income tax technical amendments on an annual basis, so that taxpayers will not be subject to more lengthy waiting periods as in the past before amendments are released to the public.

Comfort letters have since been regularly released to the public. However, in the past 18 years, very few technical bills have been introduced and passed. Only four of the bills relating to income tax have been passed.

A few sentences in my colleague's speech caught my attention. I found them surprising because it seemed to me that I had heard them yesterday as well. It is important to understand that all these bills are subject to a time allocation motion, be it Bill C-48 today, Bill C-54 last night or Bill C-49, which is to come and will not be spared either.

Introducing a time allocation motion for Bill C-48 seems particularly outrageous, especially when the members opposite do it ad nauseam, parroting the lines written and produced for them by the office on the third floor.

They are trying to tell us that this has been before the House for 200 days, yet Bill C-54 was also in the House for 200 days, as was Bill C-48, and Bill C-49 probably will be, as well.

With its majority, the government can advance its agenda as it pleases. Perhaps we are moving at a snail's pace because the government does not really know where it is going. It improvises a little and all of a sudden it realizes that the session may end and that it will leave a lot of things unfinished. That is why it is speeding everything up.

I hear people say we are repeating ourselves, but that is not the case. The message the people of Gatineau want me to send the Conservative government, particularly on Bill C-48, is that they are fed up with provisions so inaccessible and incomprehensible to the average person that everyone would like us to change those aspects.

When I got to page 13 of the Income Tax Act, I had covered only three sections, and I was already getting fed up.

Government Orders

● (1345)

Yet I was a lawyer for 30 years. I studied tax law. I was elected as a member in 2004. I have analyzed many budgets, and I have seen the Income Tax Act in all its forms, as a member of both the government and the official opposition. I was not born yesterday, but this can be hard to grasp even for someone like me.

Small businesses also point out a problem I regularly hear about in my riding of Gatineau. For a small business required to complete all the forms, the disproportionate amount of red tape is good only for the numbers expert industry.

When members of the middle class or less privileged individuals want to do the right thing and pay their taxes, but do not really know how the system works, they have to go see an expert to be sure they make no mistakes. Few people like to make mistakes when it comes to taxes. However, some people manage to divert a large portion of what they owe in taxes even though they make millions of dollars. Authorities often go after lower-income individuals and treat them like criminals even though some people are forced to make arrangements with the Canada Revenue Agency, Revenu Québec or other organizations simply because everyday life is hard for them.

We get these kinds of messages in our ridings. True, we will vote for the bill, but the Conservatives tell us to shut our traps the moment we agree with them. We are no longer entitled to speak. I do not have the right to tell the House what the people of my riding would like to get from their politicians, and I was elected by 62% of the electorate, not 39% like the Conservative government. There are lessons to be learned from each of our ridings. That is what democracy means. It means electing 308 members of different political philosophies. Gatineau may not have the same problem as certain ridings in Alberta, British Columbia or the Atlantic provinces. That is what makes it possible for us to improve the situation together.

Voting in favour of a bill is not necessarily the same thing as giving the government carte blanche or saying that overall the bill is amazing. Sometimes, the government would do well to listen to us and follow the interpretation, which it does not often do. This is unfortunate, but there is a reason why it sticks to the script, like a racehorse running straight for the finish line. The Conservatives' problem is that they often hit a wall because they fail to listen to what people were saying along the way. That is regrettable, but the message they are sending to all of our constituents is that their opinion does not matter in the least.

Yet if there is one issue that affects all Canadians, regardless of where they live, surely it is taxation. My grandmother always said that in certain areas of life, things should be the same for everyone. I am sure that she would qualify that statement, since some people are good at avoiding certain things. She used to say that some things were unavoidable, like death and taxes. She was right up to a point, although she would surely be turning in her grave at all of the tax avoidance measures that abound today.

While I am very pleased to see that Bill C-48 attempts to address certain problems, I am not fooled either. The Minister of Justice argues that by amending and toughening up certain laws, the problems of all crime victims will be resolved. That is not true. If the government fails to put more police officers on the highways and to

increase funding for psychological support services, then it will not accomplish anything. The same holds true for tax avoidance.

● (1350)

If there are not enough agents to properly investigate cases of tax avoidance, or better still, of tax evasion, we will hit another wall.

Again, this is a problem that the Conservatives have. They have an extremely narrow vision of how to get from point A to point B. They are incapable of appreciating that in order to get to point B and the desired outcome, they might have to make a small detour. The Conservatives just do not do certain things, like admitting they were wrong or that they made a mistake. According to an old saying, a fault confessed is half redressed. They have a hard time with that and again, that is unfortunate.

Bill C-48 is a sound piece of legislation, but it does resolve everything. Had we not had to contend with this time allocation motion, we would have been able to hear a lot more from my colleagues, and maybe even from the Conservatives.

I listened to some of the speeches, and it was interesting to see what it is about this bill that makes some Conservatives react. Once they had dispensed with "we are the best, the nicest, the cleverest" or what have you, in the final 30 seconds, they tied it to what was happening in their riding. It was beneficial for all members of the House.

We can all learn from one another. I learn something from my colleagues who represent more rural regions. They in turn learn about what makes people in urban areas tick. Of course, there are different kinds of urban areas. There are large cities like Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver and cities like Gatineau, which is the fourth-largest municipality in Quebec. Gatineau's problems are different because it is located right on the Ontario border. By talking to one another, it is possible to find real solutions.

When I served in Parliament from 2004 to 2006, I chaired the women's caucus. Back then, my favourite expression was gender-based analysis, or GBA.

I would tell my male colleagues that GBA stood for gender-based analysis, not Game Boy Advance. When a bill was being drafted, we ensured that all of the facts were taken into account. We were not just concerned about women.

The best example I can give you is young people who drop out of school. If the facts show that young boys are the ones who drop out of school and a policy is needed to address that situation, then young boys will be the focus of that policy. That logic will dictate our actions.

Statements by Members

We accomplish things by talking to one another, by discussing matters and especially by listening and by being willing to admit that sometimes ours is not the absolute truth. However, this government is absolutely incapable of understanding that someone other than the PMO may have some sound ideas or be right. Just imagine having to admit that the NDP had a sound idea. The government thinks the sky would fall and something terrible would happen if it admitted that. How utterly ridiculous and how out of touch with the public.

When I weigh everything, I tell myself that maybe this is what the Conservatives really want in the final analysis. All this really does is leave the public fed up, and what happens when people are fed up? The Conservatives are gambling on two possible outcomes: either that people will come out in force and vote them out of office, which I am hoping will be the case because people no longer want to have anything to do with them, or that people will stay home because they are sick and tired of the whole process. The Conservatives are gambling that the second scenario will play out.

I think people have to realize that while they may not be interested in politics, something like Bill C-48 affects their day-to-day lives, starting with taxation.

Just think about the tax people pay every day on all kinds of things. If they were to calculate how much tax they pay throughout the year, not just income tax, but tax on items purchased at the corner store, at the grocery store, at the drugstore or elsewhere, they would realize that the government is truly omnipresent and that perhaps they should pay attention to politics.

I will be voting in favour of the bill, but it is not an end in itself.

• (1355)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of New Democrats referred to the time and said that 2001 was the last time that technical changes were made. One can imagine that changes are not made on an annual basis per se, but depend on the changes that are required.

My question is related to just that. How often does the member believe it is necessary to make changes? Would she not agree that bringing out a new piece of legislation would depend on the nature and the number of changes that are being requested?

For example, 2002 would not have been a good year to bring additional legislation forward, given that changes were made in 2001. Would the member suggest that we go on an annual basis with legislation?

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question.

I think that the Auditor General has actually provided part of the answer. In my view, once there are comfort letters, a corresponding bill should be drafted to make adjustments immediately.

From 2001 to 2006, there was no temporary gap in tax rules because there were comfort letters. The Conservatives came to power afterwards.

The Auditor General told us to stop using comfort letters for the sake of those reading the legislation. Luckily, I was able to do my 20

minutes without reading part of the Income Tax Act. That would have been a real treat. Sections 1 to 5 alone take the reader through subparagraph after subparagraph. Do you think that the individuals concerned can make sense of this? No way. This is why the Auditor General wants us to put an end to comfort letters and amend legislation quickly.

• (1400)

[English]

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

Statements by members, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

VISION HEALTH MONTH

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is Vision Health Month in Canada. This is a nationwide awareness campaign, designed to educate Canadians across the country about their vision health and to help eliminate avoidable sight loss.

Recently I spent some time without sight at CNIB Edmonton, trying to cope with everyday tasks that most of us take for granted: walking down the hall or up and down stairs, making and serving lunch, crossing busy streets, and using communications technology.

The experience brought home to me just how challenging life could be for those with impaired or no vision. It also made me appreciate the determination and inner strength of those who have overcome such challenges, as well as the great work being done by CNIB staff and volunteers in helping people cope and adapt.

Vision loss does not have to mean the loss of independence or quality of life. With the right support, people who are blind or partially sighted can do almost anything.

Throughout the month of May, CNIB and its partner, Doctors of Optometry Canada, are calling on all Canadians to do one simple thing that could save their sight, and that is get an eye exam from a doctor of optometry and do it today.

* * *

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative Party wages its war on science, the NDP continues to champion research and growing Canada's knowledge economy.

Conservative cuts to basic research, muzzling scientists and dismantling the National Research Council shows that Conservatives do not understand how science works.

Statements by Members

Under the Conservative government, Canadian R and D investment has dropped from 16th to 23rd in the world.

The NDP unanimously passed a motion at our 2013 policy convention to continue to develop our made in Canada national science strategy, which includes moving to match the percentage of GDP invested by the public and private sectors in R and D as found in other global leading countries, such as the United States.

The Conservatives have no such policy goals or targets and only offer vacuous statements based upon dubious financial figures, while attacking the core of our knowledge economy.

The NDP has a clear and positive vision, which we will implement when we form government in 2015.

* * *

BROOKS BANDITS

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I stand in this place to congratulate the Brooks Bandits, a team from a community that it has been my privilege to represent here since 2008, on having won the RBC Cup, Canada's junior A hockey championship.

The Bandits worked so hard all season, as they always do, and it paid huge dividends. I have no doubt that many of these players will go on to play in the NHL. They have made their communities and families very proud, with the resounding 3-1 victory over the Summerside Western Capitals.

The Brooks Bandits won the RBC Cup and, believe it or not, it was their very first time participating in this tournament.

The Brooks Bandits ranked number one in the Canadian Junior Hockey League for the final 22 weeks of the season and won their second consecutive AJHL title as well.

I am with the Bandits in spirit, as they parade triumphantly through Brooks today.

I would like to congratulate team captain Cam Maclise, as well as coach Ryan Papaioannou, assistant coach Brent Gunnlaughson, and the entire team for a job well done. They have done us all very proud. Go Bandits, go.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Prabh Srawn is a young Canadian studying law in Australia. He has been a Canadian Forces reservist for six years. I know many members of the House will know the story that Prabh went missing in Kosciuszko National Park in Australia on May 13, and he has not yet been found.

The family has been asking for an enhanced effort by Australian officials to find Prabh. I am sure all members of the House would join with me in seeking every possible avenue to find him. The news that the rescue effort is being scaled back is especially troubling. We would hope that in fact additional steps could be taken.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Prabh and his family.

We continue to urge the Canadian and Australian governments to do whatever they can to find this exemplary young Canadian.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, far too often the scales of justice were tipped away from the rights of law-abiding citizens in favour of the rights of criminals, while the interests of victims were ignored altogether.

Our government has taken action to right this wrong. We have put forward a strong tough on crime agenda by establishing tougher penalties for a wide range of crimes. We have introduced and passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act, which raised the age of protection and made it easier to keep dangerous, violent and repeat offenders behind bars. We passed the Safe Streets and Communities Act, which eliminated house arrest for serious and violent crime and toughened sentences for drug dealers. We passed the Citizen's Arrest and Self-defence Act, which clarified the rules related to citizen's arrest and defence of property and persons.

Canadians can count on our government to continue to protect victims of crime by holding criminals accountable for the crimes they commit.

* * *

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to highlight an important event being held across Canada, namely the Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite my constituents to sign up for this one-of-a-kind event. This year, in Drummond and Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, people may join the Relay for Life in Acton Vale on May 31, in Drummondville on June 1, and in St-Hyacinthe on June 7.

Walking 12 hours overnight may seem quite a challenge. However, the people facing the real challenge are those living with cancer and their loved ones.

Civil society must engage in raising funds to support cancer research. The federal government should follow the NDP's health-related recommendations for a public and accessible Canadian health care system.

Solidarity is also essential both for motivation and to keep hope alive. That is why I warmly invite my constituents in Drummond and Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot to join in an enriching human experience by participating in the Relay for Life. Together, we can create hope, the hope to eradicate cancer, to live healthy lives and to embrace a dignified life—hope for tomorrow.

Statements by Members

[English]

DREAM BELIEVERS

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to share an inspirational story from the great Kenora riding. On May 10, Dryden's own Mardi Plomp and her Dream Believers team held the "Shake Your Booty for Colon Cancer" gala to help raise money for colon cancer screening equipment for the Dryden Regional Health Centre.

Mardi started her annual cancer fundraiser in 2008 with small garden parties in her home. This year, Mardi's fundraiser went big time, requiring the local arena to accommodate more than 700 folks from across northwestern Ontario who came out to shake their booty.

Mardi and her team set a goal to raise \$85,000 dollars in one night. In fact, they raised \$106,844, which will be used to purchase a colonoscope and gastroscope for the Dryden Regional Health Centre.

I am proud to stand in my place today and congratulate Mardi Plomp, the Dream Believers and all those booty shaking folks for their success and support to ensure that people in our region have access to the cancer screening tools they need to help prevent and detect cancer early.

Mardi Plomp and the Dream Believers are just another example of what is so great about the great Kenora riding.

* * *

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the many Canadian vintners who are here today, and those across the country, on the recent results of the largest and most in-depth Canadian wine and grape economic impact study ever conducted.

This third party report found that the industry generates more than \$6.8 billion annually for the Canadian economy, including \$1.2 billion in government-related revenue.

With more than 500 wineries and 1,300 grape growers in Canada, this industry proudly supports 31,000 Canadian jobs in agriculture, processing and support services.

It is also important to note that more than three million tourists are welcomed to Canadian wineries each year, which is four times the number of visitors to the Vancouver Olympics.

I cannot overstate the importance of the Canadian wine industry to the people of my riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook and the greater Canadian economy.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you and all hon. members to the Government of Canada Conference Centre tonight for the Canadian wine reception to fully experience the excellence of Canadian wines and winemakers.

[Translation]

CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO SOCIETY

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us take a moment to celebrate the contributions of women to our society. Whether in urban or rural areas, in business or community organizations, in politics or the service industry, we need women—strong, engaged, influential women.

I am thinking of women like Micheline Anctil, the mayor of Forestville and reeve of Haute-Côte-Nord; Line Sirois, who has been a volunteer advocate for the unemployed for over 10 years; Danie Harvey, who has remained dedicated to defending those less fortunate for the past 25 years. I am also thinking of women like Chantale Cormier, director of the CLD de l'Île-d'Orléans; Isabelle Lusignan, director of the Chambre de commerce de Charlevoix; Chantal Lachance, who, with her colleagues, has made a name for herself in business; and Ginette Faucher, who runs an organization that makes the Montmorency area a better place to live.

I am especially proud to be part of a caucus that has a record number of women. Municipal elections will be held in Quebec this November. I congratulate organizations like Réseau femmes et politique municipale de la Capitale-Nationale, which encourages women to enter politics and promotes women candidates. I say hats off to you all, ladies.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, day after day the NDP members stand in the House and claim to be defenders of Canadian taxpayers. Then we find out that two members of the NDP cannot be bothered to pay the tens of thousands of dollars they owe in back taxes. What is more, these members cannot be bothered to properly report this to the Ethics Commissioner.

The NDP admitted that it knew the member for Brossard—La Prairie owed back taxes "from the beginning". Not only did it not disclose this to Canadians, it decided to make him the national revenue critic.

Paying taxes is a responsibility shouldered by all Canadians. Not paying our taxes is irresponsible, inconsiderate and un-Canadian.

The NDP cannot claim to have any respect for Canadian taxpayers while allowing those members to remain in its caucus.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

JEANNE MARTIN PAINCHAUD

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the birthday of Jeanne Martin Painchaud of Saint-Lambert. She blew out no fewer than 100 candles last Friday and is here with us today. It was a great honour and an immense pleasure for me to mark this memorable event with her, her daughter, Hélène, her granddaughter, Marie-Noëlle, and her son-in-law, Mel, as well as the members of the Association des résidents du Carrefour Victoria.

Ms. Painchaud has lived 100 years, a century, and during that time, she has had a busy life giving back to the community, particularly the Saint-Lambert hospital. She has shared 100 years of experience and happiness. She is an example of perseverance, accomplishment and dedication to her loved ones—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River.

* * *

[English]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on delivering meaningful reform to the Senate, including elections, term limits and tough spending oversight. We have also introduced 11 tough new rules governing Senate travel and expenses, which were introduced despite objections from the Liberals.

It should come as no surprise that the Liberal leader is defending the Senate's status quo. Recently, the Liberal leader said, "We have 24 senators in Quebec and there are only six for Alberta and British Columbia. That benefits us. It is an advantage for Quebec".

The Liberal leader is once again dividing Canadians. Recently, he also said that speaking in one language was "lazy". He also said, "Canada isn't doing well right now because it's Albertans who control our community and socio-democratic agenda. It doesn't work".

Time and time again he takes potshots at the west and then comes to the House and pretends he is defending its interests. Mr. Speaker, western Canadians know better.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my concerns about the housing first approach announced in budget 2013 and its negative impact on community outreach programs for homeless Canadians and others living in precarious situations.

[English]

In Montreal alone, shelters serve over 2,000 individuals on a nightly basis and, as we know, citizens in shelters account for only the tip of the iceberg.

Budget 2013 leaves community outreach groups focused on the homeless in the dark about whether they will have the funding required to maintain their services.

[Translation]

Focusing on housing excludes other very important initiatives that help people leave homelessness behind once and for all.

[English]

The government has a responsibility to continue to fund proven and effective programs provided by community outreach groups and to protect and support vulnerable Canadians. I hope the government will reconsider.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another interview, another oopsy for the Liberal leader. Case in point: the leader of the Liberal Party has declared that he supports the status quo in the Senate because it benefits Quebec, clearly showing to Canadians he does not know or understand what our national interests are.

The Liberal leader says one thing when he is in one part of the country and the complete opposite when he is in a different part of the country. It makes me wonder if the Liberal leader understands that the Internet is everywhere these days—yes, even in the west.

Just because he is speaking to his media buddies in Quebec does not mean that western Canadians will not hear and be shocked by what he has said. It is the only reason I can explain why the Liberal leader said that "Quebecers are better than the rest of Canada" and "Canada isn't doing well right now because its Albertans in control of our country". He then called Canadians who speak only one of our two languages "lazy".

The good people of the electric city riding of Peterborough, Ontario, understand that the Senate must be reformed if possible, or abolished if necessary.

We stand with all Canadians, except perhaps the new Liberal leader, who will be standing up for the status quo, unaccountable Senate and demonstrating—

● (1415)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the scandals pile up, the Conservatives are continuing with operation camouflage. Senators may be lounging in luxury at taxpayers' expense, falsifying their residence claims, inflating their travel expenses and cashing in \$90,000 cheques from the Prime Minister's Office, but the Conservatives keep repeating that they saw nothing and knew nothing, that they did not do it and that the guilty party acted alone. It is almost like listening to the former mayor of Montreal, Gérald Tremblay. How pathetic.

Oral Questions

While one hides, the other defends the status quo and his privileges. The Liberals are arguing for the status quo that gave us Mac Harb, Raymond Lavigne and a number of other senators with questionable ethics, which does not make a lot of sense. The Conservatives still will not answer questions about this scandal, which is the direct result of the Prime Minister's partisan appointments, but the NDP's position is clear: the Senate is not elected, not accountable, not ethical, not representative, and not relevant. It is time to shut down this relic of the past. The NDP will do so with enthusiasm and a sense of relief in 2015.

* * *

[English]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party is clearly in over his head. We know he does not want Canadians to have a say in who represents them in the Senate because the Liberal leader thinks that "...an elected Senate is a terrible idea".

Instead of working with our government to bring greater accountability and transparency to the Senate, the Liberal leader champions the Senate's status quo, this time because it is to Quebec's advantage, as he says.

These divisive comments are not surprising. They are consistent with the Liberal leader's poor judgment and lack of respect for Canadians from all regions of our country.

Our government is focused on delivering meaningful reform to the Senate, including elections, term limits and tough spending oversight.

The Liberal leader is defending the status quo in the Senate because it benefits one region at the expense of others. It is time the Liberal leader and his Liberal senators stopped defending the Senate status quo.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on what date and at what time was the Prime Minister informed that Nigel Wright had made a payment to Conservative Senator Mike Duffy?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear on this question. This matter came to my attention two weeks ago, after speculation appeared in the media.

On Wednesday, May 15, I was told about it. At that very moment, I demanded that my office ensure that the public was informed, and it was informed appropriately.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when did the Prime Minister first speak with Nigel Wright about Mike Duffy's expenses?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, my first knowledge of this was on the date and at the time indicated.

Prior to that point in time, it was my understanding that Mr. Duffy had paid back his own expenses.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question was when did the Prime Minister first speak with Nigel Wright about Mike Duffy's expenses, and how many times did he speak with Nigel Wright in the week preceding his resignation?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the NDP is suggesting I had any information to the contrary from Mr. Wright prior to this, that is completely false. I learned of this on May 15 and immediately made this information public, as I have said many times.

● (1420)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are asking very simple, straightforward questions and the Prime Minister is not answering them. That is the problem. Canadians want answers.

[Translation]

What instructions did the Prime Minister give to Nigel Wright or other people in his office to solve the problem of Conservative Senator Mike Duffy's expenses?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not give any such instructions. It was my opinion that Mr. Duffy was to pay his own expenses, and that is what I believed until May 15.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Then what changed, Mr. Speaker, between the time the Prime Minister expressed his total, absolute support of Nigel Wright and the moment he accepted his resignation just three days later? What changed?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Wright accepted full responsibility for his error in this matter. He offered his resignation, and I accepted that resignation.

As we know, he will be subject to an examination by the Ethics Commissioner, and that is the accountability mechanism we have put in place for these kinds of things.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the country now knows, the Prime Minister's closest adviser secretly paid \$90,000 to a sitting legislator to obstruct an audit.

Will the Prime Minister commit to releasing all records, emails, documents, correspondence and other material relating to any arrangement between Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the arrangement in question that the leader speaks to was, of course, between Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy. It is a matter of examination by the Ethics Commissioners in each chamber of this Parliament, and obviously, should we be asked to produce any kind of information, we would be happy to do so.

Oral Questions

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are asking for that information.

[Translation]

I will try again.

Is the Prime Minister going to release all the documents, including emails and correspondence, relating to the arrangement between Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy? Is the Prime Minister going to show the public a copy of the cheque made out by Mr. Wright to Mr. Duffy?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once more, this was an arrangement between Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy. I am expecting the Ethics Commissioners in each house of Parliament to look into these questions.

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are questions to which Canadians have been asking for answers, and they deserve those answers directly from the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister commit to having everyone involved in this affair, including himself, testify about their involvement, in a public forum under oath?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts here are very straightforward. This is a matter between Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy. It is the subject of an examination by the Ethics Commissioners in both houses of Parliament.

What I think Canadians are completely bewildered about is why the leader of the Liberal Party thinks now is an appropriate time to try to pit one region against another region over the question of Senate reform.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps referring us back to the whitewashed report of the Senate. Senator Carolyn Stewart Olsen is his former press secretary. Did he or did he not ever have any conversations with his former press secretary, Carolyn Stewart Olsen, concerning this affair in the Senate?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, no, I did not, but it is very clear the Senate committee itself has answered those questions. It is the author of its own report. That report mirrors the recommendations of an independent audit conducted on behalf of the Senate; and the government, as a matter of fact, agrees with the recommendations in those reports, which are that the expenses in question are inappropriate and amounts such as that must be repaid to the taxpayers of Canada.

• (1425)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, did the Prime Minister ever discuss this matter in cabinet?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Senate committee has been very clear. It made its own report on these matters. The government's position is also extremely well known. When people claim expenditures they never actually incurred, these are inappropriate and must be repaid to the taxpayers.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps trying to convince Canadians that

he is being straightforward. That was a very straightforward and simple question. Did he ever discuss this matter in cabinet?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Senate committee report is a Senate committee report. It is not a matter of government or cabinet business. That is plainly obvious.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when did the Prime Minister learn that an agreement had been made with Conservative Senator Mike Duffy? This time we are asking about the agreement, not the payment.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, it was the same date.

On Wednesday, May 15, Mr. Wright told me that he had given a personal cheque to Mr. Duffy so that he could reimburse the taxpayers.

Until that moment, I thought that Mr. Duffy had paid his own expenses.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, who in the Prime Minister's Office spoke with Mr. Duffy about withholding information from auditors or others investigating this matter?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have no information to that effect. Obviously, as I have said repeatedly, the arrangements between Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright are a matter of inquiry of the Ethics Commissioners of both houses of this Parliament, and we will provide any support necessary in those examinations.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy wrote in an email that after being paid \$90,000, he "stayed silent on the orders of the Prime Minister's Office". Who told Mike Duffy to remain silent?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are not matters I am privy to. This is an email from Mike Duffy, who is no longer a member of our caucus and certainly never conveyed that information to me.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once Mike Duffy received the \$90,000 from the Prime Minister's Office, he stopped co-operating with Deloitte, which was the auditor in the file. Was that part of the deal with Mike Duffy?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note the falsehood in that particular question. Mr. Duffy has received no money from the Prime Minister's Office, nor from the taxpayers of Canada. Mr. Wright has been very clear that Mr. Wright gave this money to Mr. Duffy out of his own personal resources, and to my knowledge, there is no legal agreement between the two of them.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, actually, when the chief of staff of the Prime Minister in the course of his functions from the Prime Minister's Office gives \$90,000 to shut up a sitting senator, that is out of the Prime Minister's Office.

Oral Questions

No legal document? A cheque is a document. Do they have a copy of the cheque? Has the Prime Minister or anyone in his office seen that cheque?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition just said, there is no cheque from the Prime Minister's Office. There is no use of Prime Minister's Office funds in this affair.

This was an action Mr. Wright took, using his own resources, on which he is now subject to examination and accountability by the Ethics Commissioner.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if he has never seen the cheque, how can the Prime Minister rise in this House and tell us that it is a personal cheque? How does he know that it is not from a trust account? How does he know that if he has never seen the cheque?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of public record, as Mr. Wright himself has said. I can certainly assure the member that no such money has gone out of our office or out of PMO budget.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has repeatedly stated in this House today that he only learned about the deal between Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy on May 15.

However, on the evening of May 14, CTV News ran the story about this deal and included commentary from the Prime Minister's own office that no taxpayer money was used.

Is the Prime Minister so completely not aware about what is going on in his own office that he did not know the night before, when the news broke?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I have been very clear. Until the morning of May 15, when Mr. Wright informed me that he had written a personal cheque to Mr. Duffy so that he could repay his expenses, it had been my understanding that Mr. Duffy had paid from his own personal resources.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us get this straight.

On Tuesday, the Prime Minister's Office denies any problem with the payment. On Wednesday, it is an honourable act. On Friday, Nigel Wright still has the complete confidence of the Prime Minister. Sunday morning, he resigns, but cabinet ministers run around calling him "a great Canadian".

If the Prime Minister learned about the \$90,000 payment at the same time as the rest of us, why did it take him a week to relieve his chief of staff of his responsibilities?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by his own admission, Mr. Wright made a very serious error. For that, he has accepted full, sole responsibility.

He has agreed to resign. He is subject to an investigation and examination by the Ethics Commissioner, on which I anticipate he will be fully co-operative.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is what the Prime Minister would have Canadians believe: the chief of staff walks into the Prime Minister's Office on Wednesday morning, looks him in the eye and says that unbeknownst to him he had secretly paid a sitting legislator \$90,000 to obstruct an audit.

If that were true, the Prime Minister should have fired Nigel Wright on the spot. Instead, he spent five days defending him and calling him "honourable".

Has the Prime Minister grown so out of touch that he actually expects Canadians to believe this story?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts here are reasonably simple, whether or not the opposition or anybody else particularly likes them.

The facts are simple and they are clear. It was the belief of Mr. Wright—in fact, I think it is fair to say the belief of all of us—that Mr. Duffy should repay any inappropriate expenses. Mr. Wright ultimately decided, on his own, using his own resources, to assist Mr. Duffy in that repayment, a matter he kept to himself until Wednesday, May 15.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Benjamin Perrin denies having been a part of the decision to give Mike Duffy the money and write him a cheque. He does not deny having drawn up the agreement for Nigel Wright.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what part Mr. Perrin played in this story?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Perrin has already answered these questions. It was Mr. Wright who gave the cheque to Mr. Duffy. According to our information, as far as we know at this time, there is no legal agreement between them.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is simply juggling the same words as his ministers.

There is no legal agreement, but there was an exchange of emails, and we should see something here, because there was an exchange of emails. The cheque is a legal document. It is a negotiable instrument. It should be disclosed. We will find out if it was a personal cheque or one drawn on a trust account.

[*English*]

We have another question.

After expressing full confidence in Pamela Wallin, what did he learn from the audit of Ms. Wallin's expenses that led him to ask Senator Wallin to resign from the Conservative caucus after having expressed full confidence in her and having said in this House that he had personally checked her expenses and that they were fine? What changed?

Oral Questions

● (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is incorrect. What we said is there would be an examination of the expenses of all senators. There is in fact an ongoing audit of Senator Wallin's expenses. Senator Wallin has chosen to step outside the Conservative caucus until such time as that audit report and the matters that may or may not be raised in it are resolved.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was almost a moment of admission there.

Let me remind the Prime Minister of what he said when he was in opposition. He said that the prime minister personally ordered adscam done and chose the people who executed the plan. He said that at the very least he fostered an attitude within the party, chose the managers who committed these crimes and completely and utterly failed to exercise any oversight, supervision or leadership. He said that in the end it does not really matter because the prime minister was the leader, and a leader is responsible for the actions of the people he leads.

Does he still agree with these comments?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree that Canadians expect and deserve accountability. That is why the Prime Minister, both in his entire term as prime minister and again here today, has shown the accountability and leadership that Canadians have come to expect.

The Leader of the Opposition asked questions; the Prime Minister has answered. The Liberals were mired in corruption, and Canadians expected action; we delivered the Accountability Act. On Senate reform, we have legislation to go further. It would be nice if the opposition would join us in the fight to reform Canada's Senate.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about three people central on this. First Nigel Wright, the Prime Minister's own hand-picked and closest adviser, cuts a potentially illegal cheque for \$90,000 to make a political crisis disappear. Second, the Prime Minister's longest-standing personal adviser, Carolyn Stewart Olsen, sits on a committee that whitewashes the report on Duffy, once again to make a potential crisis disappear.

The third member of the Prime Minister's triumvirate is Ray Novak, now the last man standing. Did the Prime Minister ask Ray Novak to explain his role in the scheme to cover up this scandal?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just answered directly both of those questions that were in the Leader of the Opposition's question. However, more broadly on the issue, the Prime Minister was just very clear about when he learned about what Nigel Wright did when Nigel Wright was acting alone.

We do want to indeed move forward on the issue of Senate reform and we do hope that the opposition parties will stand up and work with us to reform the Senate in a way that Canadians have come to hope that this House would do.

TAXATION

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that two members of the NDP caucus owe tens of thousands of dollars in back taxes. If we can believe it, one is the former revenue critic. The NDP advocate for higher taxes for Canadians and at the same time cannot be bothered to pay their own.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport update the House on the measures the government has taken to keep taxes low for hard-working Canadian taxpayers?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand that when some cheat the tax system, everyone else has to pay more to make up the difference. That is why we have hired 100 new auditors. It is why we have introduced 75 tough new measures to crack down on tax cheats. We have caught 2,000 of them since we took office.

At the same time, we are lowering taxes for hard-working, law-abiding families by, on average, \$3,000 per family. On this side of the House we believe everyone should pay their fair share and everyone should pay just a little bit less.

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GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is trying to keep up with his boss with his very own patronage scandal and cover-up.

ACOA's rules were rigged. They were rigged to hire the defence minister's political aide. That is clear. When caught, his chief of staff stepped in to whitewash a report to cover up that interference.

These agencies are supposed to help with crucial regional economic development. Instead, ACOA has become a home for Conservative partisan abuses.

Where is the accountability? What consequences did the minister's chief of staff face for this attempted cover-up?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that question, I have to say, was very void of facts.

The Public Service Commission is an independent body and, as such, makes its own determinations on what to include or not include in its reports. The independent investigation by the Public Service Commission did not find any evidence of any wrongdoing or influence on the part of ministers or political staff in this matter, and ACOA has taken action in response to the Public Service Commission's recommendations.

* * *

● (1440)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they changed the report at the request of the minister's office.

News reports have revealed that the Prime Minister, after making what we thought was a bona fide promise to Newfoundland and Labrador to provide a loan guarantee for Muskrat Falls, tried to force the province to concede fish-processing rules in the EU trade deal in order to keep that promise, and days before Nigel Wright resigned, he was pushing the issue with the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge his bad faith in this, or is he claiming that here is another case of Nigel Wright acting alone?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has it all wrong. There is no linkage between these two issues.

Our government is proceeding with the Lower Churchill project. In fact, we just issued the request for financing for this very project.

An ambitious trade agreement with the EU would be of significant benefit to hard-working Canadians, including Labradorians and Newfoundlanders. In fact, we are seeking a very high-quality fish and seafood package for Canada, and we are committed to achieving an outcome that would open up new opportunities for Canada's exporters.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians hoping for answers about the Jeffrey Delisle case got a whole lot of ducking and dodging from the Minister of Public Safety yesterday.

The fact is that CSIS failed to share critical information on this case with the RCMP and left it to the FBI to inform Canadian police. Now we are hearing the United States had to step in to ensure Canada's security systems were actually fixed.

After the damage this has done to Canada's reputation, what is the minister going to do to restore our credibility with our allies?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not comment on operational matters relating to national security. However, I can say that the conclusions drawn in the media report are inaccurate, and the comments of that individual are inaccurate as well.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can shoot the messenger all he wants, but the facts are the facts.

This disastrous breach in security could have been avoided. The loopholes that enabled Mr. Delisle to sell secrets to Russia for nearly five years had been identified by internal audits, but the Conservatives preferred to stand by and watch the disaster unfold.

One expert stated, and I quote, "National Defence, if it had tried, could not have done worse".

Why were these security breaches not rectified?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not comment on matters of national security when it involves

Oral Questions

operational matters. However, I can say that the conclusions in the media report are inaccurate.

* * *

[Translation]

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Federal Court issued a damning ruling against the Conservative Party.

Justice Mosley ruled that the Conservative Party database had been used to conduct widespread, systematic fraud during the 2011 election.

What will the Prime Minister do to hold all those in his party who committed fraud accountable?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the hon. member did not read the ruling.

If he had, he would know that the Conservative Party was vindicated in the ruling and that there was no evidence that the Conservative Party was guilty of what the hon. member is accusing us of. We won the election, we were vindicated in the ruling and we will continue to work for Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Prime Minister, who has been up talking about accountability all day. Justice Mosley ruled last week that the Conservative Party database was used to commit widespread election fraud and that in a typical pattern for the government, the Conservative Party did everything it could, to quote the judge, "to block these proceedings by any means".

Why did the Prime Minister allow the government to engage in trench warfare to prevent the truth from coming out? Will the Prime Minister explain the lack of accountability of his operatives in this case?

• (1445)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually, what the ruling said was that there was "no finding that the [Conservative Party of Canada], [or] any CPC candidates...were directly involved in any campaign to mislead voters" and that the partisan group that brought the legal action failed to produce even a single person who had been prevented from voting as a result of an illegal robo-call or a phone call.

Speaking of accountability, it is time for the member to stand up and explain why he took the occasion over this weekend to attack all Canadians outside of Quebec with a divisive comment designed to protect the Senate status quo and all the Liberals who are privileged to sit in that Senate.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Panamanian police finally nabbed Arthur Porter, who allegedly misappropriated millions of dollars. That same Arthur Porter was the Conservatives' choice to chair the CSIS Security Intelligence Review Committee.

Will the Conservatives finally admit that appointing Arthur Porter showed a serious lack of judgment?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the authorities for a successful arrest. While I cannot comment on a specific case, I can say that anyone involved in corruption must face the full force of the law. Arthur Porter resigned nearly two years ago. These allegations have no connection to his role with the federal government.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is about the Prime Minister's judgment and lack thereof. We have Jeffrey Delisle selling off Canada's secrets. At the same time, the Conservative appointee, Arthur Porter, was chair of the Security Intelligence Review Committee. Can members believe it? Now both are behind bars, yet Conservatives are refusing to take accountability and tell Canadians what really went on here.

Will the Conservatives finally take responsibility for Arthur Porter?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, I have answered those questions, but let us talk about the issue of accountability and the failure of the Leader of the Opposition to demand accountability from two of his members who are, in fact, not paying their income tax. He has taken no steps at all in that respect.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Selkirk—Interlake are extremely concerned about whether or not Canada's justice system has all the tools it needs to keep them safe from high-risk individuals. Most recently, Vince Li, a man who brutally murdered and cannibalized Tim McLean on a Greyhound bus, was granted escorted day trips by the Manitoba Criminal Code Review Board. This, in my view and the view of my constituents, is an outrage.

Could the Minister of Justice please tell the House about what action the government is taking to address these types of cases?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is precisely why we have introduced the not criminally responsible act. We want to make sure that public safety is the paramount consideration when review boards have a look at these cases.

What I do find outrageous is the position of the Liberal Party, which last night announced that it will vote against all of the common-sense reforms, this despite the fact that this has the support of victims groups, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime and provincial attorneys general. Canadians should not be surprised, but

they should be very disappointed in the Liberal position on this. We, on the other hand, will continue to stand up for victims in this country.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question period has been outrageous. The Prime Minister insists that he should not and cannot be held accountable for the actions of his own office. The Prime Minister insists that he cannot and should not be held accountable for the use of his party's database to commit widespread electoral fraud. Given his actions, does the Prime Minister believe that he is meeting the standard of accountability that he set for himself when he took office and that Canadians deserve?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, he has set the level for accountability that Canadians have come to expect and deserve. That is why we have been re-elected twice since our first mandate.

Equally, on the measure of accountability, would the Liberal leader care to explain again his position on the subject of Senate reform? He says he does not believe in changing the status quo, because it benefits the province of Quebec.

He is going to be in western Canada later this week. It would be nice if he would actually come clean with western Canadians about why it is he thinks this institution should continue to be a disrespect to other parts of the country because of its current imbalance. It would be great if he would be accountable to this House for his position on the status quo in the Senate, which is unacceptable.

* * *

● (1450)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' attempts to stall a child welfare case at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal continue. We now have a copy of the investigation by the Privacy Commissioner. It confirms that the Conservatives violated privacy laws when they collected personal information about Dr. Cindy Blackstock. This has all the signs of retaliation over Dr. Blackstock's participation in the Human Rights Tribunal.

Will the minister today agree to stop stalling the case, implement the Privacy Commissioner's recommendations and finally give first nations children the justice they deserve?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the premise of her question is totally false. The commissioner's report never referred to the Conservatives.

Oral Questions

The fact of the matter is that we take Canadians' right to privacy very seriously. Most of the recommendations, if not all, were already being implemented. We shall fully implement the recommendations of the commissioner.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, I met with members of Prabh Srawn's family. They are upset, they are anxious, and they are worried. Prabh Srawn has been missing for a little over two weeks, and the family feels that not enough is being done to find him.

I promised the family during that meeting that I would raise this issue and request that more be done. Can the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs, Americas and Consular Affairs, please advise what has been done and what will be done to find Prabh Srawn?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brampton West for his concern. Earlier today, I spoke with Australia's High Commissioner to Canada. I thanked her for their authority's dedicated efforts and relayed Canada's request that the search for Mr. Srawn not be reduced at this time.

Canada has been actively working with Australian authorities to discuss the search mission and to convey the family's concerns. Our engagement at all levels will continue. We join Canadians in praying for his safe return.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems to be, once again, too little too late. Prabhdeep Srawn is a Canadian Forces reservist who has been missing for two weeks in Australia, and when his family reached out for help, the government ignored them.

Mr. Srawn has proudly served our country. Now our country should be doing more for him. Why will the Conservatives not listen to the concerns of his family? Why have they not listened and worked to bring him home?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, our thoughts are very much with the family and friends of this Canadian missing in Australia. I have spoken with Australia's High Commissioner to request that the search for Mr. Srawn not be reduced at this time.

Canada has been actively working with Australian authorities to discuss the search mission and to convey the family's concerns. Our engagement with Australian authorities at all levels will definitely continue.

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[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has not had much luck with his partisan appointments, to say the least.

Yesterday, Arthur Porter was arrested. In 2008, the Bloc Québécois was the only party to oppose his appointment to the

Security Intelligence Review Committee because allegations of conflict of interest and mismanagement were already hanging over his head. The Prime Minister refused to listen to the Bloc Québécois' recommendations about Arthur Porter, not once, but twice.

This time, will the Prime Minister admit his mistake and ask the Governor General—as he is in a position to do so—to remove Arthur Porter from the Privy Council?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would thank the member for the question and for pointing out that the members of the opposition, in fact, did support that appointment.

I would like to congratulate the authorities for a successful arrest. While I cannot comment on the specific case, I can say that anyone involved in corruption must face the full force of the law. Arthur Porter resigned nearly two years ago, and the allegations that he was arrested on have no connection with his role with the federal government.

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● (1455)

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, as the Prime Minister will know, the Federal Court found that widespread electoral fraud was committed during the 2011 election involving phone calls telling voters that their voting location had changed. The court found that the voter database at Conservative headquarters was very “likely” the source of the data for those calls.

The Conservative Party announced very quickly that they were “pleased” with these findings, so the question is this: Is the Prime Minister pleased that his party's resources were used to commit widespread voter fraud?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the question is based on a false premise. What the court ruling actually said was: “...no finding that the [Conservative Party of Canada], [or] any Conservative candidates...were directly involved in the campaign to mislead voters”. That is what the ruling said.

It was a partisan action brought forward by an ultra-partisan group that failed to produce a single solitary voter anywhere in Canada who was prevented from casting a ballot by a misleading phone call.

Government Orders

[Translation]

ETHICS

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' official story is that nobody knows what happened. However, saying that the Prime Minister did not talk to his chief of staff before his chief of staff wrote a big cheque for a senator in trouble is about as credible as saying that the Prime Minister did not speak to his finance minister before the finance minister tabled a budget. It does not make any sense.

Now that the Prime Minister is here with us, could he make a bit of an effort to try to remember whether or not he asked Nigel Wright to make the embarrassing problem that is the Senate go away?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already provided a very clear answer to that question.

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Senator Tkachuk has admitted that he had discussions with Nigel Wright and took general advice from him during the audit. Was the PM also uninformed of those conversations his chief of staff had, which followed the secret deal to help Mike Duffy?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has again said very clearly, he was made aware of the payment by Nigel Wright the day it was reported, on that Wednesday, and he is not aware of any agreement between Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today at the finance committee, we were discussing Bill C-60, which is the first budget implementation act of this government. This legislation includes \$18 million for the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, \$165 million for Genome Canada, \$20 million for the Nature Conservancy of Canada, \$30 million for Nunavut Housing, \$5 million for aboriginal students through Indspire, \$3 million for compassionate care through the Pallium Foundation and \$3 million for the CNIB for the national digital hub.

Can the Minister of Finance comment on why it is so important that this Parliament pass these measures?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me thank the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc for the question. He is an excellent chair of the House of Commons finance committee, which is, in fact, an excellent committee, come to think of it. It does a lot work on budget preparation. A number of the recommendations from the House of Commons finance committee were incorporated in economic action plan 2013.

In terms of economic growth, we have the largest and longest federal infrastructure plan in Canadian history in the budget. We have the Canada job grant initiative, which is very important in matching people with jobs across Canada, and of course, the incentives for manufacturing, which suffered greatly from the great recession. This is contrary to the NDP, which wants to raise taxes, and the Liberals, who have no economic—

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Order. That concludes question period for today.

I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation from the Hellenic Republic, led by His Excellency Vangelis Meimarakis, Speaker of the Parliament of the Hellenic Republic.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1500)

[English]

NOT CRIMINALLY RESPONSIBLE REFORM ACT

The House resumed from May 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being three o'clock, pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 22, 2013, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-54.

Call in the members.

● (1505)

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

*(Division No. 698)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Angus
Armstrong	Ashfield
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Baird
Bateman	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Blaney	Block
Boivin	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brosseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chisu	Chong

Choquette
 Christopherson
 Cleary
 Comartin
 Crockatt
 Cullen
 Davidson
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dewar
 Donnelly
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Dusseault
 Fantino
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
 Fletcher
 Galipeau
 Garrison
 Genest-Jourdain
 Glover
 Goodyear
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Harper
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hawn
 Hiebert
 Holder
 James
 Julian
 Kellway
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Latendresse
 Laverdière
 Leitch
 Leslie
 Liu
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 Marston
 Masse
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Merrifield
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Mulcair
 Nash
 Nicholson
 Nunez-Melo
 O'Connor
 O'Neill Gordon
 O'Toole
 Paradis
 Payne
 Perreault
 Plamondon
 Preston
 Raitt
 Rankin
 Ravignat
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Sandhu
 Scott
 Sellah
 Shipley
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Storseth
 Sullivan
 Tilson
 Toews
 Tremblay
 Trottier

Chow
 Clarke
 Clement
 Côté
 Crowder
 Daniel
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Dubé
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Dykstra
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Freeman
 Gallant
 Genest
 Giguère
 Goguen
 Gosal
 Gravelle
 Grogueh
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hayes
 Hoback
 Hughes
 Jean
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lapointe
 Lauzon
 Lebel
 Lemieux
 Leung
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Mai
 Martin
 Mathysen
 McColeman
 Menegakis
 Michaud
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)

Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
 Mourani
 Nantel
 Nicholls
 Norlock
 Obhrai
 Oliver
 Opitz
 Papillon
 Patry
 Péclet
 Pilon
 Poilievre
 Quach
 Rajotte
 Rathgeber
 Raynault
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Saganash
 Saxton
 Seeback
 Shea
 Shory
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Stewart
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Toet
 Toone
 Trost
 Truppe

Government Orders

Turmel
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 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
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Members

Andrews
 Bennett
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 Coderre
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 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Eyking
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 Hsu
 Karygiannis
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 May
 McGuinty
 Murray
 Rae
 Sgro
 sor)
 Trudeau

Bélanger
 Brison
 Casey
 Cotler
 Dion
 Easter
 Foote
 Gameau
 Hyer
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 sor)
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by nine minutes.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY ACT

BILL C-49—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation to Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the Bill; and

that, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration of the second 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 said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

● (1510)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

The hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome everyone to this, the 36th time allocation motion. This is a record. It makes you wonder how the government justifies once again invoking time allocation.

Government Orders

In October 2002, when referring to the number of times that the Liberals had invoked time allocation, the Prime Minister said the following:

[*English*]

“The government has used closure and time allocation more frequently than any previous government.”

[*Translation*]

The government has beaten this record, a record that the current Prime Minister denounced approximately 10 years ago.

Professor Ned Franks, an expert in constitutional matters, stated a little earlier this year that no government in Canada's history had invoked time allocation as frequently as this government. It is a record. It is thoroughly undemocratic.

I would once again like to quote the Prime Minister. On December 9, 2002, in reference to the then-Liberal government, he said the following:

[*English*]

He said that the government invoked closure because “...there are no plans”. He added “...the government is simply increasingly embarrassed by the state of the debate and it needs to move on”.

[*Translation*]

We are faced with a similar situation today. The Conservatives are so ashamed of what is occurring in the Senate that they want to cut short debate as quickly as possible, and prorogue the House, once and for all. It is, quite simply, undemocratic. When a time allocation motion is invoked, there is no opportunity to properly and fully discuss prospective legislation. Bill C-38 is a prime example of this.

The government has amended so many bills that it is now trying to fill in the gaps left by the dearth of debate. For example, the Fisheries Act was amended to change the definition of fish habitat protection. Last month, Fisheries and Oceans Canada called on stakeholders across Canada to help it define fish habitat protection because it was unable to do so itself. Had we debated Bill C-38 last year, we would have found a solution.

Invoking a time allocation motion is undemocratic and leads to second-rate legislation that will end up before the Supreme Court. It really is a waste.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for being part of this debate on such an important subject. I speak of Canada's heritage, our country's heritage, specifically the founding of a new Canadian Museum of History. I would like to point out that this bill deals with the creation of a new museum in the national capital, the Canadian Museum of History. As outlined in the bill, the museum's mandate is as follows:

The purpose of the Canadian Museum of History is to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures.

This government is creating a museum in Canada's capital that will set up a real national infrastructure to focus on and enhance awareness of our country's heritage.

● (1515)

[*English*]

I would like to point out the broad support that we have for the creation of the Canadian museum of history. It should be pointed out that the mayor of Gatineau, Mr. Bureau, supports the creation of this museum. Mr. Watson, the mayor of Ottawa, supports the creation of this museum, as do historians and museum directors from all across this country.

I would just point out, for example, that John McAvity, who is the executive director of the Canadian Museums Association, said that the renaming of the museum is essential. He said, “That is good news....it will give Canadians greater access to their heritage, to their history”.

Michael Bliss, an historian and an author, said, “It is very exciting that Canada's major museum will now be explicitly focused on Canada's history”.

These are all important initiatives. Spokespeople for Canada's history, the understanding of Canada's history, are excited about Bill C-49, the new focus of Canada's largest museum, and moving forward so that Canadians have this national infrastructure for the teaching, dissemination and future study of Canada's history.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are seeing this attitude far too often from the Conservative-Reform majority government. The majority Conservative government has abused this legislature in the form of closure, which is what time allocation is, 36 times. The government is saying that members of Parliament who were duly elected are not going to be afforded the opportunity to thoroughly debate legislation. Thirty-six times is a record in the history of our nation. The government should not be saying “hear, hear” to time allocation. This is not a badge of honour. It is a disgrace and a slap in the face of democracy. It is a style of governance that is just not acceptable to Canadians.

We should not be taking for granted the system that we have in place. The government should be allocating more time to discuss legislation. It should be allowing and fostering democracy, not bringing in time allocation on every piece of legislation. Time allocation is not a tool to be used on every occasion. Every government of every political stripe, even New Democrats at the provincial level, have used different forms of time allocation when it was deemed necessary. It is not necessary on all pieces of legislation.

Why has the government time and time again used closure as a means to pass legislation when that is not a good way of governance? What we are seeing is an abusive Conservative-Reform government taking advantage by passing legislation through time allocation, which is just wrong.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, again, the problem with that, of course, is that our government actually moved forward to expand the time that the House can consider legislation, to have the House sit until midnight. The opposition parties voted against that. They are opposed to what he is prescribing, and then, when we take an alternative track, he is against that as well.

We announced our plan to create the Canadian museum of history in the second week of October of last year. This is nothing new.

We had what I thought was actually a very good debate. The leader of the Green Party spoke to the legislation. The member for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor spoke to the legislation. The NDP spoke to it, as well. Actually, I thought we had a very good, very thorough debate, with all sides represented. I was pleased to answer questions. I am looking forward, actually, to going to the parliamentary committee to talk about the legislation and what it would mean and being able to answer in more than 30-second sound bites like we have in question period and to actually have a thorough conversation about what it is we plan to do with this institution and how it would benefit all Canadians, not just the national capital.

We are very excited to be going forward with this. We think it is in the best interests of this country. There is, of course, limited time on the parliamentary calendar. We have extended the time the House of Commons can sit at night. I am looking forward to having this legislation debated at committee. Let us move forward and support a great institution.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition are trying to close down debate, as well. We have been here twice, two nights, and they have been too tired to sit here and work past 9:30 p.m., so they tried to close down debate.

More important, the member for Winnipeg North consistently gets up and talks about Reform-Conservative, as though we should somehow be ashamed of the fact that there are members on this side of the House who have been elected as Reform members, as Alliance members, as Progressive Conservatives and then as Conservatives, some of them seven times.

We are actually proud of those people and the millions of Canadians who voted for them, unlike the Liberal Party, which suggests that somehow these millions of Canadians are stupid, that they do not deserve the quality representation they have had from the Reform, the Canadian Alliance, the Progressive Conservatives and the Conservatives who now form the best government this country has ever had.

Again and again, the Liberals insult the west. That is why they are a rump of insignificant nobodies in this House.

My actual question, though, for the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, the best Canadian heritage minister we have ever had, is this. Not only how important is the legislation to the communities across this country, to small museums across this country, but just to reiterate, how important is arts and culture to this country?

• (1520)

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, indeed, with regard to the start of his question, I am a proud former staffer of Preston Manning, I was elected as a Canadian Alliance MP and I am pleased to see that we have all been able to move forward, build our party and be in a position where we are able to put forward legislation and to build national institutions of national significance, like creating a Canadian museum of history.

On his specific question about what this museum would mean to all museums across the country, Deborah Morrison said it very well. She is the head of Canada's History society. She said:

Government Orders

...the potential for the new Museum to create a national framework for our history is compelling. And the time [to do this] is right.

What she is referring to about the time being right is that we are now just a few years away from 2017, Canada's 150th birthday. These moments do not come by often for many countries in the world. Having a sesquicentennial on the horizon is an opportunity for us to work together to build national institutions and to be proud of them and the work they can do. It is an opportunity not only to build up the presence of great institutions in the great capital of the city of Ottawa and Gatineau and the region but also, more important, to give a shot in the arm, a boost of financing and institutional pan-Canadian support to all the museums across the country. That is what this institution would do and that is why, as I said, we have broad-based support from across this country.

The former Liberal member of Parliament and biographer of Pierre Trudeau said, "Congratulations on the Canadian museum of history. This is a great boost for the museum".

These are people, again, who are not typically Conservatives or Reformers or Canadian Alliance supporters but who are Canadians who can see the bigger picture, who can put partisanship aside and actually work with other people to support the creation of great institutions.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: There are only 18 minutes remaining for questions and comments. Accordingly, I would like to limit the answers to one minute.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it seems this minute starts with me. That is amusing, but it may be a rather dubious gift.

I listened carefully to the minister. Frankly, the museum issue is not a matter of life and death. It is not as if the museum were in danger of extinction in any way. It is a museum that does its job very well.

I am the member for Gatineau, and this museum is in the riding of Hull-Aylmer. There are many problems with these changes and many questions to be asked. When someone is laying it on so thickly and involving the mayors, we must pay attention. The mayors may be happy to hear an announcement of \$25 million, but that does not mean they will not have the same questions as their constituents and wonder what this change of mission and orientation really mean.

My problem is that the minister is telling us that yet another time allocation motion is necessary. I have finally understood, because his parliamentary secretary has told us, basically, that it is because they do not want to hear what we have to say. Hooray for democracy. I am outraged. Even Preston Manning would change sides because, if ever there was someone who believed in freedom of expression, it was him.

I would like to ask the minister this question.

Government Orders

The Museum of Civilization is a beautiful thing. Still, in this context, I wonder if the minister could give us a little update on the Science and Technology Museum, which was supposed to get a new location in Hull because it needs more space.

When one believes in museums, one does not create them piecemeal.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member says is very interesting.

We have already created the new Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg and the new Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax. Now we are creating a new Canadian Museum of History. She says she does not want that one, but she wants another one, the Science and Technology Museum. Really. What more can we do? We are creating three new museums but the NDP says those are not the ones they want. We are doing our best.

In a time of economic crisis, ours is the only G8 government that has increased its investments in national museums funding. Moreover, we are creating a new museum that is certainly very important for all of Canada.

• (1525)

[English]

I agree with her. I agree with the beginning of what she said, that the Museum of Civilization is not falling apart and it is not in a crisis. It is true. I have never said that. However, what we ought to do is take advantage of this opportunity as we head toward our sesquicentennial and build a pan-Canadian network, which starts with a jewel here in the national capital, and bind all our museums across the country together.

Nobody can argue that the *Toronto Star* is a broadsheet for the Conservative movement, but here is what it said about the creation of this museum. It stated:

It was welcome to hear...[the government] announce...rebrand the Canadian Museum of Civilization...as the Canadian Museum of History.

It said that Canada's history should be celebrated in this revamped museum and that this is a good effort.

This is what we are trying to do, work with other people. The member spoke of the importance of working with others, and I agree. That is why, before we tabled this legislation, I reached out to my critic opposite, to the leader of the Green Party and to the member of the Liberal Party to get their support for this.

We have tried to approach this the same way we approached Pier 21 and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We had quick debate, everybody saw the big picture, we worked together and we got it done. We are going to get it done on this museum as well.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I have a high regard for this minister in his sincere appreciation for the arts and his hard work for the arts. That has been clear to me many times.

I am scratching my head over this bill; I am undecided about it. So after those kudos to the minister, I really do want to learn more and hear more about this particular bill, because I am not yet persuaded that it is the right direction to go. I do not really understand the

motivation. While I trust him, I am not sure that the bigger picture is healthy here.

I also just want to go on record as once again saying that the unbelievable number of closures on debates in this House just has to stop.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the kind words, and I do hope he will be persuaded in the end to support this legislation and to move forward.

Just so he is clear, this legislation is a short bill, not a tough read, but of course the consequences of things are not always measured by the size of a piece of legislation. The new mandate of the museum would be very simple and clear. It says that the purpose of the museum would be to:

...enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures.

That is a pretty simple mandate. There is nothing ideological about that; it is pretty straightforward. If my colleague wants to sit down and chat with me, I would be more than glad. The more members of Parliament who support this bill the better. We want this to be something that all people can get behind and support, and we want to move forward with it. I would be glad to give him a briefing.

I know the people of Thunder Bay have some great cultural institutions as well, for which I know my colleague has been a great champion. They would certainly benefit from the opportunity to access the 3.5 million items that are in the collection of the soon-to-be, hopefully, Canadian museum of history. There are 3.5 million items in the collection, 90% of which are sitting in storage, not accessed. We want the museums in his riding and mine and others across the country to develop their own narratives about Canadian history, access this collection and share Canada's history with all Canadians, not just have it all here in the national capital.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have more of a comment than a question. I may have a question tonight when we get into the debate about the bill itself, but the comment is as follows.

I was reading this morning that during his leadership, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent got into trouble on the pipeline debate when the government invoked closure for the first time in that particular Parliament and that, in part, it led to the defeat of his government later on.

I remember that when the previous Liberal governments also introduced closure, at some point I voted against such measures because I thought it was not appropriate and was against the spirit of democracy and this House, especially when there was no strong, valid reason and urgency to do so.

Now we are in the 41st Parliament, and I cannot recall which significant legislation we have been able to deal with without closure. That is a terrible way of conducting oneself and one's government in any Parliament in this country.

• (1530)

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, it is a fair comment. Obviously, we will have a vote shortly on this matter, and if my colleague wants to vote against closure that is certainly his prerogative.

Government Orders

However, as he also mentioned, previous Liberal governments and New Democratic governments on the provincial side use the tools at their disposal to move the country forward in a way they think helps.

I am here to advocate on behalf of the museum because I think it is good, and I think my hon. colleague from the national capital would see the benefit of creating a great new institution in the national capital.

As well, the Canadian Museum of Civilization has not been updated since 1980. The Canada Hall, which is supposed to be the narrative of Canada's history, does not include aboriginal Canadians, which is kind of a problem. There is a stern, short and inadequate reflection on Acadian Canadians and their facts throughout Canada's history and what they have experienced. There are a number of areas in the museum that need to be updated.

This is not just a change in mandate and name but also an investment of \$25 million into not only this museum but this pan-Canadian network.

Therefore, I think it would be good for my hon. colleague. He can express his views certainly on the approach of the government when it comes to taking action, but I think the action itself is something that should have broad-based support, including from the hon. colleague.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am seeking some clarification.

I think the debate at this time is supposed to address the time allocation motion, which is a procedural issue, but for several days I have been observing the Conservative benches. They are using their time to talk about the bill as if this 30-minute period were available for advertising.

In addition, if I add them up, we have debated at least four time allocation motions in barely a week. In the end, that takes away two hours of debate on bills we could have been discussing. Instead, the government wants to discuss procedure. However, it does not do that, because it uses the time for a great big infomercial.

My question is simple. Can we return to the House's ordinary procedures and only use time allocation measures when there is an exceptional, well-justified situation?

As it stands, I would hazard a guess that if we could fine the Conservatives every time they employed such motions, the deficit problem would soon disappear.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, I understand the concerns voiced by my colleague.

It is true that every time I have an opportunity to speak about the history of Canada, its importance and the importance of this institution, I do so. I take each and every opportunity to do so.

I am sure that the procedures of the House of Commons will be discussed at length. However, the history of Canada and its heritage are subjects that I care about, and I believe it is very important to talk about them. I am pleased with, and proud of, this bill. I hope that we will enjoy the support of those members who agree with the bill.

Moreover, I would like to stress that this bill was introduced on October 12, 2012. However, on October 11, 2012, before the bill was tabled, the NDP voiced its disapproval, even before they read the museum's new mandate.

If the NDP wishes to show at least a modicum of respect for the institution of the House of Commons and its procedures, it should ensure that it studies bills before making known its position.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier who talked about time allocation. When we discuss issues in this bill, there is a lot of subtext and the subtext pertains to stuff that is under the legislation, such as the issue of sharing material across the country that would be normally of the Museum of Civilization or, in this case, the Canadian museum of history.

A lot of members from different parts of the country would like to understand how this will work and have the ability to question that in the House. Naturally, we can follow up with the bureaucrats and that sort of deal, like we normally do as parliamentarians, but we certainly cannot do that now because the legislation has not passed yet. I am not saying that this debate should go on forever, but I would certainly like a bit more information as to how this is going to be implemented. I am sure the minister, who seems to be quite sincere about it, would do it.

One of the questions I have is about the motion that was brought to the House studying Canadian history, which was alarming in the fact that it was very prescriptive in what it would do, very narrow in certain areas. It certainly caused concern. We also heard what the parliamentary secretary said earlier. I do not know why the government would do that within the context of the committee and disrupt a lot of stuff, because now we have the same sort of questions on the museum, which we would like to have answered.

● (1535)

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, let me touch on the one subject he raised while we have the time. I am, again, pleased to talk to my colleague outside the House, and we will have a discussion at committee as well.

Specifically on the issue he raised, I know, not to betray a private conversation, it is one that he is particularly interested, which is the sharing of collections between museums. This is not something that is prescribed in legislation. It is not the place to do it. Those partnerships are found in the memorandums of understanding between the national museum and the regional museums. One of those has been signed. We have others that are lined up, prepared to be signed in the future, such as the Royal BC Museum in Victoria, a fantastic institution. It has signed an MOU with the national museum.

Government Orders

Conspiracy theorists would argue that the government has tried to create an institution to tell its own narrative. No. The point is section 27(1) of the Museums Act makes it clear the government cannot prescribe the narrative in any museum in the country, as it should be. The MOUs that are signed between the museum and the regional museums is for them to decide, devoid of politics and politicians saying that certain things should or should not be shared with other museums. Therefore, they can decide their own narratives, they sign the MOUs and they work on this partnership.

When we take this legislation to committee, I know the president of the museum, Mark O'Neill, will be brought in. He has already done exhaustive research on this subject matter, reached out to museums all across the country, signed an MOU already. We have more that are lined up to be signed. The process, members will find, not only from the national perspective but from the perspective of local regions' museums, has been one of openness and sharing with them the collections they find most useful for the decisions they want to make locally.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with the manner in which the operation is being carried out and the way future projects are being described. The level of collaboration with other museums is also very positive. However, I have a huge problem with the fact that this is the 36th gag order on a bill and that the minister has the nerve to ask us to trust him.

With all the abuses in the campaigns and the way this government goes about doing things, which is true to form but, to say the very least, does not enjoy popular support, everyone agrees that the Conservatives have gone too far and, today, we are being asked to trust them, yet once again, the right to speak on this subject is being denied us. How dare the Conservatives say that they have properly consulted Canadians when, as we were discussing Canada's 150th anniversary in committee, they clearly stated that the public needed to get on board with this project? We know full well that your plans were made ahead of time.

Here is what I would like to know. You talk of respect, when last week, as I delivered my speech—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Once again, I would ask that questions and comments be directed to the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, I have already answered my NDP colleague's question on this issue.

[*English*]

If my hon. colleague is saying that members on all sides of the House—and of course he is saying this to the government, but I think it is a message all members—should show greater respect for the parliamentary process and greater respect for democracy in the House, then why, when our government tabled this legislation on October 12, 2012, did the NDP say on October 11, 2012, that it would vote against the legislation before it had even been read?

The NDP members had not read the legislation, seen the new mandate, spoken to me, or spoken to anybody about this museum, or about what we had in mind or the approach we were taking. Had

they just held their fire on rabid partisanship and just talked to us and to this long list of people who are not Conservatives and who support the legislation because they see the value in this institution, I think they would have found themselves with an opportunity to contribute much more reasonably to the establishment of a national institution that would benefit all Canadians, rather than just saying they were opposed to legislation before they had read it.

Respecting the House is not just a question of free votes in Parliament or committee structure or closure. Parliamentary freedom and responsibility and demonstrating respect for the House should also include reading legislation before deciding how to vote on it.

• (1540)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage said earlier that I had spoken to this bill.

In point of fact I have not been allowed to give an actual speech. I have only been allowed to ask a question. In the use of that question, I was able to signal that I had come to the conclusion that I would support the bill.

However, all of these closures mean that members in my position are never able to speak on the substance of the bill for more than 30 seconds.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, it turns out the same way for me, I suppose, in this moment.

I understand the member's frustration. Members of Parliament should be able to speak more frequently on legislation. It is great, for example, that in these coming few weeks Parliament sits until midnight., and I see nothing wrong with that.

I would like to see the House sit more often so more members of Parliament could express their views, raise their grievances, vent their frustrations, speak their hopes and represent their constituents. It would be good thing. I agree with my colleague on the ability of MPs to speak more frequently on legislation.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time allotted for questions and comments has expired.

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.

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•(1615)
[English]

During the taking of the vote:

The Deputy Speaker: I need direction from the leader of the official opposition as to whether he intended his vote to be in favour or opposed to the motion.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the official opposition stood immediately after our colleagues in the corner voted, in favour of the motion. I believe that our votes are proceeding in that direction, as is confirmed by the table.

Some hon. members: But we want to vote no.

Some hon. members: They like time allocation.

•(1620)
The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The House leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the excitement of question period today and the total volume of time allocation motions does tend to wear us, so I take full responsibility for this.

We seek to vote no on this motion. We will proceed according as such to vote no.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Are there any others who are in favour of the motion? Seeing none, all those who are opposed to the motion will please rise.

•(1625)
(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 699)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Ashton	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Chow
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dewar
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant

Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hiebert
Holder
Jean
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayer
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Mulcair
Norlock
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Seeback
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 161

Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poillievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Boulerice
Brison
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Freeman
Garneau

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Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Karygiannis	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rae
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stewart
Sullivan	Toone
Tremblay	Trudeau
Turmel	Valeriote — 120

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

There is a point of order from the member for Bourassa.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, this is the first time in 16 years that I have seen a point of order during a vote. If members seem a bit crazy, they will pull themselves together in the end. I think the Chair should wait until after the vote to deal with points of order.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 London—Fanshawe, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, Canada Post.

[*English*]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from May 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-49, an act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee and of the amendment.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Ajax—Pickering.

The establishment of the Canadian museum of history will provide Canadians with an opportunity to learn about and appreciate the richness of Canadian history. I will quote from an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on October 22, 2012:

The new vision reflects the country's growing self-awareness and the realization that a knowledge of history is the basis of an informed citizenry.

I would like to continue by addressing some of the statements that have been made by members of the opposition during this debate. This debate is important and if we are to make good use of our time it is important that we clarify some of these key issues.

First and perhaps most important, there is the issue of the need for independence for the new museum. This has been brought up several times during the debate. Let me be clear. The arm's-length nature of the museum is protected both by its status as a federal crown corporation and because section 27(1) of the Museums Act clearly states that no directive can be given to a national museum with respect to cultural activities and programs for the public and research. Despite these facts, it has been suggested in this House that the government is “wading into academia”, proposing a generic narrative of our history and interfering with the work of experts.

This presumes that the accomplished staff, management and board of trustees at the Canadian Museum of Civilization would let this happen.

I will quote Michael Bliss, a prominent Canadian historian, who stated:

Look at the museum's record. It has been run professionally and governments have not told it what exhibits to have. I expect that the highly professional management at arm's length from the government will carry on.

The governance structure of the museum will remain intact. The Canadian War Museum will continue to be an affiliate. The corporation will continue to exist, but with a new name and a new, clearly focused mandate. There will be no interruption of the corporation's ability to operate and no impact on the status of the employees, officers and trustees. I am confident that the management and staff that made the CMC a great museum will make the Canadian museum of history an even greater museum.

The museum will continue to host major international exhibits. It is not true, as stated by one of my colleagues, that the museum will no longer have a mandate to share its wealth and knowledge with the rest of the world. The mandate of the new museum is explicit. One of the purposes of the new museum is to “enhance their awareness of world history and cultures”. This specifically authorizes the museum to continue to offer other programming with a more international flavour, such as international exhibits.

It is not true, as stated by a member of the opposition, that the museum's mandate no longer includes the obligation to maintain collections and conduct research. The powers of the new museum are unchanged from those of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, including the power to maintain collections and conduct research.

The museum will increase its activities, working closely with a network of Canadian museums not just to make the national collection available through loans and travelling exhibitions but also to provide a permanent venue, an additional 7,500 square feet at the new museum for other Canadian museums to showcase their collections and contribute to the national narrative.

I must also point out that the changes to the mandate proposed for the Canadian Museum of Civilization are completely consistent with the strategic directions first approved by the museum's board of trustees in 2009, in particular the following direction, which states:

...broaden its national collections and its curatorial research to better reflect and present national narratives, symbols and achievements through the human, social, cultural, military and political history dimensions of Canadian life.

I am excited about the new Canadian museum of history and I encourage all of my colleagues to support the passage of the legislation that will make it a reality.

In closing, I will once again refer to Michael Bliss, who says “it is very exciting that Canada’s major museum will now be explicitly focused on Canada’s history”.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if it is true that museum employees will be autonomous, why did the minister make his decision without even consulting Canadians or experts?

[English]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, the word “autonomous” means that they can do it on their own, and if the minister granted autonomy for the staff to do that, then what is the question? They asked for autonomy and they have autonomy. I think that is fair enough.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member uses the term “autonomous”. I want to ask him about this, because it seems to be thrown about here. The independence and the autonomy of this particular board and the curators in this institution are at question here. We have to realize that curatorial independence is most sacrosanct in this, no matter what we do to change in name or to change in narrative. I agree that artifacts should be shared with the rest of the country, but it comes down to that central independence that is what they need.

I would like the member precisely, within the legislation, to tell the House exactly where that curatorial independence remains despite these changes. Where is it in the legislation exactly?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to quote chapter and verse as to where this issue rises, but I will share this with the member. It is now in place. The new museum will indeed have curatorial opportunities like the old museum did. There is no change. It is a lateral kind of move, so to speak.

• (1635)

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was quite eloquent in the way he described the creation of the new museum of history. When we speak in the House, we often refer to what matters to our local constituents. As we approach Canada’s 150th anniversary, I know that his constituents, like mine, are looking forward to being able to celebrate that great history of our country, a century and a half of one of the oldest democracies on earth. We have great heroes we need to celebrate and we will celebrate.

I wonder if the member could expand on that and talk about the importance of the museum and what it will mean to his constituents to finally have a place they can go to that will expand on our knowledge of our great country.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, we are going to have an expanding museum. It is important for us to note that the

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government has increased funding to the museum, up to a 20% increase over what we supplied for the last budget year, so there is a definite amount of money going into it for planning for the 150th anniversary of Canada. We know that the museum will take a lead role in setting up all the activities for the 150th. There is money set aside to support that, without additional money being earmarked. It is going to be handled through the internal economy of the budget as it exists today.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to follow my colleague, the member for Palliser, the very name of whose riding honours a great historical Canadian hero. I think his speech was very much in that grand tradition that has given us this tremendous country of over 10 million square kilometres and the opportunity to fashion a Canadian museum of history that will do justice to the length and breadth of that history.

[Translation]

Our government supports heritage institutions and organizations through a range of measures to increase their professional knowledge, skills and practices and to enhance their ability to preserve and present Canada’s heritage and history.

We do this so Canadians will have access to, and an enhanced appreciation for, our museums’ treasures and our collective legacy, not just here in Ottawa and Gatineau, but across the country.

In the upcoming years, we will give particular consideration to initiatives that will celebrate Canada’s 150th anniversary, and the Canadian museum of history will play an important part in this celebration.

With the establishment of the Canadian museum of history, we are providing long-term access to heritage collections so that Canadians will have opportunities to learn about Canada’s history and heritage and appreciate the many events that have shaped our country’s identity.

The museum has created an online forum that gives Canadians the opportunity to provide their input on the defining chapters in our country’s history. It will also introduce a new process linking Canada’s network of museums to the Canadian museum of history, so Canadians in all regions have better access to our shared history.

Mr. Speaker, you and all our colleagues in the House are quite aware that in Canada we have hundreds of regional and local museums and museums with a specific mandate to honour the history and roots of our regiments, our naval forces, wars that Canadian soldiers took part in, our natural heritage and our industrial heritage. With the linking of all these museums across the country to the Canadian museum of history in the nation’s capital, we will all be able to enjoy this heritage even more.

Marie Sénécal-Tremblay from the Canadian Federation of Friends of Museums said, “This new museum will allow smaller museums to showcase their collections better and make them more accessible to far more Canadians and visitors”.

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That is why there will be fundraising activities to solicit support from the private sector to complement the government's investment of \$25 million.

In order to support the government's investment, and to ensure that Canadians from all regions have an opportunity to become more familiar with Canada's history, the new museum will sign agreements with other museums across the country, in order to: organize mobile exhibitions outside the national capital region; bring exhibitions from the regions to the Canadian Museum of History; share expertise; and loan artifacts and other materials from Canada's national collection in order to enhance the exhibitions of local museums and their educational programs.

We are almost all very familiar with our regional history; however, here in Canada, we are not all very knowledgeable about what goes on in other provinces, in other regions, or in bygone days when there may not have been an established community in our particular region. Not everybody has in-depth knowledge of the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. Not everybody knows what transpired to open up the great north of British Columbia.

As a result of these exchanges and mobile exhibitions, Canadians from all regions will become better acquainted with the history of other localities.

I would like to remind members that the government's commitment to celebrate the history and heritage of Canada, and the objectives of the Canadian Museum of History, will be supported by the many existing programs at the Department of Canadian Heritage.

• (1640)

For example, the Canadian Heritage Information Network already administers two of the investment programs of the Virtual Museum of Canada. Together, they invest approximately \$2.2 million annually in the development of digital heritage content by Canada's museums.

Are all members familiar with exhibitions such as "For Valour: Canadian Airmen and the Victoria Cross", developed by the Air Force Heritage Park & Museum in Manitoba? The exhibition showcases the fascinating stories of seven airmen and their experiences during the First and Second World Wars. It goes without saying that the Canadian aviators were among the best in the world during both world wars.

Consider also the McCord Museum's "Where To Draw the Line?", based on Quebec editorial cartoons from the period spanning 1950 through 2000. This exhibition tells of the rich history behind the events that made headlines in Montreal over that period. For most of that time, Montreal essentially considered itself the capital of major political events in Canada.

The support programs for the Virtual Museum of Canada will allocate a portion of their annual budgets to proposals in relation to the main anniversaries that will take place from now until 2017. Approximately \$2 million will be invested in these projects.

There will also be the Canada Travelling Exhibitions Indemnification Program, an invaluable program for small regional museums and national museums alike. This program will give them the opportunity to enjoy Canadian and international treasures.

In addition, exchanges among museums will create new opportunities for Canadians, as Ms. Marie Lalonde, the executive director of the Ontario Museum Association, noted. According to Ms. Lalonde, with the new museum's co-operation, local museums will now be in a better position to offer their visitors special exhibitions and initiatives that would otherwise be impossible.

In the run-up to 2017, the Canadian Conservation Institute will encourage clients to submit applications for the treatment of artifacts that are of special importance to their community and that may be associated with key moments in the history of Canada.

Let us talk about Confederation, Sir John A. Macdonald, George-Étienne Cartier and all their colleagues from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, western Canada and even Newfoundland, because Newfoundland attended talks for a period of time. Those people knew their history, that of the War of 1812, of the British and the French empires, the history of Europe and the history of Asia and the Americas, relatively recently rediscovered by Europeans.

The quality of their contribution to the history of Canada was determined by the quality of their understanding of that history. That is what we want to give to a new generation of Canadians by means of this museum and the connection we are making between the museum and the 150th anniversary of Confederation, which will take place in a few years.

Our government is proud to have adopted several measures that will help preserve and celebrate Canada's history and heritage. Those measures include tax incentives to encourage Canadians to make donations to the museum and to charities, \$5 million in new annual funding for summer internships at the museums, \$100 million allocated between 2008 and 2013 to the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian Museum of Nature, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Canada Science and Technology Museum and the National Arts Centre to meet the capital and infrastructure needs of four of our national museums and the National Arts Centre.

The list is long and the task a major one, as is the ambition of our program and policy, but we are dealing with this country, its land, its history and the diversity of our backgrounds.

• (1645)

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I would only point out that with this bill, the Conservatives are relying on an approach to history that will celebrate heroes, leaving out women as well as everything that involves Canada's diversity. This bill also represents a contradiction in the Conservatives' approach, in light of the budget cuts they have specifically made to the institutions that preserve our heritage and culture.

Could my colleague explain why the government wants to change, even reduce, the mandate of one of the most popular museums in the country?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member could not be more wrong.

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I just quoted two renowned women in Canada who gave their unequivocal support to our agenda. Obviously, many of the 20,000 comments we received through the consultation process were from women. Canadians do not want to diminish, but rather to enhance our understanding and the strength of our identity as it relates to the role of women throughout our country's history. This was very clearly expressed to us.

The government will make sure that Canada's diversity is reflected in everything our museums do. That is why this government was the first in Canadian history to turn Pier 21 in Halifax into a national museum focusing on the immigration of women and men to Canada. Is the hon. member not aware of our initiatives in this area?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the issue of independence.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he can point out within this or related legislation where curatorial independence will be maintained after the passage of this legislation.

As well, does the member feel that there should be a review after a certain period of time to help maintain that independence?

• (1650)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the independence of the current Museum of Civilization has been maintained, in curatorial terms, at every step, and it will continue to be maintained under an independent and very professional board.

Our Parliament has the responsibility to legislate for national museums. That is what we are doing. We are responding to an extremely loud and multi-faceted set of enthusiastic comments from Canadians who want to know more about their history.

All my life I have faced newspaper articles, professors and teachers who lamented the loss of Canadian history and the lack of knowledge of Canadian history, not just of my generation but of generations before and after.

This museum is our attempt to put the mandate back into the hands of professionals to retell that story, and to tell it more richly, more broadly and more deeply than ever before.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question will be around funding.

We have heard from opposition parties that our government has not funded arts and heritage. I know that in my own riding I have made numerous announcements of funding for the arts and for heritage. Could the member for Ajax—Pickering provide us with some further information as to our government's funding for arts and heritage?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, it is a great opportunity to mention some of those very large numbers that have been put into budgets by this government for museums.

There is \$142 million for museums, a 20% increase in the budget for the Canada Council and \$100 million for the construction of a new human rights museums in Winnipeg, which will show an

entirely different facet of our history. These are new initiatives. They come in addition to our commitment to telling the story of immigration at Pier 21 and to the Canadian Museum of History, right here in the national capital. It will be a centrepiece in that growing portfolio of very powerful vehicles for maintaining our identity and for telling our stories.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saint-Lambert.

As an archaeologist, I really wanted to be able to talk about the proposed changes to the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Bill C-49.

There are major differences between an anthropological museum and a history museum. Either the Conservatives do not understand this difference or they want to give the museum a much narrower mandate to better manipulate the institution, or both.

Bill C-49 introduces major amendments to the museum's mandate. The current mandate talks about establishing, maintaining and developing for research and posterity a collection of objects of historical or cultural interest. That sentence is completely missing from the new mandate. The museum's current mandate talks about working throughout Canada and abroad. The new proposed mandate only deals with Canadian history and identity.

It is important to understand that Canada is and was influenced in the past by the rest of the world. I see that this new narrower vision does not do justice to that.

According to the amendments proposed by Bill C-49, the museum's approach would be limited to understanding and appreciating just dates, events, historical figures and objects. This approach, which is completely outdated in the social sciences, leaves out a number of important aspects of a society's development. A study of historical heroes often leaves out women, children, aboriginal peoples and minority groups, not because they did not have an impact on our history or make cultural contributions. No, it is because unfortunately this impact is too often left out in the Conservatives' approach.

All kinds of moments and processes in our country's history could be lost because of this approach. For example, the development of the Lachine canal in Montreal and its role in the industrial revolution in the rest of Canada; the poor treatment of Polish settlers in the west who, left to their own devices, had to build dugouts to survive the winter; the fact that slavery existed in New France; the evolution of women's rights; and the evolution of the rights of the workers who built our economy.

Allow me to use a few archaeological examples to illustrate my remarks. Artifacts, in and of themselves, are interesting, but they only reveal a portion of the important information. The context in which the artifact is discovered is just as important.

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In Mobile, Alabama, in the early 18th century, the lives of the colonists from New France were very difficult, yet in a carpenter's house, archaeologists found a cup made of fine porcelain, an object rarely associated with a worker in a colony where life was uncertain. In attempting to understand why such an object was there, the archaeologists realized that to survive, the French settlers forged an alliance with the Spanish, who had access to imported goods from Asia thanks to their trading posts in Mexico.

The cup itself was magnificent, but the context laid bare its true history, which involved neither heroes, nor any date or event of great importance. If the approach to research and other areas favoured by the Conservatives at the Canadian Museum of Civilization is adopted, this kind of information will never become available.

Another example is our rich aboriginal heritage. It did not start with the arrival of the Vikings 1,000 years ago. It began at least 12,000 years ago when the ancestors of the aboriginal peoples first set foot on Canadian soil. Under the proposed new approach, with its narrow focus on characters, dates and events, most of this heritage will be swept under the rug, not to mention the oral traditions handed down from one generation to the next by the aboriginal peoples.

When the Canadian Museum of Civilization was built, its originators recognized the important contribution of aboriginal cultures to culture in general, and so they chose an aboriginal architect, Douglas Cardinal, to design the museum's structure.

The Conservatives have a bad habit of being led by preconceived notions, which they try to back up with so-called evidence, after the fact. For example, the Conservatives stated that the museum focused more heavily on, and allocated the lion's share of its resources to, non-Canadian exhibitions. That is not true. At least 70% of the exhibitions presented in recent years focused on Canada.

Nevertheless, Canada's history was also influenced by that of other peoples, and museum goers really enjoy international exhibitions. These international exhibitions attract visitors who, in turn, visit the Canadian exhibitions. It is a win-win situation. For example, the exhibition Tombs of Eternity – The Afterlife in Ancient Egypt drew 240,714 visitors to the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

I am going to quote a passage from the museum's website regarding another exhibition:

Museum of Civilization reaches out across Canada and around the world

Thanks to the phenomenal success of The Mysterious Bog People and other outreach projects, the Canadian Museum of Civilization's travelling exhibitions program is connecting with a remarkable number of people worldwide.

- (1655)

Together, 10 of the CMC's travelling exhibitions attracted 445,315 visitors between May 2005 and September 2006...

The Mysterious Bog People opened in Vienna, Austria, last week after a tour that began in Germany, with stops in England, the Netherlands, Calgary, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles and, of course, Gatineau...The total number of visitors worldwide could top 1 million during The Mysterious Bog People's presentation in Vienna.

The success of the CMC's travelling exhibitions program underscores the importance of international partnerships in organizing successful exhibitions. The Mysterious Bog People, which reveals the fascinating early history of northwestern Europeans, is the result of a collaborative effort between four museums in Canada, the Netherlands and Germany.

"Such international exchanges help forge strong scholarly and people-to-people ties between countries," says Dr. Victor Rabinovitch, President and CEO of the

Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation. "More important, they deepen our understanding of other societies, and enable us in turn to share Canada's rich culture and heritage with the rest of the world."

Outreach activities also help the CMC display national treasures for Canadians from sea to sea.

This is forgotten with the new approach. The collective heritage of Canadians and human kind will be undermined.

The Conservatives say that they consulted Canadians about the new mandate of the museum. I said that their *modus operandi* was to go with a preconceived idea and then try to come up with the facts to back it up. That is how they proceeded as well with their consultations.

The minister made the decision to transform the museum and subsequently, people were consulted about certain aspects of this process. Canadians, and much less professionals, were never asked if they wanted this transformation. The department issued the following release, and I quote: "Representatives from the Museum are travelling the country asking Canadians what they would like to see in this new exhibition."

Moreover, Canadians were asked to choose from among a limited number of events they wanted showcased within a predetermined timeline of 1,000 years, starting with the arrival of the Vikings. Among other things, this timeline excludes the Laurel culture which was already using copper in northern Ontario 3,000 years ago. This is a rather interesting fact, given that very few aboriginal peoples used metals.

Museum workers have already had to contend with staff reorganizations. The government has imposed changes and incurred spending related to the new mandate, even before the bill has been adopted. It has already begun to spend our money to make these changes which have not yet been approved by the House. This is arrogance, pure and simple. As always, the Conservatives want to impose their vision, but this time it is even worse. They want to rewrite history.

They spent \$28 million to commemorate the War of 1812. This celebration of a long-ago war was completely out of proportion. Most of our history is a peaceful one. We survived few armed conflicts to become the nation that we are today.

Canadians do not want a politicized version of their country's history. Decisions about the mandate of the museum and the content of its collection must be left to independent professionals, not to politicians.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is the most popular museum in Canada. Why change this institution when no one has asked for this? Why spend \$25 million to bring about this change, when more financial support should instead be given to small museums? Where will the department make cuts to find the \$25 million?

If the Conservatives believe that Canada's history is so important, why are they slashing \$29 million from Parks Canada's budget and eliminating 80% of all archaeologist and conservator jobs? Why have they cut all three research positions that relate to first nations' national historical sites? Why have they cut deeply into the Library and Archives Canada budget?

Government Orders

The museum has built its reputation on research. Archeologists and historians have had access to primary source documents at the museum for their research for 135 years, or since 1877, at the museum's predecessor, the Geological Survey of Canada. Researchers are very concerned. The collections are a huge resource for them.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage intend to make significant cuts to research and the acquisition of collections not directly related to exhibits? Unfortunately, that is the message sent by the recent abolition of the position of vice-president, research and collections.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member actually read any part of the bill before her. First of all, she talked about curatorial independence. Obviously, subsection 27(1) of the Museums Act actually guarantees that in legislation. We are not touching that.

If we look at Bill C-49, what part of paragraphs 9(1)(a) through 9(1)(p) does she disagree with? How do they differ from the act that currently governs the civilization museum? If we look at paragraph 9(1)(e), it talks about travelling exhibits, both in Canada and internationally. Paragraph 9(1)(i) establishes and fosters liaisons with other organizations that have purposes similar to its own. Paragraph 9(1)(j) talks about staff working with other museums across the country. In paragraph 9(1)(k) it goes further and talks about how we can work with other museums to get these collections out there.

I am not sure she has actually read the bill. She talks about all the things she does not like in the bill, but they are actually already protected by both the Museum Act and this proposed act. What specifically in the new bill does she not like that was in the previous act?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am familiar with the bill.

We heard earlier that the museum is at arm's length. However, the minister has already imposed changes. What will prevent the minister or his department from making other changes?

There is a culture of terror with this Conservative government. What will stop it from continuing in this manner with the Canadian Museum of Civilization, as it already does just about everywhere else?

• (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not entirely disagree with how the member started the premise of the whole thing, but I would like her to go back to that question one more time. I am here trying to seek out the break between what was curatorial independence, as the member pointed out, in subsection 27(1), and what is about to be changed by this legislation. I think she just mentioned amendments. I did not get the whole thing. Could she try that again?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, it is fine to have a law, but that usually does not stop the Conservatives.

They will continue to exert pressure on people. They could influence a museum director, just as they could an archives director, for example. We know what happens next. The same thing will happen. There is a culture of terror among the museum's employees.

Why would it stop with this bill?

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it might also be relevant to ask whether the Conservative members know where they made cuts and whether they are aware of the consequences of how their new measures are affecting the country, for example, in terms of culture or heritage.

I am particularly thinking of the 80% of archeologists who were laid off. Only ten or so are left to take care of 167 sites in Canada. This bill seems to be an attempt by the Conservatives to make it seem they care about culture.

Does my hon. colleague share my concerns?

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree.

The government has indeed eliminated many archeologist jobs, but the preservation of artifacts is also a concern. Quebec City, for example, has one remaining archeologist, while two were moved with their collection here to Gatineau.

Moving the collection here to Gatineau is itself a major step. When a collection is moved away from its researchers, it ends up being neglected. I worked in archeology labs where forgotten boxes just sat there gathering dust. The risks to a collection increase substantially when it is moved away from where it was found.

In addition, these artifacts are not being preserved right now. A metal artifact that is not cared for will break down and rust. The same applies to objects made of wood or bone. The preservation of our heritage objects is therefore in considerable jeopardy.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak on Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

The primary purpose of this bill, in the heritage minister's words, is to refocus and reposition the mandate of the present Canadian Museum of Civilization. Thus, the Conservatives want to eliminate the museum's functions of creating and maintaining a collection of objects for research and for posterity. They want to change the museum's orientation and only focus on Canadians, rather than covering both Canada and the rest of the world. Finally, they want to remove the phrase "critical understanding" and replace it with a general idea of understanding, and replace human cultural achievements and human behaviour with a simplistic concept, "Canada's history and identity."

Government Orders

When the government announced its intention to close the Canadian Museum of Civilization and create the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, I feared this reform would be just like the others the Conservatives have given us: it would look inward, manipulate the facts, use history for partisan purposes and avoid consultation when implementing broad reforms.

When I saw the bill, many of my fears were realized. This bill reflects exactly what we have been criticizing the Conservatives about for years. This action may well lead to more missteps and cost overruns at the expense of Canadian taxpayers.

Before I go any further, I must make it clear that the Canadian Museum of Civilization is not being redesigned in answer to a need expressed by the general population or by the people in the field. No problem has been decried by anyone at all. No, this is all a simplistic initiative from the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who chooses self-promotion over the interests of the Canadian people. Instead of doing something about the flagrant needs for funding in arts and culture, the Conservatives have chosen to take \$25 million from the operational budget of Canadian Heritage, just to showcase the minister's whims.

This decision was made in the office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage without any transparent or open consultation. In fact, the Conservatives refuse to reveal just which stakeholders they consulted, what the consultation process involved, and what the findings were.

It seems that no stakeholders in the Outaouais were consulted. Not even the mayor of Gatineau, the city where the current Museum of Civilization is located, was approached by the government for his input on the issue. Thus, the Minister of Canadian Heritage did not think it useful to contact the people most closely affected by this reform.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is the most popular museum in Canada, with 1.2 million visitors per year, and \$15 million in annual revenue, some of that coming from admission fees. Its exhibitions present the whole world and attract everyone's interest; they enable us to keep learning all the time.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage did not take account of these facts, did not engage the community in his plans, and is trying to write the end of this success story. The whole country is proud of the museum's success and its fame is worldwide. The haste with which the government has started this process may spoil this success and limit its impact.

I also think we should question the Conservatives' perspective on history and the way they want to utilize it, as well as the mandate they would give to the museum. This vision clearly reflects the inward-looking attitude typical of this government. Rather than opening up the museum to the history of all civilizations, the government prefers to use this institution as a tool to promote militarism, glorify the monarchy and rewrite history for partisan purposes.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage wants to impose a linear view of history that is miles away from current educational practices, which tend to focus more on understanding and critical analysis.

In their efforts to deform or reform Canadian history, control history classes—which should be managed by the provinces—and promote militarism and the monarchy, the Conservatives are proving that they are completely out of touch with reality and the concerns of Canadians. They should leave it up to the real experts in the field to determine what direction to take in order to ensure a proper understanding of our history, rather than imposing a narrow, partisan view of history.

As a final point, implementing this bill and other Conservative actions on heritage matters deserve our attention. While the minister wants to spend \$25 million on self-promotion, the government has cut \$29 million from Parks Canada budgets.

● (1710)

Over 80% of Parks Canada archeologists and curators have lost their jobs. The number of professionals working in conservation dropped from 33 to eight. This means that about 20 or so people will be responsible for managing 30 million artifacts in the Parks Canada collection.

How can the minister stand up in this House and speak so highly of Canadian history, when his government's decisions are undermining the conservation of Canadian heritage and the protection of our historic sites?

As the executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, James L. Turk, pointed out: "If the government is genuinely committed to Canadian history, it should restore funding to Library and Archives Canada..." The government should restore its support for regional and local archives, and restore funding to protect and enhance Canada's historic sites.

On the contrary, by spending \$25 million of Heritage Canada's budget, even more money will be taken away from other funding areas. This situation is completely unacceptable.

To conclude, Bill C-49 is a huge mistake. By making new budget cuts to credits that have already been granted, the government will jeopardize heritage so it can move ahead with creating the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation. This decision is purely ideological and does not take into account the reality of the situation or the real and immediate heritage protection needs.

I therefore urge members to reject Bill C-49. Let us make an outward-looking museum, an outward-looking history and an outward-looking population a priority.

● (1715)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, I have to go back to the point that I do not think the NDP read any part of the bill. She talked about territorial independence. Subsection 27(1) states:

No directive shall be given to a museum under section 89 or subsection 114(3) of the Financial Administration Act with respect to cultural activities, including

- (a) the acquisition...
- (b) its activities and programs...; and
- (c) research with respect to the matters referred to in [the] paragraphs...

Government Orders

The actual mandate of the museum states:

The purpose of the Canadian Museum of History is to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures.

What part of those two things does she disagree with?

What part of section 9, which is the capacity and powers under this bill in comparison to the existing Museums Act with respect to civilization, does she disagree with? She cannot talk about all of these things, which are completely wrong. I am asking for her to give some specific areas where she disagrees. Does she disagree with the current Museums Act, which guarantees curatorial independence? Does she disagree with the mandate which talks about people's better understanding of Canadian history and world and other cultures? What part of that are you not in agreement with?

The Deputy Speaker: I do not get to say what I agree or disagree with.

The hon. member for St. Lambert.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely cannot agree with so narrow a vision of history. We are again witnessing this government's taking control. There is a risk that it will eliminate a part of history simply to create a politicized version of the museum. We must also fear that the government is not leaving room for autonomy and that it is truly controlling. We cannot trust the government.

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what concerns me is the Conservatives' judgment. They put a lot of effort into celebrating the War of 1812, yet this war should not be celebrated. It was a catastrophe in which Canada lost approximately 30% of its territory to the Americans. The great hero of this war disobeyed orders and abandoned our aboriginal allies from the other side of the Detroit River, leaving them to be massacred by the Americans. There is nothing about this war that should be celebrated. I am concerned that these people are able to decide how history is interpreted. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I would like to answer him by simply saying that we are in favour of recognizing a multi-faceted history. For example, a history museum located on the ancestral lands of the first nations, such as the Inuit or the Metis, must reflect their history and their voice.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, that previous question demonstrates the difference between members of this side of the House and Canadians and the NDP. NDP members are actually embarrassed by our military history. They do not want to talk about it.

The War of 1812 is important because it, in part, guaranteed the French factor in Canada. It led Canada on to a different relationship with its first nations. I think that is worth celebrating.

I am proud of Vimy Ridge and proud of the Canadian sacrifices in two world wars that helped guarantee our freedom and have given

them the opportunity to be in this place and to debate, yet those members are embarrassed by it. We are going to celebrate that.

More specifically, what part of what I read with respect to the mandate of the museum do you not agree with?

The Deputy Speaker: The parliamentary secretary has now twice directed comments at the individual member of Parliament as opposed to the Chair.

The hon. member for Saint-Lambert.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, we must ask ourselves an essential question about this bill. We have wondered about it and we have asked it before. That question is: are the Conservatives genuinely and seriously interested in history? One has to wonder.

In closing, I am wondering if the mandate of one of the most popular museums in the country really needs to be changed and maybe even reduced. What is more, why do the Conservatives want to change a winning formula?

Once again, I think that it is obviously for ideological reasons.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak to Bill C-49, a bill which would create the new Canadian museum of history.

The road to Canada's 150th birthday offers Canadians from coast to coast to coast an opportunity to celebrate our history and the achievements that define who we are as Canadians. This government is determined to make the most of these opportunities to celebrate our history, and our national museums play a key role in that undertaking.

Museums are considered by the public to be highly trustworthy sources of information about history and can provide valuable learning opportunities for Canadians. However, our museums are also major economic drivers, attracting tens of thousands of tourists in all regions and in both large and small communities, contributing to the \$78-billion tourism industry. A single blockbuster exhibition can generate more than \$30 million in incremental tourism revenues for the surrounding region.

This government has created two new national museums in the past four years, both outside of the national capital region. They are the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, in Winnipeg, and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, in Halifax. This has marked the first time in 40 years that a new national museum was created and the first time that a national museum had been located outside the national capital region.

Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I was to have mentioned that I am splitting my time with the member for Oakville.

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Our government believes in our national museums, and we recognize the tremendous value that they hold for all Canadians. As we approach Canada's 150th birthday, it is an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians. Mark O'Neill, president of the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation said "The Canadian Museum of History will inspire...a greater understanding" of our Canadian identity. "Canadians, as well as visitors from around the world", will gain "a deeper appreciation of Canada's unique and fascinating national journey".

However, while our national institutions do magnificent work as guardians of our heritage, not one is dedicated to telling the full narrative of our nation's history. That is the reason my colleague, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, announced that the Government of Canada would establish the Canadian museum of history, a national museum that would provide Canadians with an opportunity to learn about and appreciate the richness of Canadian history.

For Canada, 2012 was an eventful year. We celebrated the 95th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the bicentennial of the War of 1812, and her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. This year, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Arctic Expedition. In 2014, we will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War.

I know the opposition members are asking why this government feels it is important to focus the interest of Canadians on our collective history. In 2017, this country will celebrate its 150th birthday. In the lead-up to that celebration, it is important that Canadians know about, appreciate, and celebrate the wealth of our collective history. The statistics are concerning. Only four Canadian provinces, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Nova Scotia, require a credit in Canadian history to be mandatory for graduation. There are 82% of young Canadians surveyed who could not pass a basic Canadian history exam. This is not acceptable.

Let us begin the celebration of the 150th birthday of our country by reminding the citizens of this great nation of the events, people and achievements that make this country unique. Let us remind Canadians and the world that the following are all Canadian inventions: the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell; the electron microscope, James Hillier and Albert Prebus; the snowblower, Arthur Sicard; the snowmobile, Armand Bombardier; the Canadarm, Spar Aerospace; and insulin, Frederick Banting and Charles Best.

• (1725)

Let us inform Canadians in the world about the Hudson's Bay Company, the Bluenose, the Empress of Ireland, the Franklin Expedition and the Canadian Arctic Expedition. Let us celebrate the Battle of Vimy Ridge; the Falcon of Malta, Buzz Beurling; and World War I flying aces Billy Bishop and Billy Barker. Let us reflect on the accomplishments of pianist Glenn Gould; poet Pauline Johnson; Mary Two-Axe Earley, who fought to have her aboriginal rights restored; and John Peters Humphrey, who wrote the original draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Let us remember that this land has been continuously occupied for more than 10,000 years. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, in Alberta, a World Heritage site, was being used while the pyramids were still

under construction. Anthony Island, another World Heritage site, was first inhabited thousands of years ago. L'Anse aux Meadows, in Newfoundland, contains the ruins of a north settlement dating from the 11th century. Ours is not a short history.

It is perhaps time that we paused to reflect on what has made this country what it is today. The Canadian Museum of Civilization sought the opinions of Canadians, both online and in nine cities across the country, on the personalities, events and milestones that truly tell the Canadian story. The fact that close to 20,000 Canadians responded speaks to the importance of this new museum.

The Canadian museum of history will provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world.

In conclusion, I hope that as many Canadians as possible will take the opportunity to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday in 2017, in the freshly renovated exhibition halls of the new Canadian museum of history, a museum that highlights the national achievements and accomplishments that have shaped this great nation.

Let me again quote Mr. O'Neill, who said, "There has been no place that Canadians can point to and say this is where we can go to discover who we are as Canadians. This is a place where we can see how we, as Canadians, got to where we are now. Starting today, Canada will have a place like that".

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I want to thank my colleague for pointing out that the first national museum ever built outside the national capital region is the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, in my riding. I also want to recognize and pay tribute to those who raised funds to bring that about. MPs would be interested to note that the Museum of Natural History and the people of Winnipeg have raised more money for that museum than all the other museums in Canadian history combined. Approximately \$150 million of private money has gone into that museum.

When there was a 10% cost overrun, we were told to have a tag sale and raise some more money. When there was a 100% cost overrun at the Museum of Natural History in Ottawa, the federal government simply wrote a cheque totalling hundreds of millions of dollars.

My question is simple. Why is there a double standard for these museums outside of the national capital region? Second, how much money in total are they spending to renovate the Museum of Civilization? Why has the construction started before they even have the enabling legislation passed?

• (1730)

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, first let me thank hon. colleague. True to his point, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg is a great example and testament to this great nation and what we as a country have done successfully. I applaud all of those who contributed to make that museum the success that it is today. It is an opportunity for people from around the world to come and see what is truly remarkable about our nation.

I have a couple of quick comments and then I will be done. The amount spent to date is \$1 million. That amount was applied to all of the work that was done in preparation to determine the future of what Canadians from coast to coast to coast want to see.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Should he wish it, the hon. member for Don Valley West will have three minutes remaining in the time for questions and comments when the House next resumes debate on this question.

It being 5:31 p.m., the House will proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL CHARITIES WEEK

The House resumed from March 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-458, An Act respecting a National Charities Week and to amend the Income Tax Act (charitable and other gifts), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my speech on the bill regarding a National Charities Week by showing how the government has gradually transferred many of its fundamental responsibilities to the private sector.

Over the years, during my brief experience in the House, I have noticed the government's trend of transferring responsibilities, as well as withdrawing and, at the very least, attempting to distance itself from its obligations to provide services to Canadians.

Strange as it may seem, the government is attempting to transfer its own responsibilities to paragonovernmental bodies that are not accountable to Canadians. I will provide evidence of this in my speech. The House will therefore be in a position to draw its own conclusions.

Although we cannot but welcome efforts to increase charitable donations, we must carefully look at the impact of the proposed measures on federal revenues, on the total amount of donations and on their distribution, in light of the current political situation.

Based on my experience as deputy aboriginal affairs critic, I have noticed that the government blindly delegates the implementation parameters for public policy measures. Once again this morning, when I attended the meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, members were dealing with the issue of safe drinking water on first nations reserves.

The evidence provided by the witnesses who had been invited to appear this morning reflected the government's barely concealed desire to transfer its obligations to agencies and bodies that are rarely accountable to the general public, even though band councils are accountable to members of the first nations.

In this case, the Canadian government is trying to transfer its own obligations to band councils, by virtue of the fiduciary relationship that the Crown has with first nations. Moreover, it is doing so

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without necessarily transferring the budget envelope that should go along with it.

This kind of reasoning is applicable in many other areas, not just aboriginal affairs. Over the years, we have seen the Conservatives simply trying to shift that weight and pass it on to others. Certain highly controversial issues can often be seen in a positive light by some. Ultimately, they are covered by the media and taken up by international bodies.

In this case, we are talking about safe drinking water, but in terms of charities, we are talking about the delivery of services to Canadians. This puts the government in a more or less favourable light. That is why the government is distancing itself, or at least why there is a very clear desire to do so in this case.

In this speech, I will give concrete examples that support this position and that show how the government's desire and these distancing measures we see day after day are detrimental. I cannot speak to the past but, over the two years that I have been here, I have observed the government's gradual withdrawal. This will have a negative impact on all Canadians.

Considering the unstable economic situation in Canada, it is important to condemn the government's gradual withdrawal from the provision of services to Canadians. The government needs to maintain social programs and make further investments in them to reduce the visible strain on the charitable sector and prevent essential government services from being replaced by charities.

This is especially true because charities, just like first nations, do not necessarily have the budget envelope to provide services to the public. They are not always accountable; this depends on how closely they are tied to government bodies. Some charitable organizations are simply not accountable. How convenient for them.

Finally, the government has divested itself of highly controversial areas. It can simply say that it is no longer responsible for these areas since another organization has taken charge of the whole thing.

•(1735)

I would now like to delve into my own personal experience. I often discuss issues at the empirical level and today will be no different.

Coming back to my own practice, as a lawyer working for legal aid and also as a private counsel, when I opened my own office in August or September 2010, I occasionally worked on a voluntary basis, in order to increase the glamour and build a reputation as an ethical lawyer. In legal parlance, the Latin term *pro bono* is used for this. The Barreau du Québec and the other bar associations just about everywhere in the country strongly urge their members to work *pro bono*, that is, to work on a voluntary basis.

When I worked on criminal cases, or even more obviously, when I provided services to clients with mental health needs, it sometimes happened that the clients were not eligible for legal aid for financial or other reasons.

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In some cases, the process was already under way, and as the case progressed I realized that legal aid had refused its assistance. I was still responsible for these cases. I simply decided to continue providing my services to the client. I did not do it in order to gain some financial reward or for a mercenary purpose, but because my help was needed. In addition, no other lawyer would have taken on these cases free of charge. So I provided these services for no personal benefit.

I would like to come back to one point regarding charities. When you work on a voluntary basis or pro bono, disinterest must always be kept in mind. You do not do the work with profit in mind. The primary reason for working on a voluntary basis or pro bono is to ensure that everyone benefits from one's services and skills.

In my own case, this was quite beneficial, because my reputation grew, and I like to think this was one of the inducements or at least one of the elements that led to my election in 2011. People were already aware of my pro bono work and the fact that I provided services free of charge for people who were poor and vulnerable.

To come back to this notion of disinterest, some lawyers who call themselves "first nation specialists" often lurk around band councils with the idea of making a profit. Some lawyers will say that they are doing pro bono work on a case. Strangely enough, these are the same people who will demand \$100,000 per month from Indian bands. This is not really what pro bono means. I would like to make an aside to discuss another Latin expression: *obiter dictum*. This means that I am saying something in passing.

In summary, when you perform work on a pro bono basis, you have to keep in mind that there will be no payment for the work. I would like to send this message to my friends the first nation specialists.

Finally, it is important to point out that the best approach to the matter under consideration is to implement a comprehensive, consistent, long-term charity policy. Beyond the ostentatious aspect of the issue, it may be worthwhile to assess the entire matter in light of the Conservatives' double-talk.

Beneath a facade of magnanimity and compassion, supported by expensive marketing hype, the actual implementation of their policies means gaps in funding and targeted attacks on agencies that hold positions that clash with government policy.

This can be seen in bodies other than charitable organizations. The government looks down on some agencies, bodies and band councils and even certain clans that are moderately favourable or freethinking, that are able to express their own position. Strangely, they can also experience a gap in funding, and the government speaks contemptuously about them.

I will repeat my own words. At a meeting with first nations that was meant to be historic, some groups ended up on the sidewalk and were treated as undesirables. In that case and in the case of certain charitable organizations, there has been some cherry picking over the years. Some organizations have had their funding cut because they were not conspicuously favourable to the ideas expressed or at least because they took positions that came into conflict with the ideology of this government.

Clearly, in 2013, the Conservatives have a poor idea of freedom of expression and freethinkers.

I submit this respectfully.

● (1740)

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I rise today to speak to Bill C-458, the national charities week act, I want to refer to what my colleague from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor noted during the first hour of the debate. As he stated in his remarks in this House, the Liberal Party of Canada will be supporting the bill.

[*Translation*]

We are all proud of the outstanding work done by Canada's charities.

[*English*]

However, I would like to reiterate the two main concerns my colleague previously raised. As the House heard, Bill C-458 would amend the Income Tax Act by allowing taxpayers to deduct donations made within 60 days of the end of the taxation year from that year's taxable income.

During the study by the Standing Committee on Finance of tax incentives for charitable donations, Adam Aptowitz noted that there is no economic modelling on the issue of tax deadlines, which means that while there is no modelling to support keeping the current deadline, there is also none to encourage moving it to the end of February.

[*Translation*]

Before making this change, Parliament needs to know all of the facts.

[*English*]

First, we need to hear from stakeholders about the impact these changes would have on fundraising strategies. The current tax deadline coincides with December holidays, which are the basis of major fundraising campaigns for many Canadian charities.

It costs money to raise money. We should be asking if it makes sense to encourage another series of campaigns at the end of February, a time more associated with paying down debt and making RRSP contributions than charitable giving. We need to hear the broader not-for-profit sector's views on whether this would be a useful or productive change.

Second, my colleague from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, that extraordinary, exceptional member of Parliament, rightly pointed out that we have no estimate of the impact Bill C-458 might have on federal revenues. Donation tax credits for individuals cost the treasury about \$2.4 billion per year. If more Canadians claim donor tax credits, these costs will grow. Of course, we would hope that the increase would be offset by an attendant increase in charitable donations, but again, we have not seen the data on this point.

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• (1745)

[Translation]

That is why Bill C-458 needs to be studied in more detail in committee.

[English]

To give a reasonable and responsible verdict on this legislation, parliamentarians need to know the costs involved, and they need to know the potential positive impact on increased charitable giving.

It is a timely moment to talk about the state of charitable giving in Canada. As the finance committee's recent report showed, government funding to the charitable sector has declined, and charities rely increasingly on private donations. While Canadians give time and money generously, the number of Canadians claiming the charitable donation tax credit has been stable since 1990, while the number of individual taxpayers has grown by over seven million.

[Translation]

We need to ask ourselves what we can do to help charities expand and strengthen their donor base.

The Liberal Party is encouraging the government to take meaningful action to promote the charitable sector. We believe that two measures in particular would have a definite impact.

[English]

First, we urge the government to establish a stretch tax credit for charitable donations. Second, we recommend extending the capital gains tax exemption to include gifts of private company shares and real estate.

A stretch tax credit rewards donors who increase the amount they give to charity by stretching the tax credit on the difference.

In their brief to the finance committee on this subject, Imagine Canada outlined the benefits. They said that a stretch tax credit would “challenge more Canadians to give and to give more”.

[Translation]

Another goal is to “strengthen and revitalize the donor base for many years to come”.

[English]

They said it would “benefit the broadest number of taxpayers; support the broadest number of charities and communities”.

[Translation]

Finally, the measures should “entail minimal impact on the federal Treasury in proportion to the benefits gained”.

[English]

This is an innovative reform with support from Canadians as well as many Canadian charities.

On the subject of reform, many in this House would know Donald Johnson as one of Canada's leading philanthropists and a tireless advocate of tax reform in the charitable sector. D.K. Johnson has worked for well over a decade advancing the cause of the charitable sector in Canada. In 2011, he told the finance committee that there

was a strong case to be made for eliminating the capital gains tax on gifts of private company shares and real estate.

The economy remains weak. Charities need more resources, because more people need help, and since those resources would need to come from private donations, the government ought to do everything it can to encourage giving. According to D.K. Johnson's testimony, this tax change would cost the treasury between \$50 million and \$65 million but would result in \$200 million in new donations. That is the sort of dramatic result Canadian charities need and could benefit from.

The finance committee's report recommended that the government “explore the feasibility and cost of adopting a stretch tax credit” and of cutting the capital gains tax on donations of certain assets. These measures ought to be prioritized by the government.

Canada's charities deserve real support, because they make a real difference in people's lives. I would like to highlight a couple of examples from my riding. The Mermaid Theatre in Windsor, Nova Scotia does incredible work with young people and for young people. Their youth theatre project, which has been running for more than 20 years, gives teenagers a chance to explore tough questions and create innovative theatre, building confidence and performance skills.

Another great example is Camp Brigadoon on Aylesford Lake in my riding, which is a place for children with chronic illnesses, conditions and special needs. These kids face tremendous challenges, but with the help of staff and volunteers, they make friends and explore beautiful Lake Aylesford and the Annapolis Valley. They have fun. They get to enjoy the fun and the opportunity to go to a summer camp that children who are not burdened by chronic health issues often take for granted. For many of these children and their families, summer camp was something that was simply inaccessible for a child with a chronic illness. Camp Brigadoon is an example of the kind of non-profit organization that makes a real difference in people's lives.

Another example is the Alzheimer Society. The work the Alzheimer Society does is really important to families like mine. My mother has Alzheimer's. I know the work the Alzheimer Society does.

There is the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation and the incredible work they are doing on brain health and on issues of dementia and Alzheimer's. Tax changes for charitable giving would help attract more money to the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation and help potentially find a cure in the future for some of these brain health issues. In the interim, it could help people and their families living with these brain health issues deal with the issues and have a higher quality of life.

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These are examples of the invaluable work that exemplifies the dedication and generosity of Canadian charities, the important work they are doing and the difference they are making in communities and for Canadian families. We are all proud of Canada's charities. We want to see them grow and prosper.

• (1750)

[Translation]

My Liberal colleagues will be supporting this bill.

[English]

That said, there are far more concrete steps this House can and ought to take to foster the long-term sustainability of Canada's donor base. I encourage the government to give them serious attention.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-458.

Before I begin, I want to thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo for his tireless work on behalf of his constituents since his arrival in Parliament in 2008. The member has done considerable work as the vice-chair of the government operations and estimates committee and as a member of the industry, science and technology committee. He is one of the hardest working MPs that I have come to know. He has demonstrated commitment through a lifetime of volunteer work, having sat out a year of his schooling to volunteer with aboriginal communities in northwest Ontario and abroad in India. In more recent years, he has worked hard on behalf of the United Way. The hard work has won the member praise from across the aisle as a respected advocate for charities across the country.

In addition, I would like to take a moment to recognize that member's outstanding parliamentary record as a champion of the charitable sector. *The Globe and Mail* recently noted, "as a backbench MP, [the member for Kitchener—Waterloo] has carved out a niche of expertise and influence on the charities file".

In 2010, he sponsored Motion No. 559, which called for the Standing Committee on Finance to study tax incentives for charitable donations, which was passed by the House with unanimous consent. This motion played a crucial role in the development of economic action plan 2013 and, as a result, the committee heard important evidence demonstrating the need for the government to foster and promote a culture of giving.

Most important, the committee learned that tax incentives had a crucial role to play in increasing the number of new donors. That is why in economic action plan 2013 the government has introduced the first-time donor's super credit. Thanks to the hard work of the member for Kitchener—Waterloo, our government continues to build on a strong record of support for the charitable sector.

The first-time donor's super credit would significantly enhance the attractiveness of donating to a charity for young Canadians who would be in a position to make donations for the very first time and would have an immediate impact in supporting the charitable sector.

The Bank of Montreal surveyed 1,000 people about the first-time donor's super credit, and roughly half of those between the ages of 18 and 34 said that they would contribute more to charities because of this special tax break. Overall, the survey found that 70% supported the first-time donor's super credit.

Not only that, but charities across the country have welcomed this new credit. Katharine Schmidt from Food Banks Canada had this to say:

The super credit will provide an enticing opportunity for more Canadians to donate to their local food bank if they haven't already done so. Food banks across the country continue to struggle to raise enough money to keep their doors open. We believe this credit is a step in the right direction to provide food banks with a new tool with which to seek out new donors.

Furthermore, the new super credit would be a valuable tool for the arts. Camilla Holland, the advocacy chair for the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres lauded the government on its commitment to work with the charitable sector in providing charitable giving incentives. Miss Holland said that the new super credit was "welcome strides towards growing donors and levels of giving for... theatre companies of all sizes".

This super credit would also help the health care sector raise funds for research and innovation. I would note that the Canadian Multiple Sclerosis Society had this to say about the super credit:

We are also very pleased to see the commitment to strengthen the capacity of the Canadian charitable sector...I'd like to provide a few illustrations of how these measures will help the MS Society of Canada and the people we serve...We are also encouraged by the recognition in Economic Action Plan 2013 to foster and promote a culture of giving in Canada. The introduction of a new, temporary First-Time Donor's Super Credit for first-time claimants of the Charitable Donations Tax Credit will encourage all young Canadians to donate to charity.

However, more broadly, the introduction of the first-time donor's super credit will achieve its intended purpose by helping charitable organizations raise considerable amounts of funds from new donors.

• (1755)

Marcel Lauzière, president and CEO of Imagine Canada, had the following to say about the government's new super credit:

Imagine Canada...is very pleased that today's federal budget includes a First-Time Donor's Super Credit to encourage more Canadians to give to charity, and a commitment by the federal government to work with the charitable sector and with Imagine Canada to encourage more donations by a greater number of Canadians... The Super Credit will help us make real progress...generating up to \$110 million a year from new donors for causes that Canadians hold dear. This is a significant investment in our communities at a time of ongoing restraint...We are pleased at the government's commitment to work with Imagine Canada and the charitable sector to encourage more Canadians to give more.

This super credit would supplement the existing charitable donations tax credit with an additional 25% tax credit for a first time donor on up to \$1,000 of donations. Overall, this incentive would expand and rejuvenate the charitable sector's donor base and would provide an estimated \$25 million in annual tax relief.

Since 2006, our Conservative government has lowered taxes on Canadians more than 150 times, including lowering the GST from 7% to 5%. In doing so, we have reduced the overall federal tax burden on Canadians to the lowest point in over 50 years. We have also introduced the tax-free savings account to help Canadians save more of their hard-earned money. On this side of the House, we understand that lowering taxes leaves more money in the pockets of Canadians, giving them greater flexibility to donate to charity.

Our government wholeheartedly supports the intent of Bill C-458 and I applaud the noble efforts my hon. colleague has made to aid charities in their important work. Indeed, this bill has the potential to encourage young Canadians on a path of sustained charitable donations throughout their lives. A strong culture of charitable donations empowers these organizations to make an even bigger impact in communities across the country.

Our government is committed to returning to balanced budgets before the next election and we will do so by building on the solid foundations of our economic action plan, which has served Canadians well.

With respect to Bill C-458, we encourage all members to support the referral of the bill to committee where it can be further examined.

In closing, I would like to quote a recent *Waterloo Region Record* editorial, which praised the legislation before us today. It noted:

[The member for Kitchener Waterloo's] bill strikes us as a non-partisan, common sense proposal that deserves support across the political spectrum. It should be passed.

I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment and thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo for his work. I encourage all members to vote to give the bill the hearing it so rightly deserves.

• (1800)

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-458, An Act respecting a National Charities Week and to amend the Income Tax Act (charitable and other gifts).

The New Democrats will support this bill at second reading. It provides for two main measures. First of all, it amends the Income Tax Act to provide that charitable gifts, made within 60 days after the end of a taxation year are eligible for a tax credit for that taxation year. Second, it establishes a National Charities Week, which would be the last week of February.

We therefore support this bill at second reading so that it can go to the committee stage. Since I sit on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, I am well aware that the New Democrats do very serious work in committee. We work very hard. I have also sat as a substitute on several other House committees, and I can state that the New Democrats' work is exemplary. They do very serious work, analyze bills, listen to witnesses, take their recommendations seriously and insist that they be included in reports, unlike the Conservatives, who already have their minds made up and very often do not listen to the experts and scientists.

It is also important that the Standing Committee on Finance study this bill so that the committee can get a clearer idea of the actual cost

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of this measure. We must ensure that this measure is an adequate response to the difficulties charities currently face.

I would also like to talk about certain organizations in the riding of Drummond. For example, organizations benefiting from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the HPS, came to see me before the budget was tabled last year. The organizations affected include Ensoleilvent, Refuge La Piaule, Maison Habit-Action, Tablee populaire, Comptoir alimentaire and Carrefour d'entraide. These are all charitable organizations that assist the homeless and the poor in my riding.

These organizations are unfortunately being abandoned by the Conservative government. Their budgets have not even been indexed for several years now, perhaps more than five. Year after year, although demand is increasing in Drummond and elsewhere in Quebec and Canada, the funding allocated to the HPS is not even indexed. Although the Conservative government has fortunately renewed the program, allocated funding is inadequate. The government also wants to interfere in the way the organizations want to manage their money. We wanted complete freedom in this area so that the organizations, which know people's needs, could take the most appropriate action. We wanted funding to be allocated in a general way, but that is unfortunately not the case.

As my hon. colleague from Manicouagan noted in his excellent speech, the Conservative government is currently withdrawing from charities, which can no longer rely on recurring funding. They cannot count on stable funding with which to provide appropriate assistance. Furthermore, they are now accountable to the federal government.

• (1805)

On the contrary, with the Conservative government's gradual and clear withdrawal, these organizations are increasingly being left to fend for themselves, so to speak. They must solicit businesses and generous donors more often for funding. At times, they are forced to adopt an approach that may not always be the most appropriate one, with questionable or dubious results.

A very large company that may not necessarily be bad but that may have other interests could in some way influence charitable organizations into doing what it wants them to do. Sometimes their actions may be questionable. That is why it is important for the federal government to ensure an adequate level of funding for agencies like the ones I mentioned, so that they may provide adequate support to members of the public.

Unfortunately, as we saw once again with the renewal of funding for the HPS, the government has failed on this score. This is a failure on the part of the Conservative government. While it did renew HPS funding, unfortunately it stripped the HPS of its general character, something that agencies in Drummond had asked it not to do. Funding amounts were not indexed, as had been requested. In a few years' time, the process will have to be repeated.

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I want to mention the excellent work the member for Hochelaga is doing in support of social housing. I want to thank her for her hard work. We can all be proud of our social housing critic. She is doing an excellent job and we are seeing the fruits of her labour. We are continuing our hard work in this area, because we are not getting a lot of support from those across the way.

I would like to mention the fine work being done by all of the charitable organizations across Canada fighting against social inequality. They provide support for our fellow Canadians during difficult times and make a truly essential contribution.

As I pointed out earlier, the NDP and the majority of Canadians believe that it is important not to relieve the government of its responsibilities. Our social policies must also reflect the actions of charitable organizations. We must support these agencies in a more tangible way.

Government cuts to grants to NGOs working in the area of international citizenship adversely affect all agencies.

The facts show that we have reason to be leery of the Conservative government's approach. It seems to want to leave the charitable sector to fend for itself. As I said earlier, this is a dangerous approach.

Canadians want a responsible government that shoulders its responsibilities. They do not want a government that sloughs off its basic responsibilities onto the private sector, with all the risks that may entail. Once again, I refer to the excellent speech by the hon. member for Manicouagan, who explained these points so well.

In short, I will say that the NDP supports the charitable sector. We want a comprehensive, coherent, long-term policy. We must include the charitable sector when we create social policies, and charitable organizations should not be required to manage our social programs. The government must remain the master planner. It must retain the responsibility. The Conservative government must maintain the social programs and invest in them in order to avoid an explosion in demand in the charitable sector.

I would like to point out that other organizations have suffered funding cuts. Earlier, I talked a lot about HPS and the initiative to end homelessness, but then there are Rights and Democracy, Alternatives, Kairos, and Development and Peace. All these charitable organizations work independently and accountably.

● (1810)

Unfortunately, the Conservative government has not supported them; on the contrary, it has made cuts, which is really deplorable. We are in favour of charitable donations, but the government must also face up to its responsibilities. Unfortunately, the Conservative government has not done so. The NDP will do it in 2015—the public can rest assured.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely thrilled to be standing here today because I truly believe in Bill C-458. This is an important proposal before us today. It is intended to help Canadians across the country when they are involved in charities. We truly do

have a commitment to help donors and ensure that they get the benefits that have been put forward by this government.

What would this proposal do?

This proposal would establish the last seven days of February each year as national charities week, and it would extend the deadline for individuals claiming charitable gifts for tax purposes from December 31 of a taxation year to 60 days after that day to match the deadline for contributions to registered retirement savings plans.

It is my sincere hope that members on both sides will set aside all of their talking points and listen to what is being said here. There is a member here in this House who has worked extremely hard on this bill, and I would hope that members, particularly from the NDP, will listen to the benefits the bill would provide to charities and donors.

Let me begin by saying that my hon. colleague for Kitchener—Waterloo has spent an awful lot of tireless effort advocating for charities and charitable organizations throughout his time here in Parliament. I have worked alongside this member and I am so proud to see the work that he has done.

He is in the House right now, and he is a humble fellow. However, I want to take this opportunity to thank him, not only on behalf of the government but on behalf of all Canadians, because they have seen his tireless efforts and appreciate everything that he does and continues to do so that charities can benefit from the best that we have here in Parliament. In fact, he is one of the best that I have the pleasure to work with.

The member also put forward another motion, Motion No. 559, which called for the Standing Committee on Finance to study tax incentives for charitable donations. That motion was supported, thankfully, by all parties in the House. As a member of the finance committee, I am pleased to report that after extensive consultations, we have presented the government with a comprehensive report that we can all be proud of.

To the member's credit, the recommendations of that report are clearly reflected in the most recent budget economic action plan 2013 in the form of an important initiative that I will speak about at great length later on.

With respect to the member's current bill, let me quote a recent editorial in the *National Post* praising the legislation before us today, noting that:

Too often of late, private members' bills have served explicitly partisan ends. [The member for Kitchener—Waterloo's] Bill C-458, however, seeks to improve the lot of needy citizens simply by adjusting a bureaucratic formality. This is the sort of effort we'd like to see more of in Parliament....

[*Translation*]

First, I would like to tell the House that the Conservative government proudly salutes the volunteers who contribute to charities established to improve the quality of life of people who need help.

Volunteers are remarkable, altruistic Canadians who have an impact on people's lives, and who do so without any hope of reward. They give of their time and energy because they are concerned for the less fortunate.

Canadians should be proud to know that Canada is one of the countries with the most charities and non-profit organizations.

According to estimates, there are more than 160,000 charities and non-profit organizations, and their goal is to help solve our country's greatest social problems.

In addition, ordinary Canadians know very well that the charitable sector plays an essential role in society and provides invaluable services to the most vulnerable individuals, thanks to generous financial support for their important work.

According to Statistics Canada, more than 5.7 million Canadians made donations totalling nearly \$8.5 billion to registered charities in 2011. They also receive assistance through the tax system in the form of a personal tax credit and a corporate tax deduction for charitable donations.

In fact, federal government tax assistance for charitable donations exceeded \$2.9 billion in 2012. Canadian tax incentives for charitable donations are among the most generous in the world.

• (1815)

[English]

Our Conservative government fully supports the charitable sector. In fact, we have taken numerous steps to enhance support for such organizations since 2006, including exempting donations of publicly listed securities to charities from capital gains tax, reforming the disbursement quota rules for charities, reducing their administrative complexity to better able charities to focus their time and resources on charitable activities, introducing integrity measures to combat fraud and abuse in the charitable sector and, lastly, enhancing public transparency and accountability to ensure that charities devote their resources to charitable and not political activities.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, following the finance committee's report on charitable donation tax incentives, a direct response to another initiative by the member for Kitchener—Waterloo, economic action plan 2013 proposes a new temporary first-time donor super credit, designed to encourage new donors to give to charity. The FDSC, which is the first time donor super credit, will increase the value of the federal charitable donations tax credit by 25 percentage points if neither the taxpayer nor his or her spouse has claimed the credit since 2007.

The FDSC will apply on up to \$1,000 in cash donations claimed in any one taxation year from 2013 to 2017. This new credit would significantly enhance the attractiveness of donating to a charity for young Canadians who are in a position to make donations for the first time. Helping to rejuvenate and expand the charitable sector's donor base will have an immediate impact in supporting the sector. This is great news.

It is clear that our government and the member for Kitchener—Waterloo are hard at work to ensure that charities have the help they need to do what they do best. Let me take a moment to remind my hon. colleagues of the member's outstanding reputation in this regard.

Imagine Canada, the leading umbrella organization representing Canadian charities, has praised his willingness to consult with charities on new ideas, stating:

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[The member for Kitchener—Waterloo] has been and continues to be a real champion for the charitable sector. He demonstrates a sound understanding of the issues we're facing.

I am sure my colleagues on both sides of the House would agree with that assessment and will join our Conservative government in sending this bill to the finance committee for the hearing it so richly deserves. Let the champion, the member for Kitchener—Waterloo, present this bill so that we can further assist charities across the country to ensure that their good work is being done.

[Translation]

Lastly, I want to say why it is important to support this proposal at second reading so that it can be studied in greater detail.

We realize the bill's aims are clear and noble. By supporting it at second reading, we can conduct a thorough examination, reflecting contributions by parliamentarians, charities and other stakeholders, and thus report on the status of some important issues. For example, if the deadline is changed from December 31 to March 1, how much will donations increase, and what is the estimated cost of this measure?

The study of Bill C-458 will also be an opportunity for charities to indicate whether they are concerned about the reduced time limit for issuing tax receipts to last-minute donors. Charities currently have approximately six to eight weeks after the end of the year to issue receipts to donors. It is quite logical to believe that, if the time limit for making charitable donations is extended by two months, the organizations will have to make administrative adjustments to reflect the new deadline.

• (1820)

[English]

In saying all of that, I look forward to and count on the support of the members on both sides of the House so we can get this bill to the finance committee to do the important study that is required. We want to hear from charities and organizations that have no other interest except helping those who are most vulnerable. Let us give them a chance to speak, and we will do what we can to ensure that they have the assistance of this government, as we have demonstrated in the past, so they can benefit from the generosity of Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate.

I invite the hon. member for Kitchener—Waterloo for his five-minute right of reply.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House once again to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-458. I would like to begin by thanking all of my colleagues in this place who have spoken to the issue of my bill, and who have also spoken about the importance of the charitable sector in Canada.

Government Orders

As members know, my bill proposes to extend the deadline for charitable donations by 60 days, so that eligible donations made up until March 1 may be claimed in the previous calendar year. In addition, it would establish the last seven days of February as National Charities Week in Canada.

Canadians are among the most generous people in the world. When I look around my community of Kitchener—Waterloo, I see numerous events that provide support for worthwhile causes. I know that this is happening in communities across the country. For example, just this past weekend, I attended the annual Great Strides walk that raises funds for cystic fibrosis research. Hundreds of people participated in this event and almost \$200,000 was raised that will support the great work of Cystic Fibrosis Canada and help find a cure for this disease. I might add that the walk that was held in Kitchener—Waterloo raised the second-highest amount in the country, and we are very proud of that.

Not only do Canadians strongly support their local charities, but as global citizens we also recognize our responsibilities internationally. Earlier this month, I had the privilege to travel to Africa with the Governor General. Everywhere we went we saw the impact of Canada's contributions to improve the lives of people in the developing world. I can say that we are well regarded for our international aid efforts and that is thanks, in part, to the generosity of individual Canadians.

In the four and a half years that I have been a member of Parliament, I have had the opportunity to present two items of private members' business. I have chosen to focus on supporting the charitable sector because I believe the sector is a foundation of a strong society. There are two aspects to creating positive change that will benefit the charitable sector. The first is to raise awareness. As Canadians, we need to be more aware of the work that is being done on the front lines in our communities, and consider how we can further support these important efforts. The second aspect is to take action. As members of Parliament, we come here to try to make a difference, and I think we are making good progress with regard to charitable organizations.

I was very proud that our government introduced the first-time donors super credit in our last budget, which would boost the charitable tax credit by 25% for new donors. This was a response to the recommendations of the finance committee following a study that was instigated by my private member's motion, Motion No. 559. Building on this momentum, I am pleased to now have the opportunity to advance this particular initiative.

There are a number of reasons that I believe Bill C-458 would lead to increased support for charities. It would move decisions on charitable giving away from the hectic holiday season. It would raise awareness of the tax benefits of charitable donations and encourage people to consider giving as part of their tax and financial planning. It would create a second season of giving, which would be further underscored by National Charities Week at the end of February. I believe that by combining an awareness campaign with a tangible measure that would motivate increased giving, Bill C-458 would benefit our charitable sector.

I was pleased during the first hour of debate, and it appears the second hour as well today, to hear support for Bill C-458 from all

sides of this House. I believe my colleagues recognize the potential benefits of extending the deadline and would like to see this bill examined further in committee to discuss the merits and to get direct input from the charitable sector. I thank the House for the opportunity to bring forward Bill C-458. I encourage all members to support my bill as we work together for the greater good to strive to make a difference in the lives of the constituents we serve.

• (1825)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 22, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 29, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

TECHNICAL TAX AMENDMENTS ACT, 2012

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-48, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act and related legislation, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-48 and participate in this debate.

While this legislation is indeed a technical bill, as its name suggests, it is nevertheless important. The bill before us today has been over a decade in the making and represents over 10 years of miscellaneous tax announcements.

Government Orders

While Canadians have been repeatedly and broadly consulted on these measures, because they have not yet been formally enacted by Parliament, the tax system has become overwhelmingly backlogged. Previous attempts to pass technical tax legislation by governments of all stripes have been unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. Not only have governments attempted to address this backlog, the Auditor General has identified it as a matter of significant concern as far back as 2009.

All members can agree the time has come to formally legislate these technical amendments into our tax system. We all know that a sound tax system is one of the cornerstones of a strong economy and a strong economy is a top priority for our Conservative government. Through Canada's economic action plan, we are helping to ensure that all entrepreneurs and businesses have the opportunity to succeed in the global economy and continue to create jobs. That means keeping taxes low and the tax system predictable, as we are doing through today's legislation.

It also means we should have a tax system that is simple and fair for all. Indeed, our government is firmly and strongly aware of the importance of tax fairness, truly a concept that all members should understand and support. It is a basic principle that our government is committed to upholding, something that everyone, especially members, needs to remember if they try to skip out on their own taxes.

I will address that and other important tax issues in my time today as I discuss Bill C-48 in great detail. As members know, this technical bill would amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act and other related legislation to simplify the tax system and make it more predictable, while also closing tax loopholes and creating a stronger and fairer tax system for all Canadians.

I should note that this bill and its measures were previously released for a repeated public consultation before its introduction in late 2012. To highlight the importance of that consultation, especially with tax professionals, the Office of the Auditor General at a recent meeting of the finance committee stated:

It was certainly part of our recommendation that the draft legislation be released for comment so that practitioners could provide input. That's an important part of the process. This means that before it actually gets tabled in the House, it's had input and it's not going to be a surprise to the practitioners. If there are any glitches, they can be straightened out.

As members can see, the proposals in this bill reflect the feedback our government has received from all Canadians, especially those tax professionals. Indeed, Bill C-48 has received its due diligence and our Conservative government is ready to move forward with ensuring tax fairness for all Canadians.

I should note that even the all-party finance committee endorsed this bill, without amendment, after a very detailed study. Witness after witness spoke in favour of the bill. This is what some of those witnesses had to say.

I will first quote from Gabe Hayos, Vice-President of Taxation, Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, who stated:

We support Bill C-48. The CICA understands how important it is for taxpayers to have greater certainty and a clearer understanding of Canada's federal income tax system.... Bill C-48 helps improve clarity and certainty, and it mitigates the negative effects of uncertainty identified by the Auditor General.

● (1830)

Second, Larry Chapman, executive director and chief executive officer of the Canadian Tax Foundation said at committee:

Bill C-48, the Technical Tax Amendments Act, 2012...represents 10 years of repairs and maintenance in updating the Income Tax Act and the Excise Tax Act. Its passage is important to all Canadians. You heard that in the earlier presentation. I want to emphasize it again. Its passage is very important to all Canadians....Delays in the passage of tax legislation leave taxpayers and their advisers in a no man's land of uncertainty. My message for the Standing Committee on Finance is that you should encourage passage of this legislation...

Paul Hickey, a tax partner of KPMG, added in his testimony at committee:

[I] ask Parliament to act decisively and to pass Bill C-48 to essentially clean the slate of this old pending legislation and to finally bring the Income Tax Act up to date. Taxpayers could then move on and focus on running their business, and the CRA could carry on administering and collecting tax in a more stable system.

Finally, we heard from Carole Presseault, vice-president of government and regulatory affairs, Certified General Accountants Association of Canada, who said at committee:

—I wish to say that we support the tabling of the bill and that we encourage you to move swiftly to pass this important piece of legislation. The bill deals with a massive backlog of unlegislated tax measures. Its passage would, in our opinion, bring greater clarity to the tax system and strengthen the integrity of our laws.

That is just a very small sampling of the support that the committee heard for the bill.

Let me highlight a number of points in the bill. I will do my best to recap it succinctly and as briefly as possible, especially in light of its technical nature.

Part 1 of the bill proposes enhancements to the Income Tax Act to better target and simplify rules relating to the non-residents trust, taking into account comments received during public conversation.

Parts 2 and 3 relate to the taxation of Canadian multinational corporations in respect to their foreign affiliates, the result of which would be a more fair and equitable international tax system.

Part 4 deals with ensuring that the tax rules work well under both common and civil law, while part 5 would close tax loopholes and create greater fairness for taxpayers.

This part of the bill would implement a number of integrity tax measures that were first publicly released in 2010, on which we have consulted extensively since then.

These particular measures would close loopholes relating to specific leasing of properties and ensure that conversion of specific investments flow-through trusts and partnerships into corporations would be subject to rules similar to those governing transactions between corporations.

It would deal with schemes designed to artificially increase foreign tax credits in order to reduce taxes. In fact, it would prevent that from happening.

Finally, it would implement a regime for information reporting on tax avoidance and of transactions.

Government Orders

As an overall package of items, these key initiatives would help crack down on tax avoidance and ensure that every Canadian paid their fair share of tax.

At the same time, part 5 also includes a number of very technical changes essentially designed to ensure that the income tax system functions in accordance to policy that it is intended to operate under.

Most of these technical changes would address issues identified by everyday Canadian taxpayers working through the application of the income tax rules in their own personal or working studies.

Part 5 would also implement an income tax amendment relating to the enactment of the Fairness of Self-Employment Act. It would provide a tax credit in respect of employment insurance premiums paid by self-employed individuals, a change that this government has made.

• (1835)

Part 6 of the bill would implement the technical amendments to the GST and HST, including relieving the GST and HST on the administrative services of collecting and distributing the levy on blank media imposed under the Copyright Act, which we updated.

Part 7 would amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act to provide for technical changes concerning tax administration agreements.

Finally, Part 8 consists of coordinating amendments that would ensure that the tax amendments in this legislation interact properly with other legislation.

While these measures may seem technical, they are crucial to the fair and efficient functioning of our tax system and they have been consulted on a repeated basis. Now is the time to pass the bill.

Tax professional Carole Presseault again, who was one of the many expert witnesses who appeared before finance committee to speak to the importance of the bill and its passage, said:

—this bill needs to get passed. My concern doesn't result in the study of this bill. This bill has been studied; it's been consulted. My colleagues here, the witnesses, have also expressed that it's been extensively studied. Stakeholders have had an opportunity over the last decade to comment on the various provisions of this bill, and, yes, please, what's required is for it to be passed expeditiously.

Tax fairness and a competitive tax system are important to this government. As taxpayers, we are all forced to give up a part of our hard-earned income to fund government programs like health care, policing and other services for Canadians. We do so willingly and honestly and under the understanding that everyone is paying their fair share. Canadians who play by the rules do not like tax cheats and neither does this Conservative government. That is exactly why today's legislation would help fight tax cheats.

To quote noted tax practitioner Greg Boehmer of Ernst & Young, who also appeared in front of finance committee:

It's very clear that this legislation is aimed at fairness, that it does close a number of loopholes, and that it does broaden the base in certain circumstances.

Additionally, as part of our government's broader efforts to keep taxes low for Canadian families and ensure integrity in our tax system, economic action plan 2013 included a number of measures to close tax loopholes, address aggressive tax planning, clarify tax

rules and reduce international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance.

As everyone knows, our government is very committed to closing tax loopholes that allowed a select few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share. Ensuring that everyone pays their fair share also helps to keep taxes low for Canadian families and businesses, thereby improving incentives to work, save and invest in Canada.

Since 2006, as has been said before, our Conservative government has introduced a whopping 75-plus measures to improve the integrity of the tax system. Bill C-48 would work in partnership with other governments, improving efforts to promote tax fairness, a fact which did not go unnoticed during finance committee's careful consideration of this legislation.

When it comes to our Conservative government's priorities, the witnesses were absolutely correct. However, in addition to ensuring its integrity and fairness, our government remains dedicated to ensuring the tax system remains competitive so we can attract vital new business investment to Canada and to grow the economy and create jobs.

Lower Canadian taxes are critical in supporting economic growth by enabling Canadian business to invest more of their revenues back into their operations and into their workers. These businesses invest in machinery, equipment, information technology and other physical capital that are components of an improving Canadian productivity.

Taken as a whole, there is no question that our government's actions have made a noticeable difference. Canada now has the lowest overall tax rate on a new business investment in the G7, a policy proven to increase productivity and to contribute to a higher standard of living for all of us.

• (1840)

In conclusion, our government strongly believes that Canadians deserve lower taxes, not just a select few. That is why, since coming into office in 2006, Canadians from every walk of life are benefiting from the tax relief introduced by our government, such as the lowering of the GST and the landmark TFSA.

I would like to add that I have a 22-year-old daughter who is just starting out in the world. One of her questions to me recently was whether she should invest in a TFSA and whether that would that help her in the long run.

Our message is getting out there. I did not give her that message. She came to me about it. There are opportunities and the need for Canadians to invest and save.

Also, one million low-income Canadians have been removed from our tax rolls. This is a fact.

Our strong record of tax relief is saving the typical Canadian family of four more than \$3,200 each year.

Government Orders

Also, our government has shut down tax loopholes in the system in order to stop people avoiding to pay their fair share of tax. Ensuring tax fairness is just another way that our Conservative government will keep taxes low for Canadians and their families. I am proud that the bill before us today will help us go even further in meeting that objective.

I encourage all my colleagues to vote in favour of tax fairness and to support this important legislation here this evening.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is on tax fairness and equity in the system.

There is something missing in the bill, and would be some method of determining the inflation rate within the north for the northern residents tax deduction.

In 2007, after constant lobbying on my part and on the part of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the territorial governments, which were asking for a 50% increase in this northern residents tax deduction that had not been changed since 1989, the government gave us 10%.

Over the last six years, that 10% has been taken up by inflation. We are back to square one. We have not had the increases that would make the system fairer.

Why did the Conservative government not put something into this legislation that would identify an inflation increase to the northern residents tax deduction, something that is absolutely required in the north? We are losing workers. The cost of living has gone up so high in the north that people are not staying there anymore. They are flying in and out to their jobs. What has happened in northern Canada in terms of the cost of living is a disgrace.

Why did the Conservative government ignore the important requirements of tax equity and fairness for northern people?

• (1845)

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the passion the hon. member across has for his constituency. He is from the north. However, I do have to bring him back to the purpose of this bill we are debating this evening.

His question was with regard to a policy issue in the tax system. However, the bill we are dealing with today, Bill C-48, deals with legislation that has already been passed, that has had regulations and some changes to the Tax Act, or a number of other acts such as the Excise Tax Act. The purpose of the bill is to catch up on the tax changes that happened to the Tax Act. There is a legislative requirement that the House pass those minor changes to bring them into law.

The fact is that the CRA puts a note out with respect to the changes that are made. They go into effect virtually immediately and the industry, mostly the tax professionals, accepts those as being in place. However, this bill would actually put them into law.

It has been 10 years, and that is a long time. I do agree with the auditor's report that we need to be doing these minor catch-up tax amendments more often than every decade.

However, the question he asked has absolutely nothing to do with the bill.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Burlington gave a fine speech. He is also a legendary member of the finance committee, and I have the privilege of serving on the finance committee as well. We have studied the bill at length.

It is somewhat puzzling. This is something that I understand has been in the works since 2003 or possibly even longer. I understand, too, that this legislation has been given to us by the bureaucrats, those people who try to correct the tax law. As it states, these problems have cropped up through the years. These are things with which nobody disagrees. The tax lawyers, the people who make money on preparing people's taxes, said that they needed clarity, that they needed the bill to pass.

Why did it take so long to get this bill passed?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, it is not just this bill; it is a number of bills that this government has faced.

We came to office as the Conservative government with a plan to take action and do things for Canadians: to move the economy, to create jobs. In its foresight, the public decided we would have a minority government for a number of years, which made it difficult to get things done and move things forward.

Now that we have a majority government, we are able to move quickly, efficiently and effectively to put things in place that Canadians need to move forward, to create jobs, create work, create wealth and improve the quality of life we have here as Canadians.

• (1850)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, it is a rare privilege to have an opportunity to ask my colleague a couple of questions.

He talked a lot about tax fairness and equity in his speech. I remember when the Conservatives thought they needed to fix the capital gains exemption for small businesses. They said it had fallen behind inflation, so they upped it by 50%. That was fair, and we did not argue about that.

When does the member think we should deal with fairness in the tax system? The tinkering by the government that the member is talking about with these various components in this technical tax act are simply that. Where do we see the fairness in the system? Where do we see that the actual needs of Canadians are being taken into account when we look at the tax system, how it is set up and how it delivers for Canadians?

When the member and his government talk about the \$3,000 per average family, that is not the average family. The \$3,000 is quite a bit larger for the more wealthy families and quite a bit smaller for the less wealthy families. Where is the money going in the system? Where is the fairness?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite for Western Arctic because it is a question about fairness in the tax system. This bill deals with closing the tax loopholes that people are using to avoid paying taxes, whether they be illegal or very aggressive tax plans. When we talk about fairness, we are talking about fairness with respect to those changes we have made to the tax code, so that the legislative piece ensures everyone is paying their fair share.

Government Orders

On a more broad approach to this question, I am glad the member for Western Arctic is interested in tax fairness because that would mean I can look for that member to stand in favour of our budget implementation bills that move forward on closing tax loopholes. If the member is serious about closing tax loopholes and being fair to all taxpayers, I believe he should be supporting our implementation bills, including Bill C-60 when it comes back to the House.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the question was posed and the member was trying to say it was the opposition who was holding up these bills.

The government and the member know very well that a similar bill was tabled and moved very quickly prior to the last election. It has taken from November 21, 2012 until now, 2013, to table this bill, and now there is a rush to get it through.

I wonder if the member can answer this honestly. Why did it take the government so long to pass such an important bill forward? In 2009, when it was also the government of the day, Sheila Fraser, the then Auditor General, indicated we were lagging in ensuring this type of legislation was in place to deal with this technical aspect. Why did it take it so long? It was not because we were not supporting it.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, let us look at a bit of the history of the bill.

The hon. member mentioned that it was in front of the House before and was moving forward. It was the opposition that forced the election and put an end to that. It was not our party that did that. I think our friends in the third party were active in forcing the election, and it probably did not work out so well for them.

I do agree with the Auditor General's position on this. One point I would like to make, and I am glad the member opposite brought it up, is my personal view that the Auditor General's reports are an opportunity for government and the opposition. They are performance audits, not financial audits. They show where we are doing well and where we are not doing well. They give us, as a government, an opportunity to improve.

This is exactly what we are doing through this bill. We agree 100% with the Auditor General's report on where we should be going with these technical amendments. In the future that will happen, as long as we have a Conservative majority government.

• (1855)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to split my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

The Liberal Party is very happy to support this legislation. It is a very important thing that we have to do here, to legislate some of the changes in the tax code. I do know that these are technical changes.

I would like to talk about something that I was told by someone who worked in the Department of Finance. If we look at how big the tax code was, going back several decades, we can see that it has gotten thicker. To some extent that should be expected because the economy is getting more complicated and there are always new ideas about how to improve the tax system. Sometimes it means that the tax system becomes a bit more complicated, but sometimes we

figure out ways to make it easier to comply with the tax code by streamlining the rules.

I know this is an ongoing process. It is somewhat unfortunate that it has been a long time, 2001, since changes were made in legislation. It has been some time in coming, and as my hon. colleague from Burlington mentioned, it is about time. There was a bit of debate at the end of his speech about whether the changes should have occurred earlier, but, such as it is, now is the time that we have on the legislative calendar to make these changes.

It should be an ongoing process to look at the tax code, and to keep thinking about ways we can improve it, streamline it, and decrease the cost of compliance, the time it takes, the resources, and the people who have to be hired to comply with the tax code. As economists know, the payment of taxes, as well as the cost of compliance with potentially complex tax codes, is a dead-weight loss to the economy. It is a loss to our productivity.

If we can avoid it, all of these ways of streamlining our tax system can improve the performance of the economy and result in more wealth for the things we really need, such as health care, pensions, preparing for the future, protecting our natural environment, training our youth, and preparing our economy to compete against the rest of the world so that Canada can remain prosperous.

My hon. colleague from Burlington also mentioned a couple of things that I would like to refer to. He mentioned something I hear quite often from the government members, about tax savings to the typical family of \$3,000 a year. However, what they fail to mention is that if we look a little more closely, these tax savings correspond to a family of four with two working parents and an income of \$100,000 a year. Unfortunately, that is not the average family in a lot of places. In my riding, the median household income is only \$60,000 per year.

My hon. colleague from Burlington raised a misleading figure in his speech. I know that it is not relevant to the topic of this bill, but I think that since my hon. colleague spent some time praising the government's tax policy, I should rebut what he is saying.

• (1900)

The problem is not only that the typical family does not make \$100,000 a year and will not have received the \$3,000 in tax cuts the government claims. Let us say that a family makes \$100,000 a year. The family might have saved \$3,000 a year in taxes. Multiply that by five years and it is about \$15,000 in tax savings, but at the same time, this family of four's per capita share of the national debt has increased by \$16,000. It turns out that it happens to be a little bit more than the tax savings. Even this family of four that is not typical that the Conservative government likes to use as a point of illustration is actually worse off once we take into account the fact that their share of the national debt has increased by more than the claimed tax savings. It is important to take the time in the House to rebut some of the myths propagated by the Conservative government. I appreciate this opportunity to have the time to do that.

Government Orders

I would like to address another issue in response to the speech by my hon. colleague from Burlington, and I must say that it was a good speech. It did not sound like a lot of speeches in the House, when people are reading and it sounds very mechanical and like words somebody else wrote. The member's speech was not one of those speeches. He follows the fine tradition in the House of speaking one's mind and speaking one's own words. I want to commend my colleague from Burlington for that.

I want to get back to another one of my colleague's claims, because he talked a lot about tax fairness. Tax fairness can be difficult to define. We heard from the member for Western Arctic, who asked questions of my hon. colleague from Burlington about the northern residence income tax deduction.

Depending on one's point of view, one can disagree about what is fair, what is not fair and what changes need to be made to make the tax code fairer.

One of the problems with the income tax changes the Conservative government has proposed and that the Conservative Party proposed in a past election campaign is the non-refundable tax credits for things such as art lessons, physical activity camps for kids, certain kinds of lessons for adults and tax-free savings accounts. I am very happy for my hon. colleague from Burlington's daughter who is now thinking about a tax-free savings account, which means that she is gainfully employed, which means that my hon. colleague is undoubtedly very proud and in many respects has done a good job as a father. However, the tax-free savings account is essentially a tax cut for people who have an income, and it is a bigger tax cut for people who have a larger income. It is debatable, and I would argue that it does not quite move in the direction of fairness. With many of the tax cuts the government has given to Canadians, people with higher incomes have benefited more than they really needed to if we were only thinking of fairness.

I had to take that time to respond to the speech by my hon. colleague from Burlington to say that it is not obvious to say what is fair and what is not. There is an argument to be made that what the government has done is not quite fair.

• (1905)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his speech and for opening the door for me to ask a question that does not actually relate to the bill in front of us. It is based on the member's speech.

There is an important distinction between refundable tax credits and non-refundable tax credits. Before we took office, I looked at how many tax credits were fully refundable, and there were very few refundable tax credits. I would say that there were three. A non-refundable tax credit means that people have to actually pay tax to get the credit. Is it fair that if people do not pay tax, they get a tax credit? Is that not the purpose of a tax credit?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, in many ways, this is a very profound question about what tax fairness is. I think many people of the Conservative persuasion would say that what people deserve to have is whatever income they have. It is because they did the work, and they earned the income, so they really should be keeping all of it and the government should not have any of it. That is sort of the starting point for a lot of Conservative thought.

What I would say about a different way of approaching things, and I should say that it is a characteristically Liberal Party way of thinking about it, is that people's success in life and in society, in particular their economic and financial success and well-being, is half luck and half hard work.

The income I earn is half hard work, because I worked hard in school, followed my parents' advice, worked hard when I got a job and earned it, and I deserve something. However, when I look back at my own life, I have to say that I was lucky in many respects. I was lucky to live in Canada, where there is a good education system, good infrastructure and a lot of opportunity.

It is a very rich country. I was fortunate to grow up in Canada and to benefit from the institutions and traditions that have been set up here in Canada. I have been very fortunate to grow up in a certain part of Canada that offered me a lot of opportunity.

I do not deserve to keep all of what I earn. I have a responsibility to pay back something. That is another way of looking at taxes. That is why it makes sense that tax fairness might mean taxing people with higher incomes a little bit more, and taxing—

The Speaker: Order. I know the hon. member for Davenport would like to ask a question of the member for Kingston and the Islands, so I will stop him there. The hon. member for Davenport.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during this debate we have heard the government side consistently trumpet their supposed handling, in a good way, of the economy.

In light of current scandals, some of the other scandals have sort of gone down the list, making way for bigger scandals. One is the missing \$3.1 billion. There is a responsibility to disclose and reveal where that \$3.1 billion is. We are not even talking about \$50 million for gazebos.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would like to comment on some of the fiscal mismanagement of the government in light of the comments the government has made during this debate about their so-called prowess in the field of fiscal management.

• (1910)

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Davenport brings up a very important point, which is that we are somehow unable to account for \$3.1 billion the government has spent.

My hon. colleague is right that the government, or any of us, should not brag too much about all the great things we have done when there are problems we need to solve. It is important to advocate for the things we try to do and that we believe in, so we have to cut a little slack to anybody who stands up and speaks and tries to advocate for a certain position.

On the subject of the \$3.1 billion, I think it will be very important to sit down and try to find out why it is we have \$3.1 billion missing and to make sure that Parliament has a really good picture of what spending it is approving on exactly what programs. That is the recommendation the experts at committee and in this House have given to avoid this happening in the future.

Government Orders

We really need to know exactly what programs we are approving when we vote. Many people who study Parliament believe that we should reform the approval process for spending.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am lucky, again, to rise today to speak to such an important bill before the House. Last week, I had the opportunity to speak to Bill S-12, an act to amend the Statutory Instruments Act, which was, of course, another very important piece of legislation we had before the House. That bill, like this one, was about red tape. It was about modernizing our system.

When I talked about that last week, I talked about how the opposition was not in favour of our reducing red tape. It did not like to talk about red tape, because when there is red tape, it confuses people and it makes government even more confusing and out of the reach of Canadians. Whenever a government brings forward a motion or a piece of legislation that would make it easier for Canadians to work, that would make it easier for Canadians to access their government, we know that the opposition will not be in favour of it.

I want to reference something the member for Kingston and the Islands talked about, in response to the member for Davenport, on the \$3 billion this government and the previous Liberal government spent on anti-terrorism, safety and security in the country following the tragic events of 9/11.

We know that the opposition members often do not read legislation that is tabled in the House. Sometimes they make their decisions with respect to legislation before it is even tabled. We are seeing that with the current debate on the museum of history bill. Before the legislation was even tabled, they decided that they were going to vote against it. The same goes for our budgets, our economic action plans. Each and every year, before the budget is even tabled in the House of Commons, they make the decision that they are not going to read it and will just vote against it. No matter how many good things are in those plans for Canadians, no matter how many investments we are making for the Canadian economy and the people of Canada, they always make their decision, before it is even tabled, to vote against.

Specifically, when we talk about that \$3.1 billion, again, what opposition members are saying is that they do not have the time or the desire or perhaps even the knowledge to go back and look at the Public Accounts of Canada and see what was tabled in the House. If they would do that, they would be able to find an account for all of those monies we put on the table, and the previous Liberal government put on the table, with respect to preserving and protecting Canadians. That is, ultimately, one of the most fundamental activities of government. It is to ensure the safety and security of its people. We are not going to do the job for the NDP members. I am sure that they can do it on their own.

Why are technical tax amendments important? This has been something we have been faced with for many years. We have not updated or amended our technical tax amendments since 2001, if I am not mistaken. I know that the hard-working Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has been doing some exceptional work on this.

The member for Kingston and the Islands talked about how great a speech the member for Burlington gave. However, even more important than the speech he gave is the work he has been doing for his community and for all members of Parliament with respect to getting us out of this global economic downturn we have faced. He has shown tremendous leadership, and I want to thank him for that and congratulate him as well. The member from Kingston referenced what a great father he is, and he truly is. He should be very proud of his family. I know there are great things ahead for them.

This is something Parliament has had before it for a number of years. It was never done. I do not know why the previous Liberal government never brought this forward. I will give the Liberals the benefit of the doubt and assume that they care about small business. I will assume that they care about Canadian families. I guess it just was not a priority for them. They were busy doing other things, so they never got around to looking at the things that would actually protect and enhance our economy. They were busy. They had the sponsorship scandal and were looking for \$40 million that they have yet to find. They never got around to it.

● (1915)

When we came into office, we knew that we had to consult with Canadians. We knew that it was important. We sat down with big businesses, small businesses and medium businesses. These are the people who actually generate wealth, create jobs and help make our economy strong so that Canadians can be proud of their economy and so we can create jobs and investments for communities. We sat down with them.

Quite honestly, we do not take enough time in this place to recognize the hard work of those members of Parliament who sacrifice so much, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance does. It goes without saying that Canadians all over and people the world over know that we have the best Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Finance globally. They have been recognized as such, but there are also the parliamentary secretary and the entire finance committee.

When the global economic downturn occurred back in 2008, we had to take bold, decisive action. I remember that time, because in the 2007 year-end interviews, the Prime Minister at the time said there were going to be difficult times ahead and that we had to make sure to position the Canadian economy for what could be difficult times in the global economy. I remember the debate at that time.

I remember the opposition parties clamouring. They were upset because we had decided at that time that we were going to pay down debt. They said we should not be paying down debt but spending.

They did not say that we should spending by investing in tax cuts for Canadians; they said we should find programs and just spend, but we took a different track. We said that we had to pay down debt, because we knew that something could be coming in the global economy.

I recall how the opposition parties said we were crazy. However, when the global economic downturn hit, we were prepared, because we had made investments.

Government Orders

What are the types of investments that we made? We said it is not a bad thing to put more money in the pockets of Canadians. It is not a bad thing to invest in tax cuts for families. It is not a bad thing to invest in tax cuts for businesses, the people who create and generate wealth in this country. Therefore, we reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. What did that do? It put more money in the pockets of Canadians, and what did Canadians do? They went out into their communities and shopped and spent money and supported all of these small businesses across the country that actually create wealth, opportunity and jobs.

Let us talk about people like Frank from Frank's & Son Barber Shop in my riding. Here are two guys who work extraordinarily hard. Last week I had the extraordinary pleasure to be able to talk about my mother and father, who owned a pizza store, and how hard they worked. I know you will recall that, Mr. Speaker, because I was up speaking literally moments after the NDP once again tried to adjourn debate on important pieces of legislation. It was nine o'clock and they were starting to get sleepy, so they made the decision that they wanted to close down Parliament because they were tired.

I went back to my riding that weekend and I just could not understand how it could be. I thought how the member for Oshawa represents a lot of union members. I know that the member for Oakville represents a lot of union members. I know that all of Brampton, where there are a lot of union members, is represented by hard-working Conservative members of Parliament. I know that in those areas, and even in my own riding, there are lots of union members. I also know that in those ridings, they do not think about going home early. They work hard, as all Canadians do, and they want to succeed.

I asked myself how it was possible that the NDP could get tired by nine o'clock every night and want to adjourn debate. I could not figure it out.

• (1920)

It then dawned on me that what we have in the NDP caucus are not the actual hard-working men and women who work the lines, such as the people at Ford, Chrysler or GM in the member for Oakville's riding. These are not the people who actually work on the assembly lines; these are the big union bosses over there, so they are actually not used to working past five o'clock. They are used to telling other people how they should think and what they should do, but they do not have a clue about hard work. Then it dawned on me that, yes, that is why they have to go home at 9:30 every night: they are tired because they have never worked past five o'clock. Then I started to get it.

Then I started to read some of the things that they were talking about, some of the things that they were—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Davenport is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I always find the member opposite incredibly entertaining, both in camera and in public. I am looking forward to his winding up the soliloquy and preamble and meandering speech and getting back to the issue at hand.

The Speaker: I think the hon. member is making a point of relevance.

I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that at third reading the House tries to stay a little bit closer to the subject matter of the bill than at other stages of the bill, so I hope he will get his remarks back around to the bill before the House.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I have actually been on target all the time. I was talking about families; they get taxed. They pay taxes and they want an easier tax system. I talked about small business; the owners pay taxes, they want an easier tax code and they want us to eliminate red tape. Those are all important to Canadians. When I talk about the hard-working men and women who work on the assembly line at Ford, GM or Chrysler, they pay taxes.

• (1925)

Mr. Terence Young: They pay a lot.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, exactly, Mr. Speaker. As the member for Oakville says, they pay a lot. They work hard, they pay a lot and they expect their members of Parliament to do the exact same thing.

I get why the member for Davenport is so upset. It is because we are calling those members out on the fact that they want to go home at nine o'clock and that working late is tough for them. That speaks volumes to the attitude of the New Democrats. They do not want to talk about taxes. Unless it is about increasing taxes, they do not want to hear about it.

That is why they have lost 16 straight elections in this country. Since their party was founded in 1961, they have lost 16 straight elections. Why is that? It is because nothing they talk about ever resonates with Canadians, because Canadians know that in order to actually govern this country, we have to work with Canadians, listen to Canadians, and listen to small-business owners, medium-business owners, and even big business, the people who create wealth, and see what it is that they need to make the economy succeed.

They need to sit down with families. They need to invest in infrastructure. They need to invest in quality health care, as we do. After decades of Liberal cuts and NDP cuts in the Province of Ontario, we started to turn the tables and to make those important investments.

They talk about closure. The New Democrats have commented that we were bringing in closure again. Why are we bringing in closure? It is because we have to govern. This is a party whose members, when presented with it, actually support this bill. In committee, the New Democrats did not offer any amendments; they support it. However, they are filibustering it because they do not want it to pass.

The members of this party, when presented with a philanthropy bill to say thanks to those Canadians who give their time and money in support of their community, said they cannot give support to pass it because they have to filibuster it. They cannot even pass the simplest pieces of legislation.

Perhaps they want to continue to obstruct because they are so embarrassed by how great this country is doing, by how we are leading the global tide to prosperity, and it does not fit their political agenda. The New Democrats are an angry caucus over there, an angry group of people, because what they would rather do—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Davenport is rising again.

Government Orders

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I am going to rise on that one because, quite frankly, I am a little concerned that the member is going to explode over there with anger and rage. We are here until midnight and we are here for a respectful debate, and that member should wind it back to that way of talking in this House.

The Speaker: I will again remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that there are opportunities to debate some of the issues that he has been bringing up. We are on third reading stage of Bill C-48. He has about five minutes left, and I trust that the remainder of his time will be spent addressing the actual substance of the bill.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, he is right: I am going to explode. I am going to explode with pride in how well this country has been doing under the Conservative government, led by our Prime Minister, and under the policies that our Minister of Finance and our Minister of State for Finance have brought and under all of the good work that Conservatives on both sides of the House have been doing during this time of global economic downturn. Am I going to burst with excitement and pride? Absolutely, I am going to. I thank the hon. member for pointing out how proud I am of this country and everything that we have done.

Once again, because I know the NDP does not understand the relevance of families, it does not understand the relevance of businesses and how they pay taxes, it does not understand—

The Speaker: The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard on a point of order.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Again, Mr. Speaker, I have to raise a concern. The gentleman is not talking about Bill C-48. He is characterizing and not speaking to the importance of this bill and its different measures. We are in third reading, as the Speaker rightly pointed out. I would like the member to talk specifically about the different measures that are in this bill and to make sure Canadians understand the actions of the government regarding Bill C-48.

The Speaker: I appreciate the member for LaSalle—Émard raising this point.

I have asked the parliamentary secretary a couple of times to come back to the debate. We will move on to questions and comments. We were going to be interrupted very soon anyway, and this will at least allow a question that will perhaps bring us back to the substance of the bill.

The hon. member for Davenport.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague's speech. First, he referenced Frank's & Son Barber Shop, and I am wondering if Frank and his son have extended benefits at their place of employment—a workplace pension, in fact, and job security. These are all important measures that any government that cared about working people would be focused on.

I want to draw the member's attention to a comment made by the Minister of Finance on March 1, 2008, when he stated:

If you're going to make a new business investment in Canada...the last place you will go is the province of Ontario.

That is your province. How can you go back to your riding in Ontario and defend your government when it trash talks—

• (1930)

The Speaker: I am going to stop the member for Davenport. Saskatchewan is actually my province. The member should remember to address his comments through the Chair and not directly to other members.

The parliamentary secretary has about a minute or two to respond, and then we will have to put the question.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, thanks to this government, Frank's & Son Barber Shop actually has access to the pooled registered pension plan. It has access to reduced taxes. It is busier than it has ever been.

While other economies in other places of the world have unemployment of 20%, in Canada it is reduced constantly. In fact, in my area, York region, unemployment is at 6%. The region is on fire because of the policies of the Minister of State for Science and Technology. He has done some extraordinary things and made the quality investments that have helped lead our regions out of this global economic downturn.

When we talk about the city of Toronto itself, where the member comes from, we are seeing massive investments through the Pan American Games. We are seeing the city of Toronto turn the tide. When we talk about Ontario, I guess I would have to agree that the fact that there is a Liberal government in Ontario is a disadvantage.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Is he reading us a political leaflet or is it Bill C-48? I would point out that this bill has been in the making for 12 years—

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Alain Giguère: That is 12 years of tax evasion, 12 years of aggressive tax planning. After 12 years, they are fixing the situation. You must be kidding—

[*English*]

The Speaker: Order, order. The member needs to come to order.

Order. The member does not have the floor.

Fortunately, it being 7:32 p.m., pursuant to an order made Monday, May 27, 2013, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

Government Orders

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 22, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 29, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: When this bill was last before the House, the hon. member for Don Valley West had three minutes remaining for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the remarks from the hon. member for Don Valley West, and forgive me for correcting his history.

I am an enormous fan of Alexander Graham Bell and his many inventions and achievements within Canada, of which the telephone was not one. That was invented when he still lived in the United States. He did, however, move to Nova Scotia, where he invented and oversaw the first manned flight of an aircraft in the British Isles. He also invented desalination equipment and pioneered in genetics of sheep in order to encourage the birth of twins.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he has any idea of how we actually put into operation the museum of history bill in order to get the artifacts, many of which belong to Alexander Graham Bell, to museums across Canada where people can enjoy them. How will that actually take place?

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the operational part of the museum would be handled by people who are third party and independently instructed to do that.

However, let me say that this is an important bill. I am a proud and passionate Canadian. I am very proud to represent this bill today, to stand up on behalf of Canadian heritage, to talk to the history of our great country and to celebrate people such as Alexander Graham Bell, as mentioned by my friend, and so many parts of this country that make us so proud.

As we approach our 150th birthday, we have an opportunity to celebrate Canada as a nation, and I encourage her to join me in that celebration.

• (1935)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member across the way and that he is a committed parliamentarian. He takes his job seriously. However, it strikes me that the process that was used to arrive at this place with Bill C-49 is something less than democratic.

In other words, we had a committee that looked at many of the issues of Canada's 150th birthday. We invited countless witnesses, spent countless taxpayers' dollars and countless months on this

study. However, not once do we hear about the rebranding, the renaming and the costs attached to a project to do that at the Museum of Civilization.

Suddenly this announcement was made after the study was done. Apparently it came to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages in a moment of inspiration while he was riding his motorcycle.

I wonder if the member, as the representative for Don Valley West, thinks that is how democracy should proceed in the House of Commons?

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear that this bill was first introduced October 12. In fact, I think it was the day before the bill was actually introduced that the opposition members from the NDP openly declared that they would not support the bill.

As a Canadian, I can say that I had the privilege of introducing my own private member's bill, an act respecting the national flag of Canada, which I was extremely proud of. In this House, in the centre of democracy of our great nation, it was the NDP members who stood in unison and voted against an act respecting the national flag of Canada. I think that speaks clearly to the intent of my friends on the other side.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the subject of this bill tonight is history. I think we should look back on our own history for a moment in this debate on this important initiative.

More than 60 years ago, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, the Massey commission, issued the most significant cultural report in Canadian history. That commission was chaired by Vincent Massey, then-Chancellor of the University of Toronto, who later became Canada's first Canadian-born governor general. I would just mention in passing, he is my mother's second cousin.

The terms of reference for that commission stated that "it is desirable that the Canadian people should know as much as possible about their country, its history and traditions; and about their national life and common achievements". That report also noted that Canada lacked two essential institutions, a national library and a national historical museum. The National Library of Canada was created in 1953.

Today, I am pleased to speak about Bill C-49, a bill that will finally fulfill the dream to create the Canadian museum of history.

Why does the government consider it important to increase Canadians' knowledge of the history of Canada? Polls indicate that 92% of Canadians say that they are interested in Canadian social and cultural history, and yet only 40% of Canadians could pass a citizenship exam that tests general knowledge of Canadian history. This gap is troubling and puzzling.

Canada has a long and rich history. Our land has been continuously inhabited for more than 10,000 years. The Vikings visited our shores more than 1,000 years ago, and successive waves of immigrants endured the harsh environments of this huge land and made this country their home.

Government Orders

People continue to choose to make Canada their home. We are a nation of immigrants. Discovery and adventure are in our genes. We have an unlimited number of stories to be told, events to celebrate, people to admire. These stories tell us who we are, and how we came to be so blessed. They also guide us on how important our values are, the ones that help us accomplish so much.

Canadian history is not short. Canadian history is not boring. It is as interesting as any other national history in the world, and even more so. It is full of courage and romance. It expresses struggle and sacrifice. We should take pride in and celebrate it.

In four years, we will celebrate Canada's 150th birthday. This is a time to focus on people, places and achievements that bring us together as Canadians, an occasion to celebrate and take pride in all that makes Canada unique, an opportunity to explore and celebrate Canadian history. That is why the Massey commission called for a national museum in 1951, and that is why the government is creating one with this bill.

This government understands that our museums are uniquely positioned to make Canadian history come alive for all Canadians. That is why we have, despite a period of global economic uncertainty, maintained support for our national museums, continued to support Canadian museums through the museums assistance program, increasing funding by \$4.6 million annually for student summer internships, and doubled the financial capacity of the Canada travelling exhibitions indemnification program.

This program would allow the 3.5 million artifacts in the national collection to be shared with the hundreds of museums across Canada, so all Canadians can experience their history and their culture. Marie Lalonde, executive director of the Ontario Museum Association, says that local museums would now be able to “offer their visitors distinctive exhibits and initiatives that would otherwise not be available”, thanks to the partnership with this new museum.

Our government believes in our national museums, and we recognize the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians. As we approach Canada's 150th birthday, it is an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians. This national museum would be a focal point for Canadian history, with more than 43,000 square feet of permanent exhibition space presenting a comprehensive and chronological history of Canada.

● (1940)

In addition, 7,500 square feet of the museum would be reserved to showcase Canadian history exhibitions developed by other Canadian museums.

As the members opposite well know, the museum has already held a series of consultations with Canadians online and across Canada. More than 2,500 people took part in round tables and targeted discussions and more 16,000 people voiced their opinion online on a wide variety of topics regarding the exhibits and artifacts that would be on display in the museum.

Contrary to what the opposition claims, this would be a museum for Canadians, about Canadians and developed by Canadians. This is an exciting non-partisan project supported by Canadians of all political parties. To quote John McAvity, Executive Director of the

Canadian Museums Association, “The federal government is sending a strong message that museums play an important role in our society.”

The Canadian museum of history would provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. It would help us better understand that our history is living and shed light on why there are 30 million people around the world at least who would like to come to Canada to settle and begin anew.

Canadians deserve a national museum and infrastructure that tells our stories. I am proud of this initiative. I am particularly proud of the fact that we would achieve so much by making a relatively modest investment in the expertise and experience of the Canadian Museum of Civilization while using existing resources to create the new museum.

The Canadian museum of history would be a birthday gift to the citizens of Canada, a gift that would continue to contribute to our nation's legacy for decades to come.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague commented on our support or non-support for the bill. I come from the Northwest Territories, a land where people have lived in certain areas of it for about 30,000 years. I think my hon. colleague said that we are land of immigrants. In reality, where I live, the Chipewyan tribe, there were 90,000 people before the coming of immigrants who through the passing of disease dropped that population down to 10%. This changed things quite a bit for those people. Those people occupied Canada very completely.

When my colleague made his history speech in the direction he has, it does not give me much assurance that the Conservative government has the right attitude to take forward with the history of Canada. In the history of the Canada that I represent in the Northwest Territories, people have lived for 30,000 years. Large indigenous populations roamed and took care of the land for thousands of years before the immigrants. If the member does not understand Canadian history, how does he expect the rest of Canadians to understand history? How does he expect us to have any comfort with what he says about history?

● (1945)

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite had read the bill, he would understand that the title of the bill is the Canadian museum of history. It is not the museum of Canadian history. The history that would be displayed in this museum will go back more than 10,000 years. We are not just studying history. We are not just having displays about history as of Confederation. It would cover all aboriginal peoples and first nations and their history as well.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech and it was very enriching. As my colleague described this museum, it would enrich and not only that, educate Canadians about our history. As a former teacher for 23 years, I taught math and science for the most part, but all of my students really did not know what they needed to know about Canadian history.

Could my hon. colleague please expand on that?

Government Orders

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, there is a story I tell in Oakville. I have told it for the last two years in Black History Month. It is a story I have never seen on film. I have never seen it on television. It should be filmed and it should be television.

It is about William Peyton Hubbard, who was a councillor in the city of Toronto in the late 1800s, early 1900s. He represented the wealthiest part of the city of Toronto, and he was re-elected 14 times and became acting mayor of the city of Toronto in the early 1900s. He was known as “Old Cicero” because he was such a gifted speaker.

This story might not sound very interesting or very amazing. The amazing thing about William Peyton Hubbard was that he was a black man. He was a black man, acting mayor of Toronto in the early 1900s when the American people did not even get civil rights until the 1960s.

It tells a lot about Canada and Canadians. He was educated in the Toronto Board of Education, which was fully desegregated in the time when he was a little child. His grandparents were escaped slaves from Virginia.

This is a story that needs to be told. This is the kind of story that we can tell in our museums and have artifacts to tell that story in museums across Canada.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member for Oakville.

I want to ask about another museum that I, and I think many Canadians, consider to be very important. I am referring to the Canada Science and Technology Museum, part of which is on St. Laurent Boulevard in Ottawa. It was converted from a depot for the Morrison Lamothe bakery and still decades later is still in the same location.

I think all Canadians are very proud of not only Canada's accomplishments in science and technology, but as the member points out, it is about science and technology; it does not have to be Canadian.

Is it a priority for the government, after decades, to turn its mind toward perhaps something a little more on the right level for the country, in Ottawa, a science and technology museum of which we can be truly proud?

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the minister and I cannot speak for the government except to say that it would be a wonderful thing to have a major key science and technology museum.

The question is, where would it be? Would it be in Ottawa or should it be in some other city? We should be talking about those matters. We should be considering it in the future.

This museum, the one we are talking about in this bill, is focused on Canadian history. However, it is something we should talk about going forward.

• (1950)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great regret that I see the government moving forward with significant changes to the museum. It is one thing to

simply rebrand and change the name. I know the government is in tough times financially. It has the largest deficit in history, which it is having a hard time bringing down, and we have the 150th anniversary of our nation coming up. Perhaps it has decided it cannot build a new monument to recognize that point in time in history, so the best thing to do is to take some kind of institution that already exists, which is our magnificent Museum of Civilization, and rebrand it.

From what I can determine from Bill C-49, that is mostly what the bill would accomplish.

I forgot to mention, Mr. Speaker, my thanks to the page, that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, with whom I am very pleased to do so.

If one looks into the depths of the bill, we are moving away from proudly having a Museum of Civilization, which had a mandate of not only showcasing to Canadians. Thousands upon thousands visit the Capital every year to go to the museum, which was designed by, I am very proud to say, Mr. Cardinal, an internationally renowned architect. It is a masterpiece of architecture renowned worldwide. The good news is, I think he is being continually engaged, and I hope he is, to ensure that any changes to this monument are in keeping with the incredible design he put in place.

Apart from changing the name from the Museum of Civilization to the museum of Canadian history, we need to delve more into exactly what the government is up to. There are changes in the legislation that change its mandate. The mandate right now includes doing research. I think it is in clause 8 that this mandate to do research has been removed to become the museum of Canadian history. This raises the question of who then will do the research for these displays.

If we look in more detail at exactly what the proposal is, and I refer back to the speech by the minister about his intent in this legislation, apparently there will be a major fundraising exercise. There was a reassurance given to Canadians that they did not have to worry because not one more cent of taxpayer money would be spent on this monumental exercise toward the celebration of 150 years of Canada and that we would be move toward partnerships. What that raises for me is in the language. We saw that word “streamline” in all of the budgets and throne speeches of the government.

The Conservatives have two favourite words. One is “streamline”, which basically means fast-track and get rid of any legislation that might slow things down. The other word is “partnerships”. It appears that the new way of recording history in Canada and displaying it is going to be in partnerships. With whom? Will that be the way we will now do partnerships with our university institutions, so that, increasingly, research in our country has to move from basic research to applied research and they have to partner with major corporations?

Government Orders

Why is this of grave concern? There has been a lot of talk by the minister, and by the other Conservative members lauding the bill, that it will be a whole new way of doing business and there will be greater linkage with the small local museums of our country. There seems to be a short memory of what the government has done to the small local museums. I sat in the House when the government went through and erased the support to all the small local museums in our country.

• (1955)

Therefore, that leaves us with who can partner and who will be able to take advantage of these mechanisms. My understanding is there is some kind of a mechanism where monies can be transferred back. I stand to be corrected, but it seems to be that the mechanism whereby we will have these exchanges back and forth is if museums have enough money to put upfront to begin with, they too can display our national treasures and then they eventually they will be paid them.

However, if they are small museums whose funds are cut, how will they put up the dollars? More important, these are our national treasures. I know that from going to many of the events in the Art Gallery of Alberta, a lot of money was put into it and donated and given by various levels of government to ensure we could now borrow art internationally. The museums have to ensure their facilities are properly humidified and so forth.

Therefore, there is not a lot of clarity in here about exactly who will be paying for the transportation, displaying and packaging up again and sending back to Archives Canada, which raises another issue: who exactly is going to undertake this research? Now the newly called Canadian museum of Canadian history will not do the research and Archives Canada will no longer do the research. Who exactly will do this research? Is it the people with whom the museum of Canadian history will partner? Will we have the Suncor Energy display of the history of environmental protection in Canada? Who knows who will be displaying the history of first peoples in Canada?

I am a bit concerned about the remaking of the Canada Hall. People always ask how I like Ottawa and I say, "How would I know?" I tell them I never get to see Ottawa because I am always working hard for them. However, the last time I went to the Museum of Civilization, which I still like to call it, I remember I went specifically to the display of Dr. Yee. He was a Chinese herbologist who was a personal friend of my father's. Sadly, Alberta did not say it wanted Dr. Yee's herbal shop. To its credit, the Canadian Museum of Civilization took that, and it is displayed in the museum. Every chance I get, I go up and see Dr. Yee's shop and I think about my father and his relationship with this wonderful man.

Is that going to be gone? What is going to happen to this collection of information? Are we starting at zero? Who is going to make this decision?

Have we been making new appointments to the board? With the establishment of the new museum of Canadian history, are we going to have a clean slate for the board? We know where those appointees are coming from in the current government. Perhaps we will wait until after the next election and have failed candidates and have them appointed. I do not know.

I have a personal friend in Edmonton who is a textile conservationist and she used to be on the Canadian Museums Association board. She has a lot of valuable expertise. I look forward to following up with her and finding out what she thinks about these changes, especially on the removal of the research dollars.

Here is another interesting fact. The website for the Museum of Civilization no longer exists. I went to website to see what the Museum of Civilization offered and all the sites were gone. I did find one remaining site, and that was for visitors. When people visit the museum, they can put up their review and 256 people out of 350 found it excellent. People already think it is an incredible experience. Interestingly, in the comments they filed, most of them appreciated the aboriginal display.

It raises a lot of really important questions. Of course many of us are very saddened, and I know those who work for Canada Post are going to be saddened. Apparently, we are expunging the Canadian Postal Museum. Why? I do not know.

As I understand, there was \$25 million spent on rebranding and consultation after the fact when the government had already decided what the name would be. I had hoped to share the very interesting process that went on when there actually was the in-depth consultation with Canadians about renaming the Museum of Man to the Museum of Civilization, but I will save that for questions.

• (2000)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that the website does actually exist. I was looking at it on my cellphone. However, I guess it speaks to the fact that yet again the member does not know what she is talking about. I would refer her to proposed section 9 of the bill, which says:

undertake or sponsor any research related to its purpose or to museology, and communicate the results of that research;

The member talks about the museum not having a mandate to do research. Wrong. It does, and it is on page 3.

She talks about the curatorial independence, and if she actually read the Museum Act she would find that:

No directive shall be given to a museum under section 89 or subsection 114(3) of the Financial Administration Act with respect to cultural activities, including

(a) the acquisition, disposal, conservation or use of any museum material relevant to its activities

(b) its activities and programs for the public...

and research with respect to the matters referred to in the other paragraphs guaranteeing curatorial independence.

The member is wrong on financing. We have given \$142 million. She is wrong on research. It is wrong on there not being a website and wrong on the curatorial independence.

Is there anything that she was actually right about? No. Did she actually even read the bill, because that would actually help.

Government Orders

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I actually did read the bill, and perhaps I will read it to the member because apparently he has not. If the member read the bill, and if he was provided notes on the differences in the bill, he would read the changes to section 8 of the Museums Act. The phrase “maintaining and developing for research and posterity” is removed.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Because it is in section 9.

Ms. Linda Duncan: He clearly does not even want to hear an answer to his question.

If the member had actually read the bill, he would realize there also is a change in paragraph 9(1)(f).

Yes, most of the provisions are exactly the same, which raises the point of why on earth the Conservatives changed it. When we look at it in detail, the way it reads right now, paragraph 9(1)(f) says “undertake and sponsor research”. It is proposed to be changed to “undertake or sponsor” which raises the question of lesser interest by the government in actually financing the museum.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for raising two very important and interesting points in her speech.

She spoke in particular of Mr. Cardinal's absolutely remarkable architecture, which represents Canada's landscape and the influences that shape our country. It is known as a museum of civilization, and Mr. Cardinal reflects and acknowledges the Canadian landscape in his exceptional architecture.

She then talked about the incursion of private business interests into the affairs of a public institution. I would like her to discuss this a bit more and get her views on the issue.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is not clear yet what the changes exactly are to the museum, whether they are external or simply internal, or whether there have actually been consultations with anyone who has been involved in deciding how the displays would be changed and who is actually going to finance these displays.

One other thing that is important for a museum is that we maintain an archive. I mentioned one example of a display in there that is very important and very near and dear to me and to my family. The severe cuts to Archives Canada and very severe cuts, 80%, to the archeological work of Parks Canada, raise the question of where this new information on history, archeology and so forth is going to come from. What about finances for storage? What is going to happen to the former displays?

We look forward to the museum changing and displaying the history of Canada. Frankly, I hope it includes more information about the Fathers of Confederation, one of whom is from my family. I look forward to information on that and why they became involved in trying to make this a stronger country.

● (2005)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if it were not so depressing, it would be laughable.

The bill before us does an extremely good job of representing the Conservatives' attitude towards knowledge, learning, education, science and even Canada's place in the world.

Allow me to summarize the situation. Let us discuss the role of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in maintaining a collection of objects for research and for posterity. Done. Finished. That is precisely what the Conservative government is all about. To hell with research and to hell with posterity. This disdain for posterity can also be seen in its environmental policy.

The museum's mandate, which until recently was to cover Canadian and global content, has suddenly lost the second component of its work. It is no longer a matter of telling people abroad about our history and about who we are. Now, we care only about ourselves, in a narrow vision of what our interests are from a minimalist standpoint.

Reading over the bill, I wondered in fact if it had been written by the Minister of International Cooperation, because it has his usual trademarks.

Not only that, but the museum's current mandate refers to critical understanding. Critical. What a nightmare for the Conservatives. Anything critical, even a critical mind, is not something they are fond of. No problem. They simply got rid of the word “critical”, just as they would like to get rid of criticism in general.

As if that were not enough, they are changing the museum's name. The Canadian Museum of Civilization is history. In my time in the House, my impression has been that “civilization” is another word that the Conservatives do not like much. It is worth noting that the exhibitions on cultures and civilizations, which are extremely popular, will now have to play second fiddle.

The tragedy is that the Conservatives' scorched earth policy is not only affecting the Canadian Museum of Civilization. They have already decimated knowledge and research throughout the government and the country. They have muzzled and fired archaeologists, archivists, librarians and scientists, and are shunting basic research aside. The list appears to be endless.

Even in my riding, they are on the attack—that is the only word to describe what they are doing by scuppering the Biosphere.

Since there are many similarities between the Biosphere file and that of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, I will take the liberty to speak for Hervé Fischer, president of Science pour tous, and a group of Quebecers who recently released a letter on the subject, from which I will quote the following:

On the heels of cuts imposed on the Biosphere in July 2012, the federal government is now laying off most staff and putting in employees from the meteorological services. The Environment Museum will not survive. Environment Canada has unilaterally decided to review its mandate. Some public access will be retained, it would seem, but what form will they take? How can a museum like this one be operated without staff? Such is the fate reserved for this emblem of Montreal! Inaugurated in 1995 as the result of an agreement between the city of Montreal and the federal government, it became the sole environment museum in North America in 2007. Today, we bear witness to its painful demise.

Government Orders

Goodbye to museologists, educators, interpreters, designers and technicians! Too bad for visitors from here and elsewhere. Gone are the major events that left their mark at the site, such as Cousteau's Calypso, Vittorio's drawings and children's craftwork around fire hydrants, the Recycling Artists Eco-Fair, and so on. Disappointment awaits those classes of young people who were warmly greeted and were offered activities that were both recreational and educational. The same goes for the others from all over Canada who could gain video conference access to educational activities in their mother tongue.

● (2010)

[Drastically reduced] public access to the greatest architectural masterpiece by Buckminster Fuller...The Biosphere's fate extends beyond tourism. Environment Canada was a major source of scientific and technical knowledge. The Biosphere could have continued disseminating this knowledge to the public, which is something that clearly does not appear on the list of priorities of the current government...As museum and heritage institutions are on the chopping block, the end result is that young people will be losing irreplaceable expertise...A sad fate indeed.

I would like to point out that one of my proud constituents, Mr. René Binette, president of Écomusée du fier monde, will present a resolution to the Canadian Museums Association this week. I am sure the association will also address the issue of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

I would like to comment further on the Canadian Museum of Civilization. I would like to echo James Turk, President of the Canadian Association of University Teachers. I fully share his point of view. In his opinion, this decision is a mistake. It needlessly eliminates the largest and most popular museum in Canada. Some parts of the current museum will be integrated into the new Canadian Museum of History, but others, such as the immense Canada Hall, the largest and finest social history display in the country, will not be. If the government really wants to highlight Canada's history, it should restore funding for Library and Archives Canada, renew its support for local and regional archives and reinstate the budget for the protection and improvement of historic sites in Canada. Once it has done so, it can then envision creating a museum of history with a totally independent board of directors that would ensure the institution does not become a vehicle for government propaganda.

In fact, just as Canadians said about the Biosphere, the only thing you can say is "what a sad fate". I hope that all Canadians who are concerned about this situation will join us in opposing the bill as strongly as possible.

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, I am going to keep hitting on this topic because it is quite clear to me that the NDP has not read the bill or does not understand it.

The same member referenced, yet again, the fact that there is no mandate to bring this museum internationally. Proposed paragraph 9 (1)(e) talks about "Canada and internationally". I would ask the member to actually read that section. Paragraph (f) talks about the importance of research. I would ask her to read that section.

The member for Western Arctic talked about our first nations who have been here for 30,000 years. What about them? He clearly has not even read the name of the new museum. How can they understand the bill if they have not even read the title of what the new museum is going to be called?

The purpose of the new Canadian museum of history is to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of events,

experience, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity. It is also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures. How can you possibly not support that mandate

The Speaker: Order, please. I will remind the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage to address his comments to the Chair and not directly at his colleagues.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I think that if anyone has not understood something here, it is my honourable colleague. He has really not understood the points that I mentioned.

Previously, promoting Canada's image abroad was part of the goal. Of course, we are keeping an aspect such as the understanding of the history of the world by Canadians, but this element of promoting our image abroad has disappeared. Of course, there is a research element. A museum cannot exist without a research element. A distinction must be made.

● (2015)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra: There was not.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: My colleague says that I said there was not, but I never said that. This proves once again that he really has a problem with listening.

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra: You said there was not. That was your first statement in the first five minutes. You do not know what you are talking about.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: If he remained quiet, if he stopped talking and listened to me, perhaps he would be able to understand the point that I am trying to make.

[English]

The Speaker: I will stop the member there, because I see some other members rising for other questions and comments.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing a museum of Canadian history. Our country was built on two great institutions: the railway and the Royal Mail. It is impressive to see this government, which boasts about promoting Canada's history, gut two institutions: public rail transportation and Canada Post.

Could the member comment on the fact that one of the first things to be sacrificed in this new museum policy will be Canada Post?

I can see a member who has the gall to laugh about the disappearance of a Canadian institution like the post office. It shows just how un-Canadian he is.

Government Orders

Ms. Hélène Lavardière: Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with what my colleague said about the fact that institutions like railway transportation and the Canadian Postal Museum are being gutted or greatly harmed. The government has dramatically slashed the budgets of programs that support archivists across Canada, even though these programs cost almost nothing. These are people who preserve our collective memory, whether in terms of transportation, postal services, work or other areas. The government is undermining institutions from the bottom up.

I am also in full agreement with my colleague in finding the arrogance and laughter of our colleagues on the other side of the House disturbing, to say the least.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time this evening with my good friend, the member for Leeds—Grenville.

I am delighted to rise to speak to Bill C-49, which will create the new Canadian museum of history. In my remarks tonight, I would like to focus on why it is so important to have a national museum dedicated to Canadian history.

Our government believes in our national museums, and we recognize the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians. As we approach Canada's 150th birthday, it is an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians.

We have all heard the statistics. Canadians lack knowledge of our history and wish that they knew more about it. Although more than 75% of Canadians feel that learning Canadian history strengthens their attachment to the country, fewer than 50% are able to pass a basic citizenship exam that tests general knowledge of Canada, and only 26% of youth aged 18 to 24 know the year of Confederation. Only 37% know that the Battle of Vimy Ridge was fought in World War I, and only 76% of Canadians are embarrassed about the lack of knowledge Canadians have about their history. Something obviously has to change. Our children deserve and should know more about the long and complex history of this great nation.

The establishment of the Canadian museum of history will give Canadians the opportunity to learn, appreciate and feel proud of the richness of Canada's history. The museum will chronicle our country's national achievements. It will explore the major themes, events and people of our national experience by bringing history to life and providing the public with a strong sense of Canadian identity.

Our government believes that it has a solemn responsibility to wisely manage the money Canadians send to us. That is why we chose not to build a new national museum from the ground up but rather to build on the reputation and popularity of the Canadian Museum of Civilization to create a national museum of history that will showcase the national achievements that have shaped this great country.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is set to begin a progressive transformation that will be completed over the next five years and will lead up to Canada's 150th birthday in 2017. The Canadian Museum of History will provide the public with the opportunity to

appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our story and presents our country's treasures to the world.

Members might ask what this transformation involves. The government investment will allow the museum to undertake the renovation of almost half its permanent exhibition space. The result will be more than 43,000 square feet of permanent exhibition space, due to open in 2016, presenting a comprehensive and chronological history of Canada to Canadians and to the world.

It is important to remember that the Grand Hall and the First People's Hall, which present the history of Canada's first peoples, will remain an integral part of the new museum, as will the Children's Museum.

To complement the government's investment and to ensure that Canadians in all regions have new opportunities to learn about Canada's history, the new museum will sign agreements with several museums across the country to travel exhibitions outside the national capital region, to share expertise and to lend artifacts and other material from its collection to enhance their local exhibitions and educational programs.

To quote Michael Bliss, a Canadian historian and award-winning author, this new museum is a "terrific opportunity" for our local and provincial historical societies as well as our national organizations.

Understanding that not all Canadian museums have the ability to accept large travelling exhibitions, the new museum also plans to work with those institutions to develop travelling exhibitions tailored specifically to their needs. These institutions will also be able to borrow artifacts from the new museum.

The new Canadian Museum of History will not only open its collections to museums across the country but will also provide a showcase for Canadian museums. To increase its capacity to host travelling exhibitions created by museums across this country, the museum will renovate 7,500 square feet on the street level floor of its main building to create a new temporary exhibition gallery. These exhibitions will help the Canadian museum of history to tell a truly national story and connect the treasures that are scattered in local museums across the country to our national narrative.

● (2020)

Between now and 2017, the museum is planning a series of temporary exhibitions that will highlight its new mandate and will build excitement about the changes in its programming.

In terms of how Canada's history is presented, some have wondered if there is a move afoot to present our history in a way that favours a partisan approach. I would remind everyone that the Canadian museum of history will remain a federal crown corporation and will continue to operate at arm's length from the government. The board of trustees and the management of the museum are responsible for determining exactly how the museum will present Canadian history.

Our government has established a new mandate for the Canadian museum of history. That is true. Having done that, we will leave it up to the capable management of the museum to make its decisions about the implementation of that mandate.

Government Orders

I would like to note that the museum reached out to Canadians, in person and online, to seek their opinions and ideas. The Canadian Museum of Civilization even launched an online forum located at myhistory.ca. The museum also carried out a series of cross-country consultations that gave Canadians the opportunity to give their opinions on the personalities, events and milestones that truly tell the Canadian story. In total, more than 20,000 Canadians contributed their ideas to the website, panel discussions and round tables all across Canada. We are delighted by this level of engagement. By the time we celebrate Canada's 150th birthday in 2017, Canadians will have a new museum dedicated to the history of this country. It will be a celebration of our history and the achievements and accomplishments that have shaped this great land.

This is a great opportunity for young and not so young Canadians alike to have a better sense of and get a better share in our history. We will be able to share the collection gathered at the museum here in Ottawa with other museums across the country, whether they be large museums that can benefit from large exhibitions or some of the smaller museums in smaller communities, like those in my riding of Wild Rose or in Kenora, as my friend from Kenora has just pointed out. Lots of communities across this country will have an opportunity to have the exhibitions travel to their parts of the country so that they can experience them first-hand. Of course, we will see some of the great pieces in some of the museums across the country come to the National capital region to be shared with people here. It is a great opportunity for all Canadians. It is a great opportunity for many of the museums across this country, whether they be large or small.

It is also a great opportunity to see the stories of our Canadian history told. We have a very rich history. Look at some of the amazing feats of soldiers, in particular, in World War I and World War II. I believe that some of those battles were the coming of age of this country. I have had the opportunity to visit some of the places where those battles took place. That is certainly not an opportunity all Canadians have. I wish they did.

Museums that will benefit from the travelling exhibitions are the places where Canadians can learn about these significant parts of our Canadian history. It is a great opportunity for Canadians and for all museums across the country to share our Canadian history.

I will conclude by encouraging all members of the House to join me in supporting this worthwhile and responsible piece of legislation. I will quote John McAvity, the executive director of the Canadian Museums Association. He said that “the renaming of the Museum of Civilization...is essential”, that it “is good news”, and that “it will give Canadians greater access to their heritage [and] to their history”.

● (2025)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, oddly enough, as I was listening to the member opposite, it was only at the very end that I understood the real reason why they want to emphasize great military victories.

However, just before that, I heard him say that it was a great opportunity. Indeed, it would be, if we could forget the fact that they are destroying the most popular museum in the region to convert it

into a museum of history and the national showcase for the 150th anniversary. It is true that this anniversary is a great opportunity for the museum to perform this kind of role.

On my last visit, there was a magnificent symbolic image showing Parliament as it is today and a first nations village on the other shore in Gatineau, right where the museum is now located.

What precisely does he have against Canada Hall in this exhibition? The museum, as it is now, already represents our history.

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to point out an inaccuracy in the member's preamble.

Although our military history in World War I and World War II, and fighting some of those battles, are a key part of Canadian history, there are certainly many other aspects of Canadian history that are very important as well, which would be showcased at the museum.

There are things like the last spike, which was not only the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway but also the completion of tying this great country together with the vision of Sir John A. Macdonald. There are things like the journey of Terry Fox, who continues to inspire Canadians today with his marathon of hope. There are things like the iconic hockey sweater of Maurice "The Rocket" Richard, which is the reason I wore number nine when I played hockey. Those are the kinds of people, events and achievements that inspire us and bring us together as a country, and I would point that out to him. I also want to point out that in creating the new Canadian museum of history, we would be encouraging Canadians to better connect to our history.

However, the things the member was trying to claim are just not accurate. The museum would continue to be able to make its own decisions about how it best meets the mandate that the government has given it. I just do not buy into what the member was saying at all. I believe this is a great opportunity for Canadians.

● (2030)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Wild Rose for his hard work as chair of the tourism caucus and certainly for that eloquent speech.

I find the censorious tone of the NDP's debate on this piece of legislation quite interesting because, as the member for Wild Rose said, this is about telling our stories. The ever-shrinking number of northern members on that side of the House should appreciate that sometimes out in the hinterland we feel like our celebration of Canada is not properly reflected in some of these big city museums like the one across the way.

This piece of legislation specifically lays out as a mandate the opportunity for us to share and celebrate the rich histories that we have, for example, in the great Kenora riding, and to bring some of that our way. I think that is very important.

Government Orders

I wonder if the member could expound on that a little bit more, contrary to the interests of the members across the way.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question of my friend for Kenora because did touch on a very key thing here, which is the ability of the museum to be able to share those collections with some of the smaller communities. I think he is absolutely right. When we look at the members of the opposition, they do not represent some of the large rural ridings like his in Kenora and mine of Wild Rose in Alberta. They do tend to represent more of the large cities—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Davenport on a point of order, and a real point of order, I hope.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, we do have ridings represented by NDP caucus members that are—

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

The hon. member for Wild Rose, if he wants to finish.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, to have these museums in some smaller communities all across this great country share in the stories and the history that would be contained in this museum here in the national capital region, to be able to see some of the artifacts from those museums in smaller communities brought into this one, shows the opportunities here for Canadians to build a better connect to their sense of shared history and to connect to the parts of their history from all across this great country.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise tonight here in the House of Commons to speak to Bill C-49, which would create the new Canadian museum of history. Our government believes in our national museums. We recognize the tremendous value that they hold for all Canadians.

As we approach Canada's 150th birthday, we have an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians. As a country, we have evolved considerably over the last century and a half, particularly with regard to culture.

In June 1951, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, better known as the Massey commission, recognized that the development of Canada's culture was challenged by three key factors: a small population scattered over a massive amount of land; our relative youth as a nation; and a robust cultural presence from our neighbours to the south. Sixty years later, we are still taking steps to fulfill the Massey commission's mission to do "what can make our country great, and what can make it one".

An important step in meeting this challenge would be the creation of the Canadian museum of history.

Do members know that there are some 2,500 museums in communities across Canada? Most of us have museums in our ridings. In my riding of Leeds—Grenville, there is a museum or a local heritage building that displays our stories in almost every single community. Some museums are large and many are small, but most are run solely by volunteers, who are the lifeblood of our cultural institutions. No matter the size, I am sure that every member of this House would agree that our museums are crucial guardians of our heritage.

As a government, we know that museums play a vital role in our society. They protect our rich and diverse heritage and make it accessible to both Canadians and visitors from around the world. Along with the artists who commit are experiences to memory through any number of artistic media, digital media, music, books, visual art, those who care for collections that tell the story of our past are vital to helping us to understand who we are. These collections also hold the keys that will unlock the significance of events taking place today, for future generations.

There is no question the Canadian public also understands the importance of museums. A 2011 study by Léger Marketing found that 90% of Canadians believe that museums provide a valuable learning experience about our collective heritage, while 78% feel that learning more about Canada's history would help strengthen their attachment to Canada.

Our museums are an important economic driver in this country by attracting tens of thousands of tourists in all regions of the country. Museums contribute significantly to our \$78.8-billion tourism industry.

The Government of Canada recognizes the vital role that museums play as part of our cultural landscape. We have a strong record of supporting museums, even in a period of global economic uncertainty. In these challenging times, some governments have made decisions to heavily cut their support for culture. This government is one of the few in the world that did not cut funding for arts and culture during the global recession. That is something that this government and all of us on this side of the House are very proud of.

Bill C-49 is another demonstration of the value that our government places on the museum sector.

Since 2007, the government has increased funding by \$4.6 million annually for student summer internships, more than doubling the number of youth able to explore museum careers. Many of the young people who are working in museums today will choose careers in museology and in doing so, become the custodians of our collective past.

In my riding of Leeds—Grenville, I know of a young man who was hired to catalogue a collection from the Gananoque museum. He is looking forward to a career in the museum industry and I know he has taken a great deal of interest in the artifacts that we have there.

As part of the government's economic action plan 2009, we added an additional \$60 million over two years to stimulate the economy by investing in cultural infrastructure through the Canada cultural spaces fund.

I know that in eastern Ontario we contributed some money to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, which is the operator of Upper Canada Village. I actually used to be the chair of that agency before I was elected to this place.

Government Orders

● (2035)

In the discovery centre funded with the aid of this fund, people can see much of the celebration and commemoration of the War of 1812. The November 1813 Battle of Chrysler's Farm will be re-enacted this summer at Upper Canada Village. There were many of these re-enactments last summer across eastern Ontario and in the Niagara region to commemorate that important war, which was the fight for Canada.

With respect to the bill, there is additional funding as part of our ongoing efforts to ensure that museums across the country upgrade their exhibits and preserve their collections so that they are accessible for future generations. Canadians want and need to know more about our collective past in order to understand the united, strong and free country that we are today.

An important step in upholding our cultural heritage is the creation of the Canadian museum of history. The time is right to highlight our history because less than four years from now we will celebrate Canada's 150th birthday. Our stories are vast and they need to be shared. That is why the government is building on the reputation and popularity of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. As it transitions to become our national museum of history, it would give Canadians the opportunity to discover, appreciate and understand our collective past.

In establishing the Canadian museum of history, we would be taking an iconic institution in the national capital region and making it a nationwide network that would enhance the production and reach of exhibitions focusing on Canadian history.

The network would also benefit smaller institutions that, once they comply with a series of criteria, would become affiliates that would be able to borrow or co-operate on collections, programs and exhibits. As partners and affiliates, local museums would have access to important pieces of the nation's museum collection, which includes some three million items.

In a spirit of partnership, our national museums would develop a temporary exhibit space to welcome collections from its partners in the various regions of Canada.

This country deserves to have a national institution serving as its history's hub. We deserve to have a Canadian museum of history.

The government's one-time investment of \$25 million would allow the Canadian Museum of Civilization to begin a progressive transformation that would be completed over the next four years. The museum would also launch a \$5-million fundraising campaign to support its new mandate.

I assure all of my hon. colleagues that the Grand Hall and the First Peoples Hall, which present the history of Canada's first peoples, would remain an integral part of the new museum.

On the road to 2017, let us continue to celebrate everything that makes Canada the united, strong and free country that we are today. We have many wonderful museums showcasing specific aspects of our history. Our government wants to help them work together to weave a national narrative that is educational, entertaining and enlightening. The network of history museums being established under the leadership of the Canadian museum of history would help

accomplish this. The Canadian museum of history would provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world.

This is a very important bill. Many people in my riding are looking forward to it. I have already had discussions with some of our local museums and they are anxiously awaiting this bill to be passed and are looking forward to the opening of the Canadian museum of history so that they can have the opportunity to partner with the museum.

There are some displays at the Arthur Child Heritage Museum in Gananoque this summer. There was a travelling display of the War of 1812 in Ottawa at the National War Museum. I had the opportunity to take my young son to see that before it closed down. My oldest son, who is 12 years old, took a great deal of interest in many of the events that went on last year to commemorate the War of 1812. However, when I took him to see the display, which so enlightened us as to the different aspects of that important part of Canadian history, it demonstrated to me that showing off our national history helps people understand what our Canada is about today.

Therefore, I encourage all members to pass this bill.

● (2040)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has contributed in a very fair-minded way to the issues on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. While he sat on that committee, he participated in the study of Canada's 150th birthday. We brought in countless witnesses and asked them how best to celebrate and honour Canada's 150th birthday.

I would like to ask him if ever once there was a witness who said we should do what is proposed in this legislation. Was there one witness who came forward to committee during that study who said that we need to change the mandate of the Museum of Civilization, that we need to spend money on it, and that we need to narrow the mandate and change the name? Did anyone ever suggest that to committee?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague worked hard on that committee as well.

We heard from a lot of witnesses, and so many of the witnesses told us they wanted to see us celebrate Canadian history when we get to Canada 150. This is a great example of what we can do to celebrate that history.

We heard from people who wanted to celebrate back history in Canada. We heard from many different groups that wanted us to do things at the local level and to celebrate that history.

This is a wonderful way for us to have a hub here in Ottawa. This is a wonderful way to have travelling exhibits go out to the rest of the country and have exhibits come into this national hub museum. It is a wonderful idea. I encourage the hon. member to support this legislation so we can get this done.

Government Orders

• (2045)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, science and technology is an important part of Canada's history and the world's history.

My hon. colleague, who lives near the Ottawa area, knows the principal museum for this national museum on St. Laurent Boulevard is a converted bakery warehouse that has been there for decades.

I want to ask my hon. colleague whether it is a priority of the government to create a museum on the level of the Smithsonian to honour and celebrate Canada's accomplishments and the world's accomplishments in science and technology? Is that a priority for the government, because it is part of our history?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague makes a good point. It is important that we celebrate science and technology. I was a young student at Gananoque Secondary School growing up, and our class did go to that museum and I did learn a few things when I was there. As the member pointed out, I am very close to the national capital. It is important that we celebrate science and technology, but this legislation is about Canada's national museum of history.

We should have a good look at what the hon. member is talking about, but I encourage him to support the bill so we can get this part done.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all across this country, many students and many families are not able to see artifacts because they are hidden away in places that a lot of people do not get to.

It is wonderful going into the 150th anniversary of Canada that we have this Canadian museum of history.

Could my colleague please expand a bit on the importance of the artifacts and the displays that would be going in and out of the Canadian museum of history?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for Kildonan—St. Paul for all of her hard work.

My colleague brought forward a great consideration that has been dealt with in this legislation: not all Canadians have the ability to come to the nation's capital on a regular basis to see these displays. It is a wonderful idea to have these displays go out across the country and to have displays come to Ottawa from across the country. I cannot see why there would be any opposition to the bill. It is a wonderful way for us to celebrate our national history.

The government is putting a priority on this. We are putting money into it. The bill has to get through the House in order to go ahead. I cannot understand why any members in the House would not want to celebrate Canada and our history.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-49 which will establish the new Canadian museum of history.

It will come as no surprise to Canadians that our government believes in our national museums. We recognize the tremendous value that they hold for all Canadians. As we approach Canada's

150th birthday, it is an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians.

This government cannot overstate the important role that Canada's national museums play in preserving and sharing the Canadian story. Museums reach out in a myriad of ways to all communities across this great country, through travelling exhibitions, publications and online programming. Indeed, the digital age has expanded the reach of heritage institutions in this country and around the world. It has made it possible for us to share our stories in a way that was never imagined.

Mr. Speaker, I will also be sharing my time with the member for Lotbinière-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

The Canadian museum of history, like all our national museums, will reach out to Canadians and share our history through new digital initiatives. However, this is only one aspect of the Government of Canada's approach to capitalizing on the digital aid in service of Canada's history and heritage.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw to the attention of hon. members another important tool that the government has established to preserve and share our history, the Virtual Museum of Canada. The Virtual Museum of Canada was created as a result of the close partnership between Canada's museum community and the Department of Canadian Heritage. At the leading edge of this initiative is the Canadian Heritage Information Network, a special operating agency of the department.

The Canadian Heritage Information Network is a national centre of expertise in the use of digital technologies by museums, and it has been assisting our heritage community in taking full advantage of new digital technologies. The network and virtual museum are well-known and recognized as models by heritage communities in Canada and abroad.

The Virtual Museum of Canada receives millions of visits annually, from over 200 countries. It includes a detailed directory of more than 3,000 heritage institutions. That directory also allows Canadians and tourists to better understand and access these valuable repositories of our history. The Virtual Museum of Canada is also home to Artifacts Canada's inventory of almost four million objects and nearly one million images that showcase museum collections nationwide.

The Virtual Museum of Canada is also a highly interactive learning tool and resource for Canada's schools, teachers and students. Its teacher centre brings museums into the classroom. It offers teachers access to museum collections in the form of digital learning resources created by educators and museum professionals. It offers them a secure and customizable space to create and share lesson plans with each other and to interact with students. The teacher centre currently has over 3,000 registered users, students and teachers, and provides access to over 1,700 learning objects.

Government Orders

One example of a learning object collection is the one produced by the Royal Ontario Museum called “Shaping Canada: our voices and stories”. It provides teachers with the opportunity to demonstrate, by examining key artifacts, so we gain insight into Canada's collective history. At the end of the day, the Virtual Museum of Canada is essentially Canada's national online museum. It is designed to enable museums to work together in the development of an important and visible online presence. As its name suggests, the Virtual Museum of Canada is currently home to over 700 virtual exhibits, promoting the content of Canada's museums.

Connected with those exhibitions are more than 150 interactive resources, including “History matters”, which presents a series of audio and video podcasts, as well as short engaging stories of historical relevance. Both of these programs invite the viewer to say why history matters to them.

• (2050)

This is an absolutely fascinating aspect of the Virtual Museum of Canada. I urge all members to take a peek at it, at virtualmuseum.ca.

The range of virtual exhibits available for viewing, free of charge, of course, to everyone visiting the site, is extraordinary. The stories they tell us about our history are important, but they are not always easy. One example is “The Beginning of a New Era: the Quiet Revolution”, produced by the Musée québécois de culture populaire de Trois-Rivières. This fascinating online exhibit chronicles the in-depth political, social and cultural transformation that took place in less than a decade in Quebec, in the 1960s.

A further example is the exhibit presented by the Air Force Heritage Museum, in Winnipeg, entitled “For Valour: Canadian Airmen and the Victoria Cross”. This exhibit tells the amazing story of seven Canadian airmen who were awarded the Commonwealth's highest decoration, the Victoria Cross. It allows the viewers to imagine themselves flying in a bomber at 20,000 feet in total darkness, only to have their aircraft strafed and rendered inoperable by enemy fire. In the midst of this experience, we learn about the bravery and sacrifice of individual Canadians who earned our nation's highest honour. This story is even more compelling as we approach the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I.

I could go on with more fascinating examples of stories of our history that are brought to life through Canada's museum and the Virtual Museum of Canada. I would encourage everyone here to explore them online, as millions already do.

The point I would like to make in closing is that the Virtual Museum of Canada shows that there is not just one way to preserve and share Canada's history with Canadians. The Canadian museum of history will be an important addition to that toolkit. It will provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of history. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world.

I urge all of my hon. colleagues to support this new museum and to support Canada's history. Let us pass this bill as expeditiously as possible. I am sure that my friend, the member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, will have more to say on this subject after a few questions and responses.

• (2055)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member, who has just given us a very interesting virtual tour of the museum.

A member mentioned earlier that there were local museums in his community. We all have historical societies in our communities that recount Canada's history.

The member then asked, given that the Canadian Museum of Civilization fulfills the mandate of telling Canada's history, just as the Canadian War Museum, the Canadian Museum of Science and Technology, and all the local museums do as well, what possible purpose could be served by changing the role of a major popular museum—the Canadian Museum of Civilization—whose very broad mandate is to assist and support local museums? How could this government provide more assistance to the local museums that recount our history while supporting the Canadian Museum of Civilization?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, I know that in my riding, they receive moneys from the Department of Canadian Heritage every now and then, as do many ridings across the country, to help the museums carry on with their various projects and to build.

It is quite simple. In our country, which is so rich in its heritage yet is young compared to some European countries, we need to concentrate on our Canadian history. While not forgetting those things that made us great and while not forgetting the world around us, we need to better help us remember, appreciate and understand some of the trials and tribulations our forefathers went through to create this wonderful country.

As I go around my riding, and as I speak to parents and teachers and students, I find that because of the curriculum we have today, there does not seem to be the concentration on Canadian history there used to be.

The member talks about museums in the various ridings in the country. There would now be an opportunity for the museum of Canadian history to share with other museums artifacts in Ottawa and to receive artifacts from around the country, some of which are one of a kind. We could bring them to the nation's capital so that all visitors and all Canadians could see them.

That is the value I see. We can build on that and be very proud of it. I think it would add greatly as we celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary.

Government Orders

● (2100)

FAIR RAIL FREIGHT SERVICE ACT

BILL C-52—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must advise that an agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) concerning the proceedings at third reading of Bill C-52, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (administration, air and railway transportation and arbitration). Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at said stage.

* * *

THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that C-49, An Act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I did not get to ask a question of my colleague from Leeds—Grenville, so I will ask it of the member for Northumberland—Quinte West. The member for Leeds—Grenville said something I found very interesting. He said that the main hall of the museum would remain as it is to commemorate the first peoples of Canada. I would have wanted him to elaborate on that and to perhaps share with us the origins of such an assurance in terms of who made it, when and whatever else could be found out. I understand that it may not be a fair question to the member for Northumberland—Quinte West, but I am putting it to him in case he is aware of the origins of the assurances the member for Leeds—Grenville gave us.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, I can answer the question. There would be roughly 50,000 square feet renovated in the public space, roughly half of which is currently permanent. The member is correct. There are areas of the museum that would remain as they are. In deference to the member from the Northwest Territories, I can assure him that one of those areas is to remain the First Peoples Hall. The others are the very popular Canadian Children's Museum and the IMAX theatre. We are all very much aware of the IMAX theatre, that great Canadian invention.

There would be a \$25-million, one-time investment that would allow for renovations and changes to the current hall. These are very important moves. The investment would be funded from within the existing budget of Heritage Canada, at no additional cost to the taxpayers. It also would allow the Canadian Museum of Civilization to begin a transformation that would be completed in time for Canada's 150th anniversary.

I hope that is the answer the member needed. Those are assurances that there would be some permanency to some existing parts and some changes as we begin to concentrate on the history of this great country of ours.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to take part in this debate on Bill C-49, Canadian Museum of History Act.

We are all aware of the key role that culture plays in the life of our communities and in the lives of all Canadians.

The arts, culture and museums contribute to our quality of life, strengthen our identity and support our economy.

In Canada, culture is diverse, multi-faceted, thriving and reflective of Canadians and their country's geography.

Canada, the second-largest country in the world and 34th in terms of population, is united by its history, its official languages, its films and music, its sports and the ability to share common cultural experiences.

The Government of Canada recognizes the key role played by museums in the cultural community. Our support for museums remained unwavering despite the period of global economic uncertainty that we experienced. Over the course of this difficult time, a number of governments throughout the world all but took away their support for culture. We took another path. Our cultural community continues to receive the stable funding it requires.

Moreover, our government has increased funding for the Canada Council by 20%, the biggest increase in decades.

Our government knows that investing in culture and heritage is crucial to maintaining a strong economy.

We are here today to talk about the establishment of the Canadian museum of history.

Canadians, although spread out across an immense and awe-inspiring land, are united through their ability to share their stories. Our stories are many and varied, and they are worth telling.

A museum dedicated to our history will showcase these people, places and achievements that unite us.

The country needs a national museum that will tell the stories that make Canada what it is and that will carry out research and explore our history. Current and future generations need to be better acquainted with Canada's past in order to better shape its future.

Moreover, there are many people who are in agreement with us. Mr. Michael, a reputed Canadian historian and author, remarked that the new museum is a tremendous opportunity for our local and provincial historical societies and for our national organizations.

A nation's history is also shaped by its culture, and Canadians value their culture.

In a recent public opinion survey commissioned by the Department of Canadian Heritage, nine out of 10 Canadians said they believe that the arts and culture contribute to the quality of life of their community.

Government Orders

Canadians are generous when it comes to culture, which is further testament to the importance that they place on it.

In 2010, Canadians dedicated \$108 million and 97 million volunteer hours to arts and culture. Arts and culture, in addition to our museums, are at the centre of Canadians' lives.

Over 90% of Canadians agree that cultural experiences are an important way of bringing together people who are from different cultures and who speak different languages.

In 2012-2013, Canadian Heritage arts programs supported 781 projects that benefited 687 communities. Millions of Canadians across the country enjoyed access to cultural experiences.

I should also point out that 87% of Canadians believe that culture is a key part of their identity—what it means to be Canadian—and how they express this.

To illustrate what culture contributes to the economy, I remind members that culture accounts for approximately \$46 billion of the gross domestic product, which is almost 4% of GDP, and 630,000 jobs. The arts non-profit sector alone creates approximately 22 full-time jobs for every million dollars invested.

Our culture is vibrant, original, diverse, and international in scope. It attracts investment. It attracts talented artists and tourists.

The Canadian market is relatively small and the competition created by products from the United States and other countries is very strong.

• (2105)

All the more reason to encourage creativity and innovation—two major drivers of prosperity—which contribute to the success of arts and culture.

Throughout Canada, cultural ambassadors, and innovative and creative industries contribute to the success and dissemination of our homegrown culture. The book industry is a prime example. Canadian publishers generate revenue of over \$2 billion annually and employ approximately 9,000 people. Over 300 Canadian publishing houses can be found in approximately 80 cities across Canada.

We are familiar with the remarkable creativity present in Canada's musical scene. Counted among these artists are, of course, Paul Anka, Diana Krall, Arcade Fire, Celine Dion and Coeur de Pirate. There are also a whole host of artists from various backgrounds who bring to life our festivals, continue to be creative, and record highly successful songs.

Canada is ranked third in the world when it comes to exporting musical talent. Every year, the Canadian music industry generates revenue of approximately \$3 billion through the sale of the music of recording artists, various productions, commercial radio, and performing rights.

What can be said of our film industry? This year, there were Oscar nominations for *Rebelle* by Kim Nguyen, a screening at the Cannes film Festival of Chloé Robichaud's *Sarah préfère la course*, and the list goes on. Our films are viewed and enjoyed worldwide. In 2011 and 2012, the Canadian film and television industry's production

volume reached \$5.9 billion and generated approximately 132,500 direct and indirect jobs across Canada.

Every year, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the organizations within its purview invest over \$2 billion in arts, culture and heritage. Our government has protected this investment because arts, culture and heritage are important to Canadians, their quality of life, their communities, and to the health of our economy.

In closing, I would like to remind members that Canada's history is crucial to our identity, that it must be recounted, defended and celebrated. That is why we are proposing the establishment of the new Canadian Museum of History. I therefore call on members of the House of Commons to vote in favour of Bill C-49.

• (2110)

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to see that many of my colleagues on the government side are passionate about history. What a pleasant surprise.

They might want to control history, but they are nevertheless passionate about it. I too am passionate about history; history is fun. It is all well and good to want to ensure that our history, our museums and all of our artifacts are readily available to all Canadians. However, to make that possible, do we really need to destroy an institution that has not only proven itself across Canada, but is also internationally renowned? This is significant.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is a work of art, and works of art must be carefully preserved. Is the government member capable of understanding that? I am asking him to meet me halfway. There are some crucial things in that museum. The Canadian Postal Museum is excellent. It represents an important part of our history.

Can the member explain why it should be sacrificed?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

I am also passionate about history and I understand his concerns. That is why our government has invested \$25 million in the Canadian museum of history, to ensure that it enjoys a prosperous future and that it can convey this much cherished history to all Canadians.

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually agree with everything the hon. member said, in terms of the statistical data, about arts and culture, what it contributes to the economy and jobs, and its importance as the soul of our nation and in defining who we are as a people.

While this has absolutely nothing to do with the Canadian Museum of Civilization, I would like to ask the hon. member why, if his party believes so strongly in arts and culture, it proceeded to cut it so terribly over the last six years.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

I would remind the member that on top of the money invested, Canadians also donate 97 million volunteer hours to their museums, history and the arts.

Government Orders

This demonstrates how concerned Canadians are and how passionate they are, considering that nine out of ten Canadians support arts and culture. That is why our government will continue to invest in these programs and ensure the sustainability of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

• (2115)

[*English*]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for articulating so well how important culture and heritage is for our Conservative government. Also, this is a very important time in history, bringing us together as regions. This is an excellent way with the museums that will connect Canada.

We will have partnerships with the Canadian museum of history and museums across Canada that will have the same mandate at local levels. We all have these precious museums in our ridings across the country, and the local museums will have the opportunity to become official partners of this new national museum.

When the minister speaks about this new museum and how we will share collections, that too is such an important part of the mandate because of things we do not realize we have.

I travel quite a bit now across the west, as a member of Parliament, and I have yet to see some of the sharing of the collections, but I understand one of the collections is in Winnipeg, the Hudson Bay collection. It would be so great, and probably most of us do not know it exists.

I want to emphasize how important it is, sharing of collections, and how important that will be for connecting Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her relevant comment.

As I said, the arts, culture and music contribute to our quality of life, strengthen our identity and support our economy. We care about our assets, beautiful film productions and songs that are timeless, inspire us and enrich our lives.

Culture in Canada is diverse, multi-faceted, thriving and reflective of Canadians and their country's geography. I am sure that my colleague will agree with me that it is an added value for us to have the opportunity to immortalize these great moments and wonderful achievements in a museum that will be a reflection of Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand before you and Canadians on behalf of the people of Davenport in the great city of Toronto, to represent them in this debate on Bill C-49, an act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History.

It bears saying that the last week or so in the House has been quite a time. We cannot really divorce the context from the bill. We have a government that is in the middle of the biggest scandal in Canadian politics since the Liberal sponsorship scandal. Legislation that touches on Canadian history in the context of a government that has consistently sought to compromise the independence of third party cultural agencies raises questions of whether it has the trust of

Canadians, the trust of the House, notwithstanding the vote. We know it has the vote.

However, we are talking about vital cultural institutions. We are talking about how Canadians tell their stories. We are talking about how Canadians see themselves in their stories. We are talking about access to the breadth, width and depth of the Canadian story. It is a story that is unfathomable, but in fact the question remains here, in the context of what has been going on in the House, what kind of trust Canadian people have in the government to pursue an agenda that has consistently included attempts to rebrand Canadian history in the image of the Conservative Party of Canada.

The Conservatives are spending taxpayer dollars advertising on Hockey Night in Canada for programs that do not even exist. There is just a nice blue logo that connects that ad to the Conservative Party of Canada.

Canadians are no fools. They can see through this and they are concerned. It is a brand that is in tatters today. Patrick Brazeau, Pamela Wallin, Mike Duffy, Bruce Carson, Arthur Porter, not to mention the guru—

• (2120)

Hon. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member of Parliament is a little off the topic. We are talking about museums and the importance of the new mandate for the museum. I would think he would have lots to offer having a cultural background, as he talks so often about his talent and abilities to sing or play guitar. I would think we would hear more about talent.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule him out of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the hon. member for Davenport is entirely on point. It seems his party wants to make the Senate history.

The Deputy Speaker: I will address the point of order from the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification. Given the range of debate we have had on this topic and the other bill earlier today, the member's speech, in fact, is probably a bit more relevant than some of the other speeches we have heard. There is a theme that is running through his comments that make it at least indirectly relevant. However, I would encourage him and all other members to try to address more specific points in the bill before us for debate this evening.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the public trust. When we are dealing with sensitive issues like the telling of our story and the mandate of a museum, which has been the most popular and well-attended museum in the national capital region with professionals who worked there for years and years to build up its reputation not just in Canada but internationally, it suggests that if the Conservatives are to make these changes, they better have some good reasons which would benefit all Canadians.

I bring up these issues because we see time and time again a government that lacks transparency and has no commitment to accountability. I mean, the Conservatives have lost \$3.1 billion. It has fallen away somewhere and they cannot seem to find it.

I also want to talk about the way in which the bill came about. I see some hon. members across the way shaking their heads because they do not like the truth about how they spin Canadians.

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We in the heritage committee were sent on a journey to study how best to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday. We interviewed countless Canadians. They said many interesting things, but never did they say that we needed to change the name of the Museum of Civilization. No one came to us and said, "Folks, you really do this. There's a real problem here". No one ever said that, not once.

However, we did hear from many people who came before our committee from small archives and museums across the country. They said that if the government did not do something to help them out, that their archives and museums were on the verge of dying. Their curatorial workers are getting older, and the average age is well into the fifties, but because of deep cuts that the Conservative government has made to cultural industries in our country, and its contempt for the independence of third party agencies, fewer young people are going into this sector.

Now the Conservatives are telling Canadians that they are going to share this vast treasure trove of historical artifacts with all the little museums and archives across the country, but none of them have the capacity to receive that stuff. Not only that, there is no cost attached to the bill. This from the prudently fiscal government, but, oh yes, it lost \$3.1 billion. I do not know if I mentioned that.

However, all of a sudden, out of thin air, the Minister of Canadian Heritage said that he found \$25 million in the Department of Heritage to spend on this museum. He said that it was not coming from any other program and no other program was going to suffer. However, he does not tell us where the heck the money was in the first place. Not one time have we actually had accountability and transparency on Bill C-49.

When we start to talk about bills, especially ones that change the narrative or at least try to describe it in a different way, we want to consult with Canadians. That is what the heritage committee is supposed to do and, in fact, we did. Then, the minister, while riding his motorcycle, had a vision. His vision was to change the name and the mandate of the Museum of Civilization. Then he doubled back, maybe he popped a wheelie, drove back to Ottawa and announced that the government was changing the name of the Museum of Civilization. He announced how much money the government would spend on it. Then, after that, he proceeded to public consultation. I know I am still kind of new here, but that is a little on the backward side.

The entire \$25 million one-time contribution comes directly out of the Canadian Heritage budget, but the minister has refused to explain where exactly the money comes from or what heritage programs will lose funds to finance the contribution.

• (2125)

This is the game of deception the government is now famous for. The Conservatives cannot find \$3.1 billion. It is lost. No one can say where it is.

This is a government that guts environmental protection of our lakes, rivers and streams but spends millions on a fake lake in Toronto. It refused to support the NDP's national housing strategy, but spent millions on gazebos in Muskoka to help re-elect one of its vulnerable ministers.

In fact, the minister responsible for housing told Canadians that the issue of affordable housing had been solved, since interest rates are at historic lows and Canadians can now buy houses. This shows a complete lack of understanding of the reality of life for folks who live in Toronto, who live in my riding of Davenport, who struggle day in and day out to afford their apartments, their homes. Families cannot find suitable and affordable housing. Seniors are barely hanging on in their homes, and young people are facing an incredibly unstable future without access to full-time, stable jobs.

The government decided to change the name of the museum at a cost of \$500,000. It added about \$400,000 more for its bogus consultation, which happened after the fact. That is why I call it bogus. It had already made its decision. It already knew exactly what it was doing. The plan was in the minister's motorcycle satchel.

This is how things are supposed to work in the House of Commons when it is not dominated by the anti-democratic reflexes of the government. We consult Canadians. We craft legislation based on the consultation. We table legislation in the House, debate it and finally, if the legislation passes, earmark the money and spend it on the program.

The government says it is going to spend \$25 million to narrow the mandate and change the name of the Museum of Civilization. It says that the money is just lying around. Where was it all this time? It spent almost \$1 million on a party and a consultation process, but the consultation came after the decision had already been made. This is an insult to Canadians. However, this is what we have come to expect from Conservatives.

In Davenport, for example, and this is on the point of consultation and transparency, people are only too familiar with this lack of consultation. For 50 years after a nuclear fuel processing facility had been operating in the riding, no one who lives near it knew what was going on there. The company's operating licence, however, clearly stated that it must keep the residents informed. It did not, and the government is okay with that.

That is why Conservatives have refused my request, on behalf of the community, to reopen the licence to give residents their lawful opportunity to participate in the process of public information.

Cultural communities and citizens of varied backgrounds came to us at the heritage committee. They talked about their stories and their concern about a dominant culture in which there is no space for them to talk about their issues and their history.

With its one-sided and triumphalist approach, the museum of history could run the risk of presenting a monolithic vision of Canadian history, unrepresentative of its diversity. This is particularly of concern to me. More than half of all residents of Toronto were not born in Canada. Their stories, their struggles, their triumphs, their hopes and their fears are the lifeblood that courses through the veins of Toronto. Immigrants' stories are heroic stories.

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Recently I had the honour of being present at a ceremony marking 60 years of Portuguese immigration to Canada. The history of the Portuguese in Canada, particularly, in Toronto, is incredible. It is built on hard work, fidelity to family, love of home country, and a deep faith and commitment to Canada. It is a story of the collective achievements of a community, many members of which came to Canada with very little and contributed so much.

Will this story be told in Canada's museum of history? Will the great stories of Canada's multinational, multi-ethnic immigrant community have a place there? Will it be up to the whim of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages and his buddies on the board?

There are many stories and many parts of our history that many Canadians have little trust the government would be interested in presenting at this history museum.

• (2130)

The fact that we are even discussing whether the Conservatives would be interested in them underlines the real problem of independence. We know already that the Conservatives have tried time and again to interfere with the independence of cultural agencies.

We have great stories. We have troubling stories too. We have stories of the history of feminism in Canada, for example. We have the tragic story of the *Komagata Maru*. We have the On to Ottawa Trek. We have the story of Norman Bethune, for example; the Riel rebellion; the story of co-operatives in Canada, which is a phenomenal story; and of course, the story of the first peoples of Canada.

There is concern, not just here on this side of the House but across the country, that the government has a very narrow vision of what is Canadian history and that the Conservatives want to prescribe in this new museum a vision of Canadian history that is not the full picture. That is the concern. There is very little the Conservatives have said during this debate to allay the fears of many.

Some people may think that some of these concerns about telling the stories of new Canadians and immigrants are misplaced. However, when we look at the Conservative record on immigration, for example, we have a lot to be concerned about. While the New Democrats want to reunite more families in Canada, the Conservatives' radical overhaul of Canada's immigration system is turning this country into a less welcoming place, making it even harder for families to reunite in Canada with overseas spouses, children, parents and grandparents.

Here is what the Conservatives are asking families to face: waits as long as nine years to reunite with loved ones; a misguided two-year freeze on reunification applications for parents and grandparents; and arbitrary rejection of visitors visas, with no chance for appeal, preventing many family members from attending weddings and even funerals. Meanwhile, instead of welcoming skilled immigrants to address Canada's long-term economic needs, the Conservatives are prioritizing temporary work visas to help big business pay lower wages.

This is no way to build our country or our communities. If we want to grow a 21st century economy, we will need to attract the best

and the brightest from around the world. Making family reunification a central priority in our immigration system is one of the ways to go.

This is part of the context in which we are debating this bill. If we do not have a sense that the Conservative government will play a hands-off role in cultural agencies, and if we do not have a sense that it understands the importance of families and family reunification in our immigration system, how can we trust them to allow the full story of who we are as a country to come out in this new formulation of the Museum of Civilization?

The bill would closely follow the Conservative attempt to interfere with history as taught in classrooms, clearly interfering in provincial jurisdiction. We have heard these comments tonight about the apparent lack of attention to history in Canadian schools. Sometimes some of these members should perhaps consider running provincially, because that is a provincial jurisdiction.

This spring, Conservatives on the heritage committee attempted to study history in provincial classroom curricula, focusing on battles in military history.

We understand the need for a balanced rendering of history devoid of any political interference. Too often, though, we have seen the current government reach into cultural institutions and attempt to compromise their independence. In fact, the Conservative cabinet, if Bill C-60 passes, will attempt to dictate rates of pay for non-unionized workers and terms for collective agreements at many cultural agencies, including the CBC and the Museum of Civilization, or as it will soon be called, the museum of Canadian history.

For the Conservatives, it is always a race to the bottom, though, on the environment, on ethics, on transparency in government and, most importantly, on wages.

• (2135)

The government is ideologically committed to pushing wages down, breaking unions and privatizing key cultural institutions. This ideology fails the people of Canada and Toronto and urban workers in cities across the country. Almost 50% of all workers in Toronto cannot find full-time, stable employment. They work part time, freelance, on contract or are self-employed. They have no access to benefits, workplace pensions or job security.

Our cultural institutions are not only the repository, the incubator and the teller of our shared stories. They contribute enormously to our local and national economy, providing employment to hundreds of thousands of Canadians. In fact, the arts and culture sector contributes between \$60 billion and \$80 billion of GDP to the Canadian economy. However, when key employers, such as the CBC and the NFB, are cut to the bone, life gets much harder for workers in the cultural sector.

We need to frame this debate in the context of other cuts that have happened to cultural agencies. When the government talks about its interest in sharing Canadian history, a community of librarians and archivists right across the country scratch their heads.

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Since coming to power, the Conservatives have incessantly targeted Library and Archives Canada, a federal institution and the keeper of our collective memory. They have imposed modifications and irreversible consequences on our knowledge and perception of Canadian history, firing half of Library and Archives Canada digitization staff, cutting staff in charge of document preservation and conservation and eliminating the interlibrary loan program, which provides access for all Canadians to their national library collections.

These are the kinds of cuts that underline the fact that the Conservative government has done the most to prevent access to Canadian history since the \$450-million cut to the CBC by the Liberal Party in the nineties.

We need to focus on maintaining the independence of these agencies. We need to stop wasting taxpayers' money. We need to introduce much more transparency so that Canadians understand where the money is coming from and how it is spent and that their history is not going to be dictated by ministers of the Conservative government.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in defence of the Minister of Canadian Heritage in asking where the taxpayer dollars are coming from, I will quote him from yesterday. He said, "How many more NDP MPs are not paying their taxes?" and he said "...the NDP will come clean on how many MPs are avoiding paying their taxes".

The minister has been very transparent about how important this is, and he asked people yesterday to pay their taxes. That is how he is going to get it. It might be incremental, but he will be getting money for the museum.

• (2140)

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member asked a question or answered one that no one was asking. The member's supposed question did not actually get to the point. The point is this: Where did this money come from? Where is the \$3.1 billion? How can a government spend \$50 million on gazeboes just to get a minister re-elected? That is what Canadians want to know.

Canadians want to know how the chief of staff to the Prime Minister can cut a personal cheque for \$90,000 to a senator who is under a cloud of suspicion for inappropriate expenses to the taxpayer. That is the kind of issue that underlines the lack of trust Canadians have when the government starts reaching into cultural institutions and mucking about, which is what it is doing here.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I understand the member for Davenport's cynicism about the museum of history. However, I am prepared to vote for this.

I would agree with the member about the record of the Conservative administration. One of the first moves it made in relation to museums was to cut the free truck service that delivered exhibits in climate controlled vehicles, taking exhibits from one part of the country to the other without cost to museums. We have reason for skepticism.

We all know that in history, history is written by the victors. As Winston Churchill once said, "History will be kind to me, for I

intend to write it". It is not the first time people have been worried about politicians writing history that is favourable to them.

I would like the hon. member to explain to me why he is concerned that there will be political interference when the legislation, as I read it, provides independence for the curators of the museum from political interference.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, the reason that I am skeptical is because it does not matter what is written in the legislation; the government is going to do whatever the heck it wants to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciated the allusion my colleague made in his speech to the fact that we can actually be surprised that this government claims to like history so much, when the Conservatives have recently dismissed close to 84% of archaeologists.

I would like to tell my colleague that on the Museum of Civilization's website, there is a description that says a lot about the museum's current mandate. It gives us the feeling that our country's history is already very well represented in the Canada Hall.

Does he not think that all this debate and all this discussion is pointless, because if they had simply agreed to roll out the red carpet for the current exhibition in the museum's Canada Hall from the beginning, we would all have agreed with this wonderful initiative?

The problem is that they want to completely redo the historical narrative that is already housed in the museum right now. He should go and see it.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the question and also for his fantastic work as vice-chair of the heritage committee.

It is important to underline that this museum is already a jewel in the crown of Canadian culture. As usual, the Conservatives are looking to fix a problem that does not exist. However, in this particular case, the problem is their problem. The problem is that they want to redefine the way we relate to our cultural institutions and redefine that relationship so that it flows their way, to them.

This is a government that is intent on muzzling scientists and librarians, for goodness' sake. It is, in fact, a government intent on muzzling Canadian voters as per scandal upon scandal in the last election.

• (2145)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the 150th anniversary of Canada, what a unique opportunity this is to showcase our great country and our great history.

I know from being a teacher for 23 years that, in many of our schools across the country, our history has not been taught. There have been so many other subjects that were very important. Some of the students cannot even name the prime ministers of Canada. This is an opportunity for small museums and people in different places to be able to get to see exhibits that they never had the opportunity to see before.

Government Orders

I cannot understand why, in the House, we hear all this rhetoric going back and forth off-topic about this wonderful museum. Can the member explain to me why he cannot support Canadians learning more about their history and enjoying this opportunity, approaching the 150th anniversary, to showcase Canada as the great country it is?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, great countries usually have great democratic traditions, to which they hold tight and which they fight to protect. That is what a great country does.

What we see here with this piece of legislation is that the democratic process was turned upside down. In fact, this was a decision made arbitrarily by the Minister of Canadian Heritage. That should concern the member and it should concern the member's constituents. If we do not stand up in the House, fighting for the democratic ideas and ideals that Canadians hold dear, then we have got a serious problem.

The Conservative government has a serious problem. It is not committed to democracy the way that Canadians believe our Parliament should be committed to it.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask a question because I am little concerned with the word my hon. colleague from the government side just used, "showcase".

I do understand it is important to show the world, the people in the country, and our young people the great things about our country and our history. However, one of the valuable things about history is the ability to learn from our mistakes and to admit our mistakes. If we simply use the word "showcase", we may be potentially not reaping the maximum benefit of remembering our history.

I was wondering what my hon. colleague thinks about that.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question and his contribution to this debate and so many debates in this House where he comports himself with a great amount of decorum.

The issue here is that Canadian history is vast and deep. Some of it is controversial. Some of it means important things to some groups of Canadians and different things to others. The last thing we need here is to have politicians reaching into our cultural institutions. The last thing we need is to have these things become politicized and attached to the politics of the day.

I also want to just underline that there is nothing in this bill that suggests that this great sharing of Canadian history, which I would argue the government is not committed to, is actually going to happen.

They are all going to have to back to their ridings and explain the government's complete and utter failure to deliver on this, because it is going to cost a lot more than \$25 million to share this history, especially given the fact that so many archives and museums across the country are short-staffed and do not have the capacity.

● (2150)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

It is my pleasure to speak today to Bill C-49, the Canadian Museum of History Act. Our government recognizes the vital role that museums play in our cultural landscape. We have supported them consistently even during the period of economic uncertainty the world has just been through. During that difficult period, some governments chose to make severe cuts in their support for culture, but we chose another path. Our government is one of the few in the world to have refused to withdraw its support for arts and culture during the global recession. Instead, we chose to maintain our support and even increase it, in some cases.

Since 2006, our government has invested an additional \$142 million in our national museums. Additionally, the House should know that, since 2006, our government has made key investments in the museum sector. That includes the creation of two new national museums, the Canadian Human Rights Museum, which is very important for the people in my riding and for all Canadians, and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, as well as increased funding for summer work placements for students in small and medium-sized museums.

We are fortunate to have more than 2,500 museums of all sizes across the country that enable Canadians to discover our history. Our government is committed to ensuring that the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments continue to work together to enhance Canadians' appreciation for their history and heritage.

The transformation of the Canadian Museum of Civilization into the Canadian Museum of History will make it possible to encourage such linkages, reinforce existing partnerships and create new ones within the network of Canadian museums, in order to share our heritage.

Marie Lalonde, executive director of the Ontario Museum Association, said that co-operation with this new museum will make it possible for local museums to offer special exhibitions and initiatives to their visitors that they would not have been able to offer before.

Creation of the Canadian Museum of History and support for Canadian museums are the government's priorities. Surveys have shown that 91% of Canadians think that museums provide a precious learning experience and teach us about our shared heritage. Canadians are convinced that Canada's governments should help protect and preserve Canada's heritage. More than 83% of Canadians feel that museums are the most reliable source of historical information.

● (2155)

With regard to the national economy, members should be aware that Canadian museums welcome close to 30 million visitors a year. The 13 million Canadians who visit museums across the country every year make a significant contribution of \$78 billion to Canada's tourism industry.

Canadians believe that museums provide an opportunity to learn, and they are interested in Canada's social and cultural history.

Government Orders

We are well aware that various museums across the country focus on specific aspects of Canadian history and that they are in the best position to do just that. However, at the national level, Canada does not have a museum that provides a detailed account of our history. For these reasons, the government is introducing a bill to change the name and mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in order to establish the Canadian museum of history, a hallmark of Canadian history.

The Canadian museum of history seeks to improve the knowledge, understanding and appreciation that Canadians have for events, experiences, people and things that have shaped and that reflect the history and identity of Canada, as well as Canadians' knowledge of world history and culture.

The government will invest \$25 million in existing funding to allow the Canadian Museum of Civilization to renovate nearly half of its permanent exhibition space by 2017. The new museum will also hold fundraising activities to solicit the support of the private sector.

Through existing resources and new partnerships with other Canadian museums, the new museum will also launch a series of large, travelling, temporary exhibits that focus on Canada's history.

The new Canadian museum of history opened a dialogue with Canadians on the country's history and the transformation process through a dedicated website and consultations in nine Canadian cities. Over 20,000 Canadians participated.

Clearly, the Canadian museum of history will be an excellent resource for promoting Canada's history and heritage. We are pleased that the House supports the amendments to the Museums Act so that we can offer another opportunity to celebrate Canada's heritage.

For us, the key element is this: while other countries have made cuts to culture, our government has protected funding for all of our museums; however, the opposition voted against those measures. That is a shame.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the hon. member on the quality of her French. It is always nice to see that language courses and the bilingual skills of our political staff are improving.

That was a very nice and pretty speech, but my problem is that it regrettably reflects too much of an agenda. It is part of a strategy to determine what the history of Canada should be.

The government does not want to give Canadians a picture of Canada's history, it wants to impose its own history. It wants to destroy the Canadian Postal Museum although the post office is a historic institution that was instrumental in building our country.

How can the hon. member reconcile the two?

• (2200)

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. However, I must correct his mistaken impression. What I said was that the House of Commons needs the truth.

For example, while many other countries made draconian cuts to their investments in culture, we made additional investments.

Canada's history is very important to Canadians, including the members of the House, our constituents and all future generations.

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind. The Conservatives' plan to rename and rebrand the Canadian Museum of Civilization is a clear indication of their desire to direct, hijack and control a message.

I agree that it is important to talk about history. However, recent history shows us that the Conservatives do not do anything without a partisan agenda. The Conservatives' celebration of the events in relation to the war of 1812-13 was riddled with anachronisms.

I can understand wanting to promote history. However, why do so by rebranding the Canadian Museum of Civilization and changing its important mandate? This museum is known across Canada and around the world. People came to Canada to visit this important museum. As a result of the new direction the government is taking with the museum, many things will be lost and the government will control the message.

I would like the hon. member to assure me that the new museum's message will not be controlled and that the museum will not become a Canadian museum of Conservative propaganda.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member. Let me clarify the difference between my colleague and our government. We are proud of Canada. We are proud of every aspect of our history, including our country's founders and our two official languages.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak tonight on the bill about the museum of Canadian history. As a person who has been a professional educator for 18 years, I have taught every grade in the classroom, from fourth grade to graduate studies at the university level. I have served as a vice-principal and a principal of public schools as well. It is great to be here to support the bill.

It is a bill that supports the teaching and education of history to many thousands of Canadians, from one end of this country to another. When we think about the way history is being taught in Canada right now, some improvements are needed. I think it is disgraceful that we have only 3 out of 10 provinces which have the teaching of history as a required course for graduation. That means 7 out of 10 provinces from coast to coast to coast have history courses that are taught basically as an elective. I do not understand how we are going to reach the potential that is Canada, the potential that our nation can achieve, if we do not teach the next generation where we are from and who we are.

This needs to change. We all know that teaching and curriculum development is a provincial jurisdiction and mandate, but what can the federal government do to support the education of our young people and the teaching of history in Canada? I think the bill is one step forward to make sure the citizens of Canada, the next generation of Canadians, have a greater opportunity to take a look at Canada and understand who we are and where we come from. If they have a better understanding of that, they will increasingly have a better understanding of who we can be and who we will be and how we are going to reach the great potential that is Canada.

Government Orders

The bill is about who we are and who we can be. Whether our ancestors came to Canada across a land bridge from Asia, or they first set foot in North America to exploit our great cod stocks on the Grand Banks, or they established settlements in Annapolis Royal and survived scurvy and, of course, the harsh winters, or whether they built Acadian dikes and established agriculture on the east coast of our country, or they escaped religious intolerance in Europe for more freedom for their beliefs in this country, or they escaped slavery in the United States and escaped to Canada through the Underground Railroad led by great Canadians like Harriet Tubman, or they avoided the potato famine in Ireland and immigrated to Canada, or whether our ancestors, like some of my ancestors and the ancestors of the Minister of National Defence, sailed to Canada on the *Hector* with the Camerons, the MacNeils, the MacDonalds and the MacKays, or they immigrated to Canada from China to help develop the railway which united this country from coast to coast, or they fled Nazism and the Holocaust in Europe in the thirties and forties, or the totalitarianism and the Communism in the Cold War in Eastern Europe, or whether they simply sailed up to our shores as refugees from Vietnam, this museum will stand for all of them. I support this museum and I support this legislation.

This is our story. It is a Canadian story. Canada is the world's home. We have accepted Canadians from across this globe who are coming here to seek their fortune, prosperity, and to avoid persecution. They are coming for freedom, to be able to respect the religion and beliefs they want to respect. Canada respects all of these people who immigrated here. We are going to have a museum which reflects that respect, those beliefs, and the history that is Canada. As the second largest nation on the planet, with a relatively small population and vast natural resources, our future is bright.

Canada is a beacon of prosperity, and when we look across the world at the economic struggles that many of our neighbours are facing, we truly are a beacon of hope. We truly are a light at the end of the tunnel. Canada is experiencing a better recovery from the greatest depression since the Great Depression of the thirties than any other nation in the G8. Thanks to the leadership of our Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, we are emerging from that recession in a stronger position than anyone else, positioning our country for greatness for generations to come. This ability to help people coming to Canada, to help people who have lived in Canada for generations, understand where our nation was founded, how we have grown and where we can go is what this museum is all about. That is why I support this museum.

● (2205)

People from across the country have to come to our national museums, whether it be Pier 21 in Halifax or whether it be in Ottawa, and see what is contained in their national museums. This museum will work by partnering with museums all across the country, from Terrace, British Columbia to Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia to Weyburn, Saskatchewan. Small museums will be able to have artifacts in storage from these large museums.

I understand 80% of the artifacts of some museums at any given time are kept in the attic or kept in the basement. We will free those artifacts from the attic. We will free them from the basement. We will move them across the country, so literally thousands and thousands of Canadians, who have never had the opportunity to see these

artifacts, to see what the history of this nation truly is, those who would not have the finances to travel from one end of this nation to the other, will be able to experience this in their home town, in their home communities and their home museums will be able to exploit this to help build the resources they need to celebrate their individual culture and history as well.

It is a win-win situation for our small museums and for all Canadians across the country. That is why we are putting forward this legislation. That is why this plan will best serve Canadians from coast to coast to coast, whether they are rich or poor, they can see the true Canadian cultural experience right in their home town museums.

That is why we support this legislation. That is why Canada, small museums and small communities will prosper from this legislation.

What might be contained in some of these communities? What might be able to travel? Artifacts from Marconi's radio, Bell's telephone. We might have something from the Canadarm.

We could celebrate great Canadians like Harriet Tugman, as I mentioned before, and the underground railroad, like Adam Beach and Tecumseh, artifacts from the War of 1812, artifacts from the Battle of Vimy Ridge and the great military history we have in Canada. All these things can now in showcases across the country from coast to coast to coast so all Canadians can enjoy them.

Canada is a special place, a place that we can all be proud of and a place that we should continuously celebrate. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, if we do not know who we are, if we do not know where we are from, if we do not know how we came to be, how can we achieve the greatness that Canada can be? How can we achieve that potential that every member of Parliament is here to ensure we all achieve together?

I am very proud to support this legislation. I am very proud that we are putting this forward. I encourage all members from all parties across the House to get behind our national history museum.

Any of us who have travelled to the United States or travelled to the German Museum of History, have seen what kinds of artifacts would be contained in these great national museums. This will be our Smithsonian. This will be our national museum, a Canadian national museum, celebrating great Canadians like Terry Fox, like all the prime ministers who have come before the current Prime Minister, celebrating great Canadians like Banting and Best and all the people who have put forward the scientific achievement that is Canada.

I strongly support this legislation. I credit the minister for putting this forward. This will be a true, national treasure for all Canadians to enjoy from coast to coast to coast.

● (2210)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for an entertaining address on Canadian history. I found it to be his version of Canadian history to be entrusting us. I suppose each one of us in this room would have our version of Canadian history, what we think is important and how it should be displayed.

Government Orders

He talked about small museums. I sat on the board of a small museum called the Northern Lights Museum in Fort Smith. It actually had a great collection, collected by the Oblate priests from all over the north, 10,000 items. It is all in the national registry now.

At the time, we got great displays from national museums in our museum. We actually had a museum assistance program. In the 1980s, we used to get \$25,000 for our museum from the provincial government. That museum assistance program never got any bigger in size and eventually it was cut by the Conservatives.

Small museums across the country need some financial support. What will this do for my small museum in my community?

• (2215)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, in fact, that is the centrepiece of this. Not only are we going to build a great museum in Ottawa that people can travel to, both domestically and internationally to visit, there will be the ability for great treasures that are contained in that museum to move across the country so all Canadian can enjoy them.

I am very proud that we are one of the few nations in the G8 that, during this time of economic difficulty across the globe, has increased the funding for arts and culture. When all the other countries are cutting that money, we are increasing it. This is another step we are taking to support our small museums, in our rural communities in particular, giving them opportunities that they have not had before.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from listening to the speeches from the government side, there seems to be a heavy emphasis on the civic and political side of history, history that really has a direct civic and political relevance. However, there are other important aspects to Canadian history which are important to emphasize. I am a little worried that this new renaming of the museum and the emphasis put on this Canadian museum of history is going to miss some of this.

This goes back to my colleague, the member for Western Arctic, who mentioned a small museum and asked whether it would receive funding. There is a very important museum in my riding, the Canadian Museum of Health Care, which is the only museum of its type in the country. It is short of funds. It needs to find funding to preserve the history of health care in Canada. It has an enormous collection.

Will this emphasis on the civic and political side of history miss an important part of history? In this case it is health care, but it could also be science and technology. Could my colleague address this question?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, we have all kinds of museums across the country. We have the museums of science and technology across the country. Our government has done an amazing job of funding new museums, particularly our national museums. I think of Pier 21 in Halifax close to my riding, which celebrates immigration. I talked about it in my speech.

We have increased the funding for museums across the country. This program will allow artifacts from the national museum to travel across the country.

However, I do not think we have to take any lessons on history from the Liberal Party when it has a leader who said that all the best prime ministers came from Quebec. He said Mulroney, Trudeau and Chrétien, as if there were never a prime minister ever elected before 1968. That is the Liberal Party's legacy.

The Speaker: I think we have time for one more quick question and comment and given the effort the member for Crowfoot put in to getting back to his seat in time, I will give him the floor for the last round.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this hour any movement is an effort.

I listened to the member's speech. Obviously, he has been an educator, not only in Nova Scotia, but my understanding is, although I do not know him really well, he was out west as well and he has taught across the country.

I wonder if he would just expand a little. One of the things I have tried to understand from what they are trying to do is how students from schools might now be able to take a field trip to a local museum that up until now, especially in the west, has had very limited artifacts. It would have artifacts about the west, but now some key Canadian national types of artifacts could actually show up in rural Alberta and rural Saskatchewan. How will this help teachers?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley has only about 20 seconds left.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, in many small rural communities in particular, and I have taught in several of those, they might have a local museum that really celebrates their community's history, the history of that small area of our country. The elementary children would go there, maybe in first or second grade. Then probably in third or fourth grade another teacher would take them down to the same museum and see the same artifacts. Then they might go there again with a different teacher in the eighth or ninth grade. This would give them the ability to maybe see something like Terry Fox's van, which will travel the country from our national museum. It would provide new artifacts—

The Speaker: Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskinging.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskinging, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was a long 20 seconds.

I am happy to join in the debate this evening on Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

In plain language, it is a bill to change the name and mandate of Canada's most popular and successful museum for reasons that make the Conservatives happy, but has others wondering if we will sacrifice a world renowned museum in order to celebrate some sterilized 1950s version of Canada in its place.

In addition to that, we know that while the government is changing the name of the museum, it is financially starving and constraining those individuals who do the work the museum is built upon. If it sounds ironic, it is because it is.

Government Orders

At the heart of this debate is a basic contradiction. The government claims it is interested in the country's history and wants to celebrate it and make the public more aware of it. However, the same government has undermined research into our history more than any other government.

With respect to the bill, the government is not listening to the historians, archeologists, archivists, anthropologists and ethnologists, the experts on our history who make it their life's work. Sadly, this is consistent behaviour for a government that seems to value its opinion more than fact and goes out of its way to starve and silence those who prefer the benefit of strong empirical evidence.

We see that across all manner of legislation and this is merely another in a long stream. When it comes to silencing, dismissing and starving critics, we could be talking about environmental research, the census or even the work of the NRC.

It is part of a larger pattern of behaviour to reshape Canada in dangerous and limiting ways. Certainly we have heard from professionals, researchers and experts that budget cuts combined with the federal government's consistent meddling in their affairs in research will have lingering negative effects on their work and the research that ultimately helps us understand our history better.

It would seem the Conservatives want to have their version of Canada become the official history of our country, which would certainly amount to official revisionism. Revisionism is a dangerous thing that can happen when a government does not like the portrayal of its country and sets about meddling in history to suit its sensibilities.

Not understanding our history or whitewashing it to reflect governing party values is revolutionary in exactly the wrong way, and we have certainly heard a lot about whitewashing this past month.

It reeks of anti-intellectualism and reminds me more of the actions of tin pot dictators than it does of modern western democracy. Last week my colleague, the member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, gave a strong speech showing how the government was playing fast and loose with Parks Canada, which maintains many historic sites, including some that are certified "historic" by UNESCO, which is the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture.

He explained how the government had laid off more than 80% of the archeologists and curators, those who take care of historic sites and preserve our precious artifacts. Now there are only about 10 archaeologists working for Parks Canada across the country, for all of our national parks, national historic sites and world heritage sites.

The member also gave a frank and clear warning that world heritage site status was not a given and UNESCO could revoke that status at any time.

I would hope the government had been listening to the member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, but will keep my expectation in check at the same time.

Tonight, the government has the gall to tell us that it wants to promote history when the facts are, through indiscriminate budget cuts, it is actually walking away from fragile historic sites across the country. For example, it is planning to remove carefully preserved

artifacts from Parks Canada's regional facilities in Quebec City, only to put them in storage in Ottawa. It is unbelievable. That makes our history less accessible and can never be considered promoting it.

● (2220)

Sadly, this is in keeping with the actions of a government that continually says one thing but does another.

The Conservatives say they are interested in history, but at the same time they have set about weakening and destroying every single federal public institution responsible for protecting our history. They have cut deep into Parks Canada, which is responsible for protecting our 167 national historic sites as well as Canada's world heritage. They hobbled Library and Archives Canada as well. In fact, the guardian of Canada's archives for 140 years, both as the National Archives and as the National Library, whose experts, archivists, professional librarians and others are recognized and admired around the world for their work, did not escape indiscriminate cuts. Now those wonderful exhibition halls are closed and those people find themselves out of work. For a government that says it promotes jobs and the economy, that is not the way to go.

We have to be clear and understand that this is a government that cut millions of dollars from research and the preservation of Canadian history. This is a government that laid off hundreds of archivists, librarians, digitization experts, historians and professionals at Library and Archives Canada. This is a government that destroyed programs like the national archival development program, which supported small communities all over Canada to create their own local community archives, allowing Library and Archives Canada to accomplish an essential part of its mandate. This is a government that almost put a complete stop to the acquisition of historic documents and artifacts by cutting the Library and Archives Canada \$1 million budget to \$12,000 a year. Yes, members heard it right. The Conservative government cut the budget of Library and Archives Canada from \$1 million to just \$12,000. Unbelievable.

This is a government that has allowed irreplaceable manuscripts and relics of our history to slip through our fingers and be purchased by auction houses and speculators, and then be exported to shady warehouses in the United States.

When the Conservatives claim they want to promote history, we can be excused if we meet that claim with a good degree of cynicism. When they want to change the name and mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, they should be reminded that it has existed in one form or another for almost 150 years. In fact, some of the collection existed before Confederation.

Government Orders

The museum's mandate is "...to increase, throughout Canada and internationally, interest in, knowledge and critical understanding of and appreciation and respect for human cultural achievements and human behaviour by establishing, maintaining and developing for research and posterity a collection of objects of historical or cultural interest, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, and by demonstrating those achievements and behaviour, the knowledge derived from them and the understanding they represent."

Now this has to change and the focus would be on Canadian history.

One should not mess with success in that way. The Louvre has not been rebranded to promote more art from France. The British Museum has been going strong for hundreds of years. These are just examples. My point is that a museum requires continuity to gain credibility and become well known. That is what has happened to the Museum of Civilization, and the government is not willing to admit that a rebrand would amount to a new start and building a new reputation from the ground up. This is because of a notion that we do not celebrate our history enough.

Canada Hall will be gutted to make way for this. The fact is, arguably, the hall contains the most impressive display of Canadian history in the world. We will also be walking away from a commitment to maintain a collection of objects for research and posterity, which is absolutely shocking.

Many of these proposed changes indicate an interest in adopting a simpler story of Canadian history. However, critics worry that there is a risk of excluding different experiences from Canada's past that may not fit into an unchallenging narrative. That is not the Canada most people see or want to see. A country's greatness comes in some ways from the acknowledgement of its warts. The colonization of first nations or the regrettable treatment of ethnic minorities are not items that should be forgotten or marginalized.

We are supposed to learn from our history, but there is no guarantee that is what we will do. In fact, most of the renovations are shrouded in secrecy and we are being asked to give this our stamp of approval, which is something New Democrats are not prepared to do.

• (2225)

In closing, let us not change what works. Let us acknowledge the Museum of Civilization as a great achievement that celebrates Canadian history as it is and be proud of our achievement and contribution to the great museums of the world.

• (2230)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there go the NDP members again, insulting Canadians from beginning to end. Millions of Canadians across this country voted for this government and gave us a majority. Imagine equating a government that was democratically elected by the people of this country to a tinpot dictatorship.

That should not surprise us, because the New Democrats question the value of the Canadian efforts in World War I and World War II. The NDP defend those disgusting comments made by their members as though those achievements meant nothing. The last time we debated this, one of its members suggested that anybody who voted

for the Liberals must have had an intellectual lobotomy, suggesting that the people who vote for any party other than the NDP are too stupid to get it.

Here is the reality. Canadians are smart people. That is why the New Democrats have lost 16 straight elections in a row. No wonder they are so bitter. If I lost 16 straight elections in a row I would be bitter too.

The mandate of this museum—

The Speaker: Order. I will just stop the hon. parliamentary secretary there. I heard him say something and I hope he was not attributing personal characteristics to other members. I did not quite catch it, but I trust that he was not trying to inflame emotions in the House at this late hour.

He has had the floor now for a little over a minute. I would ask him to be a bit judicious in his words and we will go back to the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, thank you for cutting him off. It is obvious that he is the one who is angry and that the "s" word he used is on his side.

The government should not be deciding what should be on display in our museums. That should be left to the experts, professionals, historians, archivists, ethnologists and curators, the people who do the research and the hard work to help us understand our history—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Although you have cut him off, he keeps going. It is unbelievable how rude those Conservatives are.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Wow, that hurt. That hurt.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Why change a winning formula if not to impose an ideological vision?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that it was the Minister of Canadian Heritage's idea to change the museum's name and redefine its mandate. He said so himself.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers had this to say:

We call on the federal Department of Canadian Heritage to stop its process of redesigning that museum until a panel of distinguished figures in historical and museum work is created and has an opportunity to prepare recommendations...

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion. Brilliant though he may be, is the minister a history or museum expert? I doubt it.

It is a typical Conservative move to make an announcement and then launch consultations to see how refining the proposal can score them some political points. It is completely unacceptable that experts in the field were not consulted.

Does my colleague agree?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, my colleague certainly knows what she is talking about.

Government Orders

It is clearly not up to the government to make decisions on museum content. That is why professionals are in charge of research. They are the ones who make sure that artifacts dating back to another era have their place in the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

This government is sticking its nose where it does not belong. This task really should be left to the professionals. However, the government is eliminating their jobs, and once they are gone, they are hard to get back because not everyone has these skills. It is important to ensure that our museums are well served.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Vancouver Quadra there has been a lot of concern from people at UBC about the muzzling of scientists. We have two important museums in Vancouver Quadra dealing with science. One is the Museum of Anthropology. The other is the Beaty Biodiversity Museum.

I would like to ask the member this. In her view, might the Conservative government's approach of clamping down on the ability of scientists to communicate extend to the curation of the exhibits in the museums in Vancouver Quadra?

• (2235)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, just like with any other museum, the government members or any other legislators have no place in determining the content or orientation of a national, publicly funded museum.

The municipal governments do not decide what is in the small museums in our communities. It is quite important for the curators to know what they are actually bringing in. They are able to do the research, whether it is the museum in Sheguiandah, Massey, Vancouver, Assinack or the Old Mill Museum in Kagawong. Rick Nelson in Kagawong is a great curator. He puts on really nice displays.

Again, we have a great museum that is in danger of becoming much less, based on some vague notion of an inner circle and not the opinion and knowledge of antiquity experts—

The Speaker: The hon. member is out of time, so we will have to move on and resume debate with the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has over 2,500 museums, made up of small local museums and medium and large-sized institutions. While many countries have opted in these challenging economic times to cut funding to heritage institutions and national museums, this government has stood by its museums and arts community, maintaining and even increasing its support to heritage organizations. The creation of the new Canadian museum of history is proof of that. Our government believes in our national museums and we recognize the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians. As we approach Canada's 150th birthday, it is an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians.

Alongside the Canadian museum of history, there are other great initiatives that our government has undertaken to support culture and heritage in Canada. I would like to take this opportunity to bring one

of these initiatives to everyone's attention, the Canada travelling exhibitions indemnification program, which was strengthened last year through Canada's economic action plan.

The Canada travelling exhibitions indemnification program is a program through which our government assumes the financial risk associated with a presentation of significant travelling exhibitions showcasing Canada's and the world's treasures, so that these objects are accessible to all Canadians. This program guarantees that if damage or loss occurs to a loaned object, the government will compensate the lender. This government's guarantee helps museums and art galleries reduce their insurance costs when hosting major exhibitions, such as “Van Gogh: Up Close”, which was held at the National Gallery of Canada last year, or the exhibition celebrating 100 years of the Calgary Stampede presented at the Glenbow Museum last summer.

Without an indemnification program, most major international exhibitions in the country would not be seen because the cost of insurance is simply too high for many museums and galleries. We have recognized this challenge. We have also recognized that these blockbuster exhibitions provide significant economic benefits to the communities in which they are held with as much as \$30 million in incremental tourism revenues for the surrounding regions.

The Picasso exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Ontario, which the government supported last year, saw nearly 310,000 visitors walk through its gates, placing it fourth on the gallery's all-time attendance list. The Van Gogh exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada, which saw over 230,000 visitors, was the gallery's most visited show in the last 15 years. These numbers are good for both museums and the economy.

Since the year 2000, objects borrowed from prestigious collections worldwide were in turn seen by over 13 million visitors, in over 180 venues across Canada, from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Victoria, British Columbia. All of this occurred without a single claim, thanks to the program's rigorous risk-assessment process. Thus, every year since 2000, the government has saved host institutions from across the country some \$2 million in annual insurance premiums, at no cost to taxpayers.

As impressive as these numbers are, this government realized that in the changing economy more needed to be done to support our heritage institutions. This is why we have introduced legislation through the 2012 economic action plan to double the financial capacity of the Canada travelling exhibitions indemnification program, from \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion. Our government has also increased the maximum level of support for exhibitions from \$450 million to \$600 million.

Thanks to the 2012 Canada economic action plan, Canadian museums and galleries have gained an important advantage when negotiating for major exhibitions because the cost of insurance premiums is often a decisive factor. Furthermore, this government has ensured that Canadians will continue to have access to significant artifacts and that all communities will continue to enjoy the benefits that come with major exhibitions.

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● (2240)

Again, this is a simple measure undertaken without any increased risk to the government or cost to the taxpayer. On that note—

The Speaker: Order, please. There is a point of order.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, could we talk about the Canadian Museum of Civilization? We are completely off topic. The member is talking about insurance and protection programs for travelling exhibits. There is no correlation.

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member has raised a point of relevance, and I am sure the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville will bring his remarks to the bill as he develops his remarks on museums in general.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, on that note, I am thrilled to report that the positive impacts of the legislative amendments introduced through the Canada economic action plan have already been felt. Indeed, shortly after changes were implemented last June, travelling exhibitions that could not be accommodated under the previous liability limit became eligible for full support. This was the case for the exhibition *Frida & Diego: Passion, Politics and Painting*, presented at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and *Once upon a Time... Impressionism: Great French Paintings from the Clark*, at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Thanks to the action of this government, these institutions saved a total of nearly half a million dollars in insurance costs.

As we turn our attention to the creation of the new Canadian museum of history, our government's commitment to the Canada travelling exhibitions indemnification program seems more timely than ever. Indeed, the program has become a tool, allowing some of the finest museums of this country to benefit from the circulation of significant travelling history exhibitions.

In conclusion, this government recognizes the important role that museums play in our society. We have a strong record of supporting heritage organizations, even in a period of economic uncertainty. The Canada travelling exhibition indemnification program as well as our investment in the creation of the Canadian museum of history is tangible proof of that. The Canadian museum of history will provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world.

As such, I am calling on the opposition parties to support Canadian history, support arts and culture and support this very important bill.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question. In his conclusion, the member talked about Canada's identity. I would like to know how the bill defines "Canada's identity". What definition does the bill give to the notion of Canada's identity, and how will the Canadian museum of history convey that identity?

● (2245)

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, the creation of the Canadian museum of history will allow Canadians to see presentations of this country. It may not be the longest history in the world, because as a country we are relatively young, and many countries in the world have a longer history. However, over the past almost 150 years, we have had a lot to show to Canadians, to teach them about our past, to teach them of our achievements and to make them proud of what we are.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech and I thank him for it.

One of the aspects of the new Canadian museum of history that we are hearing a lot of enthusiasm about is the ability for Canadians from coast to coast to be able to see some of these important artifacts of Canadian history without having to make the expensive trip to the national capital region. I wonder if the hon. member would like to comment on the benefit of the exchange between the Canadian museum of history and local museums in all of our communities.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, we have over 2,500 museums across the country. With the program that would be offered to them, many artifacts could travel across the country and be shown in local museums like the Bradley House museum in Mississauga.

Instead of travelling to Ottawa or somewhere else, people, school children and residents of Mississauga and the GTA, could make a trip to the local museum and see those artifacts on display there. That would be great and it could be done all across the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify something. All night long, we have heard our colleagues across the floor talk about what a great program this will be and how it will be shared with all museums in Canada.

I must emphasize that the issue here is not all these peripheral points, but rather the heart of the bill, which is to change a museum's mission.

I would like to read the description that can be found on the Canadian Museum of Civilization website. It states:

[*English*]

—a panorama of Canadian history unfolds in a space more than 3,000 square metres...in area. Life-size settings of buildings and environments from the history of Canada are reconstructed, furnished with appropriate artifacts...

[*Translation*]

It seems to me that that is a description of Canada's history. What does the government have against that history?

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I do not understand where this negative approach comes from. It should be in the interest of us all to show what great things we have in our country. It is something for Canadians to be proud.

If we talk about our past, about our history and even about the education, and one member said that we were interfering with the provincial jurisdiction, we should know what kids are taught at school. We should be concerned why so little is known about the great Canadian contributions to the First World War and Second World War, because there is very little known. It is absolutely out of the question that this should not be known and should not be presented.

• (2250)

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand in opposition to the bill, the short title of which is the “Canadian museum of history act”. The bill would amend the Museums Act to create the new crown corporation called the “Canadian museum of history”, which would replace the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The bill also sets out the purpose of the new Canadian museum of history.

In other words, the Canadian Museum of Civilization would be refocused and rebranded. That is a scary thought. The thought of any Conservative rebranding initiative is frightening.

When I heard about this legislation, my first thought was that the Conservatives planned to put a big blue C on the side of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, representing the Conservative action plan or, as more and more Canadians like to call it, the Conservative inaction plan. However, that is another speech.

Maybe the Conservatives would put their big C next to a massive bust of Mike Duffy's head, praising him for all the good that he had done for the Senate. Maybe they would even give free admission to the museum if people guessed correctly where Mike Duffy lived. I am sorry, I do not want to give the Conservatives any ideas. Frankly —

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. There are a lot of cross conversations going on. I assure members that they will be able to ask questions and make comments when the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl is finished his speech. Therefore, if members could just hold off until then, I think the rest of the House would appreciate it.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Frankly, Mr. Speaker, the thought of Conservative hands touching anything to do with our history, with our culture, with our heritage is reprehensible. A scary thought indeed.

Conservatives may claim to be interested in history, but that is the same government that has gutted the country's knowledge and research communities. That government fired and muzzled archeologists. That government constantly muzzles scientists, and I know that all too well in terms of fishery scientists within the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Our fish scientists cannot open their mouths unless the government first jams in the words. The same goes with Environment Canada scientists.

We do not have government science in this country so much as Conservative political science, the worst kind, the kind that is tainted by Conservative spin.

The Conservative government has fired and muzzled archivists and librarians. The government has gutted national historic sites,

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Parks Canada and our national archives. The government criticizes us, Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and I have been hearing this all night, for not backing it with a rebranding of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Not likely. Not a chance. It is about trust. Canada's cultural communities have no trust in the Conservative government.

Here is an idea. Let us allow museum professionals define the mandate and content of the museum. Imagine the Conservatives defining Canadian history. How would that look? The current Conservative Prime Minister would probably go down as the greatest Prime Minister in Canadian history, and what a joke that would be.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Members will be able to applaud the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl when he is finished his speech and I am sure they will give him a big round of applause. I would appreciate it if they would do it when he is done.

The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, that is the same way that the Prime Minister defined the former Conservative MP for Labrador as “the greatest MP in Labrador history”, and what a joke that was. The people of Labrador laughed all the way to the election booths where they voted Peter Penashue out of office.

The Conservatives need to stop playing politics with our culture, with our heritage, with our history and with our museum.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is the most popular museum in Canada for a reason. The temporary exhibits on world culture under the current mandate are a driving force of tourism. Let us not change what works.

I have been to museums all over the world. I have been to the Holocaust museum in Israel. I have seen thousands of shoes from a concentration camp under a glass case, an image one never forgets. I have been to the British museum in London, England and seen mummies and Egyptian culture thousands of years old. I have been to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. I have seen the first ever picture of a giant squid. The year was 1873 and the squid was draped over the bathtub of Reverend Moses Harvey of Newfoundland. I have been to The Rooms in St. John's many times. It is the place where it all comes together—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (2255)

The Speaker: Order. I have had to get up three times now and ask members to hold off on their comments until the member is done. I would appreciate it if they would do that. I am going to have to start asking some people to leave if they do not allow the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl to finish.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: I would not want them to leave, though, Mr. Speaker. I want them to hear the end of my speech.

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I have been to The Rooms in St. John's, and I have been there many times. It is a place where it all comes together: our history, our heritage, our artistic expression. The Rooms is the portal to the many stories that our province has to tell. I have also been to the Museum of Civilization. It is one of the first places I took my sons after I was sworn in as a member of Parliament in 2011, and it was wonderful.

Now the Conservatives are going to mess with it. They are going to taint it. Support this bill? Not a chance.

Amendments to the purpose, section 8 of the Museums Act, seek to eliminate all reference to establishing and maintaining a collection of objects for “research and prosperity”. Collections at the museum, as well as its current status as a research institution, are clearly under threat. Amendments will also change the target for the museum's activities from “throughout Canada and internationally” to simply “Canadians”, removing any requirement to share our story with the world.

It is feared that the bill will result in popular exhibits on cultures and civilizations taking on a secondary role. The proposed renovation, which is still shrouded in secrecy, involves gutting Canada Hall, which took 20 years to build at a cost of \$50 million. Canada Hall is arguably one of the most impressive displays of Canadian history in the world, and its very existence remains in limbo. I would not doubt that the government would rename it Conservative Hall, after the greatest of Conservative governments. What government would that be? Why, the current government, of course; at least in the hon. heads of the Conservative MPs who sit opposite.

Canadians know the difference. The sudden and unceremonious closure of the Canadian Postal Museum showed a lack of transparency. Who knows what unwanted surprises lay ahead? Who knows the mind of a Conservative? The mind of a Conservative would certainly make for a fascinating scientific display.

Under the bill, exhibits on cultures and civilizations will take a secondary role. I mentioned that earlier. The museum promoted the understanding of cultures and civilizations, from Haitian voodoo to ancient Egypt. Our exhibits went on the road and built the museum's international reputation. However, the Conservatives are not really concerned with Canada's international reputation, in the same way the Conservative climate change policy is killing Canada's international reputation and Canada's international reputation on any number of fronts.

The face of Canada has changed under the Conservative government, and that is bad enough. Imagine that our history, culture and heritage would change under the government. Let us cut to the chase. We are concerned that the internationally recognized Museum of Civilization will be used to put forward a politicized version of Canadian history. We might see a giant bust of Mike Duffy's head in recognition of his enormous contribution to Senate reform, and a prize for guessing where he lived. We might see a statue of the current Prime Minister with his arms wrapped around Peter Penashue, in loving admiration of all he did for Labrador, the greatest of Labrador MPs with the greatest—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Kenora is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I understand the latitude that is normally afforded, but I fail to see the nexus between Peter Penashue and Mike Duffy in the piece of legislation that the member is currently speaking on. I think that is a reasonable observation.

• (2300)

The Speaker: I thank the member for raising this.

The member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl has 30 seconds left. We have had a number of points on relevance raised this evening. I trust that in his last 26 seconds he will touch on the relevance of the bill.

The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, the task of defining the content of the Museum of Civilization must be left to museum professionals—historians, anthropologists, archivists, librarians—not to politicians. I repeat, not to politicians. The face of Canada has changed under the Conservative government. The face of Canada has changed so that Canadians barely recognize what we have become, at home and on the world stage. The last thing that should ever happen is that the Conservatives be allowed to tamper with our history, to tamper with the definition of who we are and where we come from.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to have an opportunity to ask my colleague a question. I must say that I enjoyed his interpretation of what we might see in the new museum.

I want to come back to what has actually been announced. The government announced that in this new museum there will be an emphasis on dates, events, heroes and narrative timelines. Unfortunately, that departs from any sort of humanistic approach to history: a look at the contributions of women, first nations, immigrants, and the reality that their contributions have brought to this nation.

I would like the member to comment on that, since it seems to me that dates and timelines are a tad sterile for a country as incredibly diverse and humanistic as Canada.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, that is a very real concern.

That is why I pointed out in my speech that the task of defining the content of the Museum of Civilization must be left to museum professionals, historians, anthropologists, archivists and librarians. It should not be left to Conservative politicians. It should never be left to Conservative politicians to write their own history.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about curatorial independence, and that is why section 27.(1) of the Museums Act has not actually been changed. The member would know that if he read the bill.

He talked about travelling exhibits. Section 9.(e) of the bill talks about travelling exhibits.

He talked about research. Section 9.(f) talks about research.

The mandate of the museum is this:

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The purpose of the Canadian Museum of History is to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures.

Is the real reason that the NDP members cannot support this bill that they are having a difficult time, because so many people within their caucus are actually separatists who have no pride or appreciation for this country, and they are having a difficult time passing a bill that wants to promote and respect Canada?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question, although I do not thank the hon. member for his tone throughout this whole debate this evening.

The member talked about whether or not NDP MPs have read the bill. Of course, we have read the bill. I could not have prepared a speech unless I had read the bill.

The member talks about the emphasis still being on exhibits, but one of the many concerns here is that the emphasis is going to be off, for example, international exhibits; that is not going to happen. That is a real concern.

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's speech.

One of the things that struck me was that he talked a lot about the opportunities he has had in life to travel around and to see different museums and look at different exhibits. The member talked about the value and enrichment this brought to his life.

Why does the member not want that same experience for people from his riding, who do not have the same opportunities and the same benefit of travelling the country and travelling the world, to experience some of the things the member has gotten to experience?

Why does the member not put aside his own ultra-partisan ways and stop basing his position on this bill on partisanship, and look to the benefit for his constituents?

• (2305)

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, the concern here is that the Conservative government is going to define our history and our past and will have the say in the exhibits and the museum. It should not be left to Conservative politicians. It should be left to knowledgeable people within the whole museum sphere. That is who it should be left to.

Too often in the past, the government has tried to define who we are as a country and who we are as a people, and it has absolutely failed.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues. It is great to be here late this evening to speak about this wonderful new Canadian museum of history. I am very fortunate to be here, in fact. I am the granddaughter of three World War II veterans, and I am thrilled to be able to speak about our Canadian history. The fact is that my grandparents, along with many of the grandparents of many of my colleagues, helped to create this wonderful country. It is a country we need to talk about and a country we need to educate our children about and that I am very proud of.

Unfortunately, tonight we have seen a bit of a display of Canada-bashing on one side of the House. I would like to take a different tone altogether and talk about the wonderful things, not only about Canada, but about Canadians.

Let us talk about the Canadian museum of history. Our government believes in our national museums, and it recognizes the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians. As we approach Canada's 150th birthday, it is an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians.

Our government looks to young Canadians as our future cultural leaders and museum professionals. Since 1996, the Department of Canadian Heritage, as part of the youth employment strategy, has supported the creation of student summer jobs through the young Canada works program. This program exemplifies our government's commitment to the nearly 2,600 provincial, municipal, regional and rural museums outside the national capital region. It is a program with far-reaching and practical objectives that responds to the needs of the heritage community.

The young Canada works program has multiple key objectives. For youth participants, the program aims to increase their knowledge and appreciation of important local and national accomplishments, provide the opportunity to work with heritage sector specialists, and help them discover career choices in the heritage sector while acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to join the labour force. For communities and regions, the program does two things. First, it promotes the knowledge and appreciation of collections at the local and national levels. Second, it contributes to the sustainable development of organizations and communities.

Until 2007, fewer than 50% of eligible applications could be funded through the program. However, recognizing the greater need, our government announced new funds in budget 2007, which enabled the creation of a special \$4.6 million annual funding envelope targeting small and medium-sized museums. Today, with an annual \$7.6 million budget, the program supports the creation of more than 1,600 summer jobs in as many as 1,000 heritage organizations, including Canadian museums, art galleries, archives, libraries, historic sites and heritage buildings.

Before my opposition colleagues, who I respect tremendously, stand up and accuse me of not being on topic, I would like to remind them of the opportunities the Canadian museum of history would afford our young people who may be getting involved in this very important program. By supporting museums and heritage organizations, the young Canada works program contributes to the ongoing health and future of the heritage sector, helping to build a pool of the young professionals necessary for the museum community's successful long-term human resources planning.

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As members may know, program delivery is achieved by partnering with six key cultural stakeholders, including the Canadian Museums Association, the Canadian Council of Archives, the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations, the Canadian Library Association, the Heritage Canada Foundation and l'Association pour l'avancement des sciences et des techniques de la documentation. The program leverages the professional knowledge and experience of these organizations, ensuring that program funds are allocated to the jobs that best meet the needs of employers and the training requirements of youth.

One program beneficiary, the Quesnel & District Museum and Archives in Quesnel, British Columbia, said:

As a smaller community museum and archives, we welcome the opportunity to hire students to assist with operations during our busiest season and to take on special projects. This program provides valuable work experience to students in a field related to their career aspirations. This year [our student] exceeded the objectives outlined in our original application.... We thank you for the opportunity provide this work experience.

● (2310)

These are the types of opportunities that the museum that we are talking about tonight could afford our young people. Many times we have heard in this place the concern we have for employment opportunities for our youth; this is another aspect for employment for young Canadians.

The need and benefits of the program are equally reflected in the words of youth participants. To quote one participant:

When I applied...with the Manitoba Craft Museum and Library... I was hoping to gain experience in archival photography and cataloguing; what I left...with was indeed that experience and much more.... The work performed...this summer has allowed me to tune my personal, professional and academic focus.... Working this summer has [provided] greater understanding of the historical significance of craft, especially the role of craft in welcoming and embracing new Canadians into society.

Another participant reported:

Working at the Spiritwood Museum this summer has been a great work experience. It differs greatly from any job I have had in the past.... One of the key parts of this job [was] cataloguing the item in the museum...another...was giving tours. This job has benefited me greatly. I have met and worked with so many wonderful people...have become more familiar with this community [and]...improved my history skills tremendously.

Beyond increasing their knowledge and their appreciation of important local and national accomplishments, it is hoped that some youth participants would consider further studies in pursuit of a career in a heritage field.

Representatives from the Bonavista Historic Townscape Foundation in Bonavista, Newfoundland recount:

We hired a young archivist to assist with the daily activities of the archives. The Intern did remarkable work with the historical and municipal records, and the employer has prolonged her contract...with the hope of securing funds to prolong even further the term of employment into a more permanent position.

Representatives from the Dawson City Museum in Dawson City, Yukon, also stated:

We needed an intern to revive the archival components of the museum. Being in Northern Canada, [we] could not find a candidate with an archives education degree so [we] hired a history graduate. The intern revealed herself to be a great acquisition for [us] [and] she appreciated so much her work experience at the archives that she has decided to do a master's in archival study.

In turn, Dawson City Museum planned to remain in contact with the intern with the hope that they could hire her permanently at the end of her studies.

The future of Canadian museums and other heritage organizations depends on the renewal of professional staff with the academic credentials, knowledge and skills required to maintain the high professional standards for which the Canadian heritage community is known worldwide. Most importantly, the future of the new museum of Canadian history depends on this program.

Contrary to what the opposition parties say, the Canadian museum of history will provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history.

Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world. Most importantly, Canadians deserve a museum that benefits them, while offering opportunity to our talented, hard-working youth.

I must say that I am the mother of five children. They are very much interested in Canadian history. I expect that through museums like the new museum of Canadian history, they will learn and be able to develop a history that they can then share with my grandchildren, and their children and their children, for many generations to come.

I am proud of our government's achievements. I am proud of what it intends to do with the museum. I look forward to visiting it.

● (2315)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been a very interesting debate tonight, and we have heard many different opinions and sides of the issue. One that keeps coming up is that it will be great for Canadians in small towns and rural municipalities because they will be able to see some of this great repository of Canadian history, which is interesting.

I will read a quick report:

In a move that blindsided the Canadian Museums Association, the Conservative government cut \$4.6 million from the museum assistance program...The reduction in funding was made without warning, without consultations with museums or the museums association [said the executive director of the CMA, John McAvity]...“This kind of funding is one of the hallmarks of a civilized society”... But small museums across the country will be left competing for a much smaller pot of money as a result of the cuts, he said. “This program has been inadequate [for quite some time now]... Now it's even more inadequate.”

If we are talking about funding for a tour of artifacts to small Canadian museums, we have already heard at the heritage committee how desperate these museums and archives are. The government has already cut the program that supports these small museums. How much is it going to cost and where is the money going to come from so that these small towns can access Canadian history as the member has described tonight?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I think I have actually convinced the member opposite to perhaps lean towards supporting this wonderful legislation. In that spirit of collaboration, I am going to respond with numbers.

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Of course, we know that this government has in fact injected an extra \$142 million into our museums. That is over and above what we last saw from a former Liberal government. That is a tremendous commitment to our museums. Unfortunately, the member opposite voted against all of that extra funding.

I might add that the member opposite from the NDP was talking about Mr. John McAvity, who supports this legislation. I am hopeful that my colleague will take Mr. McAvity's opinion to heart and that he will support this museum and support this all-important legislation for the future of this museum.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we went off topic a little when the member talked about summer jobs. However, in my riding students are having a difficult time finding jobs, and I will ask a quick, easy and direct question.

Is it because I do not have a museum in my riding that these kids cannot find a job?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the member opposite that it is this government that invested significantly in the youth employment strategy, which affords an extra \$50 million to young entrepreneurs so that they can move forward in this tough economic time. Unfortunately, the Liberals seem to always want to vote against our youth by voting against legislation that puts that funding in the hands of our youth.

As I said in my speech, we also have the young Canada works program, which is affiliated with our museums. This new museum, this latest addition with a \$25-million investment by this government, will in fact create jobs for young people under the young Canada works program. I would suggest that member share this information with the youth of his riding so that they benefit from the opportunities that this governments provides to those youth.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if my colleague could take a moment to contrast how we on this side of the House feel toward Canadian history compared to the opposition.

I mean, as she so rightly said, we have made record investments. We believe in things like Banting and Best, the Canadarm and Terry Fox. One of the things we believe in passionately is our veterans. We believe in the men and women in uniform who fought for this country, for freedom of speech so we could actually hear some of the garbage that was coming from the other side.

I would like the member to contrast the difference on this side versus that side as far as Canadian history—

• (2320)

The Speaker: There is only 20 seconds left for the parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, let me concentrate on veterans because, in fact, they are the people who did afford us the opportunity to have this wonderful country.

I am going to focus on the fact that I have a grandfather who fought at Dieppe with his brother who, unfortunately, lost his leg there. Both men returned alive. I also have a husband whose grandfather fought at Vimy. To know that the NDP have shamefully accused our veterans of leaving a scar on Canada as a result—

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I confess that I find myself somewhat surprised that a speaking slot has opened up at this hour. I found out a few moments ago. I have been enjoying this debate, and at this hour of night, I hope I will be forgiven for trying to cheer everybody up by telling a short story about my daughter.

We were watching *Canada: A People's History*. The last episode, I hate to say, involved me. CBC decided that I was a good thread to describe the origins of the environmental movement. My daughter had been watching this program in school. Thank goodness for the CBC and the great programming that tells Canadians about our history.

As the last episode ended, she turned to me—she was in grade four at the time—and said, “Congratulations, Mommy, you're the first”. I said, “I'm the first what?” She said, “You're the first person who could ever watch herself on *Canada: A People's History*, because everybody else is dead”.

I just thought the hour called for some levity.

I find myself standing here having read Bill C-49 carefully, having listened to the debates, and particularly having heard what I regard as a very sincere, well-meaning presentation by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, for whom this is clearly a vision he cares about deeply. I think he has persuaded the Prime Minister to allow him to do something that I have come to believe is in the interest of Canada.

That is not without trepidation. It is not without sharing a lot of the skepticism of my colleagues on other opposition benches, but I come to this. We have had this museum, in one shape or another, since 1856. It has not remained static, and it will not stay the museum of history in another few generations. If we go back to 1856, it was for the displays of the Geological Survey of Canada. It was a hodgepodge, I can imagine, and by 1968, it was decided to split it into two things. We still have the Museum of Nature, of course, on Metcalfe Street. That was one part of it. The other part became known as, and all of my women colleagues in the House should brace themselves, the National Museum of Man.

By 1986, it was seen that the National Museum of Man was probably a gender-loaded term. They did not mean to call it that. One of my friends, who is currently a parliamentarian here, quipped, “When they name this thing again, please, God, let us not call it the mausoleum of men.” Let us inject the history and contribution of Canadian women.

In any case, in 1986, the name Museum of Man changed to Museum of Civilization and the inspired and entirely magnificent building on the other side of the river, built by architect Douglas Cardinal, was given to Canadians.

Government Orders

I remember well, because I was living in Ottawa at the time, that they were racing to the finish line to be ready for opening. It was such a nip and tuck effort that they called on Canadian senators to show up and help Douglas Cardinal fit the bits of marble to the curvy bits. It is all curvy. My dear friend, now retired, Senator Mira Spivak, was one of those who showed up and was on her knees until after 11 o'clock at night finishing work at the museum. Given current events, some people might suspect that it was the last time senators actually worked. In any case, it was a great opening.

I love the Grand Hall. I hate the idea that anything about it will change. I love the fact that the great silkscreen of ancient forests that we see in the Museum of Civilization today is actually a silkscreen photograph of Windy Bay in Gwaii Haanas, now part of Gwaii Haanas National Park. I would love it not to change at all, but change is not a bad thing if we can use the additional money to make sure that exhibits that are now in storage get out to people across Canada.

I see this as a way of invigorating our understanding of history. I have great concerns that the current administration is trying to remould our own iconography, how we see ourselves, and get rid of our notion of peacekeeping and see ourselves as a warrior nation. I share these concerns, but I have gone to section 27 of the Museums Act, and I see that the role of a curator and the way a museum is run is separate from political interference. We will have to watchdog this as it goes forward. I am not denying that, but I want the records of the debates in Parliament in accepting the museum of history to reflect that at least someone on the opposition benches was prepared to take a leap of faith, prepared to go with the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages and say, "Yes, okay. Let us modernize. Let us update. We will have a museum of Canadian history".

● (2325)

It hardly sounds like we are updating when we are going back to our history, but let us imagine for a moment that we can. Let us imagine that we tell the stories of the women of Canada and their contributions, and of the new Canadians we celebrate at Pier 21, at the museum in Halifax. Let us exchange exhibits with Pier 21 in Halifax.

Let us ensure we tell the stories of the contributions of people whose stories are unsung and untold, and of the role that Canada has had in the world in the past. I hope we will reclaim it by once again being the best country we can be, by re-engaging with the world on climate negotiations, on drought negotiations, on all the things we have done historically for worldwide development and so on.

This legislation does include international exhibits. It does not say we are going to be insular and parochial. Let us try to see if we can accept the idea of a Canadian museum of history with an infusion of funds that allows our history to be real to our kids, and not just the kids who come to Ottawa to see the Museum of Civilization.

I remember when the Museum of Civilization opened. As I said, I went to the opening, but beyond that, initially the exhibits were panned. People were outraged that we had Disneyfied—I think that is what some of the commentators said—the collections by making them too touchy-feely, too hands on, too kid-focused.

Change will happen to the way we share our heritage. Change will happen to the way we tell our stories. If we engage ourselves with this effort in good faith, we will tell our stories more honestly. We will reflect more of the real Canadian mosaic and identity.

The Speaker: It being 11:27 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment 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: Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, May 22, 2013, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 29, 2013 at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

● (2330)

FIRST NATIONS ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development) moved that Bill S-6, An Act respecting the election and term of office of chiefs and councillors of certain First Nations and the composition of council of those First Nations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the constituents of the great Kenora riding for this opportunity to speak on Bill S-6 and, in particular, one of our newest constituents, the very special Abigail Mae Rickford.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about Bill S-6, the first nations elections act.

Government Orders

Over a year ago the Prime Minister spoke at the Crown-First Nations Gathering about the approach our government is taking to enable first nations people to share fully with other Canadians the prosperity, security and promise of our great country. Specifically, the Prime Minister stated that our approach is to work as partners with the first nations to replace elements of the Indian Act that are outdated with modern tools—a constellation, so to speak, of options, like this bill, to provide opportunities for modern first nation political economic development.

The fact is that the Indian Act election system has some significant and serious flaws. To start, the Indian Act requires that first nation communities hold elections every two years. This requirement restricts first nations chiefs and councils from initiating long-term projects and working closely with investors, business owners, partners and other governments, and from taking full advantage of emerging opportunities to improve the lives of people in their communities.

Also, the Indian Act does not prevent any person from running and being elected chief and to a councillor position during the same election. The current system's loose nomination process also enables the names of candidates who are neither dedicated to running nor serious about serving to be placed on the ballot without their approval and, in some instances, without their knowledge. Because of this omission in the law, some first nations elections have had more than 100 candidates vie for as few as three positions.

[*Translation*]

The mail-in ballot system under the Indian Act is also open to abuse. In addition, the act does not provide for offences or related penalties when abuse is uncovered. As a result, it is virtually impossible for a legal entity to prosecute those involved in corruption. If illegal, corrupt or abusive practices are alleged to have taken place, department officials launch a lengthy appeals process, which has proven to be slow, inefficient and paternalistic.

[*English*]

Bill S-6 enables first nations people to shed a piece of the Indian Act by providing an alternative to its flawed election provisions. Bill S-6 presents an open, transparent and accountable election system that first nations people expect and deserve. We only have to consider some key provisions of the bill and what these provisions will set in motion to understand its value.

To that end, I would like to categorize the main provisions of the bill under four headings: term of office, election mechanics, candidates, and offences and penalties. Let me speak to those.

The bill provides for terms of office of four years. This is a much more reasonable timeframe for stable first nation governments to launch important initiatives and obtain concrete results before embarking on another election.

Furthermore, the first nations election act enables first nations communities to line up their terms of office and hold elections on the same day if they so choose.

Taking advantage of this provision makes perfect sense for communities in the same province or region. By aligning the terms of office of their elected leaders, they provide governance stability

among first nations across a given region. As a result, these leaders can more easily collaborate on long-term projects, work closely with investors and seize opportunities whenever they emerge.

● (2335)

[*Translation*]

Bill S-6 also deals with important aspects of running elections.

It contains regulation-making mechanisms that will address a large number of concerns about candidate nominations and the mail-in ballot system that regularly arise during elections under the Indian Act. From this perspective, the First Nations Elections Act provides for a much more consistent, effective, reliable and legitimate electoral process.

[*English*]

In terms of candidates for election, the bill specifies that no individual can be a candidate for more than one office in the same election and requires that nominees consent to being a candidate prior to actually becoming one. This is a key point, as it means only the names of those persons who have agreed to be a candidate will appear on the ballot, which is not currently the case.

In terms of offences and penalties, Bill S-6 would fill a significant void. Just like the provincial and federal election laws, the new act would include several clearly defined offences and penalties surrounding questionable activities, such as vote buying, intimidation and obstructing the electoral process.

The new provisions will discourage these activities from taking place by making it possible for authorities to investigate and prosecute those who engage in such acts and they will empower our courts to adjudicate over fines and sentences of those found guilty.

Together, the provisions I have laid out remove the destabilizing effects of perpetual electioneering from first nation governments. They help eliminate potential abuses of power. They help communities elect governments that are truly representative of the needs and interests of residents.

[*Translation*]

In stark contrast to the Indian Act election system, Bill S-6 offers an appeals process that does not involve the department, the minister or his successors. Appeals of elections held under Bill S-6 will be addressed in the courts, where election disputes in municipal, provincial and federal elections in our country are resolved.

[*English*]

I also want to speak briefly, but I think importantly, about ministerial authority.

Government Orders

Bill S-6 would not give the minister of Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development any more power than already found in the Indian Act. I am referring, specifically, to provision in the bill that will permit the minister to order a first nation to hold its elections under the proposed new law when there is a protracted leadership dispute that has significantly compromised the governance of that first nation.

The minister already holds this power, under the Indian Act, where he or she may order a first nation hold elections under the act if it is deemed advisable for the good governance of the band.

Ministers have only used this power three times, as far as I can tell, for the purposes of solving an ongoing governance dispute in a given first nation and only did so after several attempts to support the community in reaching its own resolution had failed. More important, in instances where the power was exercised, the dispute had compromised the overall well-being of the community.

History has shown that this power under the Indian Act has not been exercised frivolously.

In fact, the power afforded the minister, under Bill S-6, would be much narrower. The condition that must be present before the minister could order an election under Bill S-6 is clearly defined, and it bears repeating. That condition is, "a protracted leadership dispute has significantly compromised governance of that First Nation". This stands in stark contrast to the vast discretion afforded the minister as it stands under the Indian Act.

Even though it is rarely used, it is vital that Bill S-6 provide this power as a measure of last resort. A long-standing dispute over leadership selection in elections paralyzes governance in a first nation. Eventually, the well-being of the whole community is compromised. The delivery of programs and services has to be placed, in many instances, in the control of third parties.

Without clear and legitimate leaders, strategic decisions are not made, partnerships with other first nations, other governments and private enterprises become virtually impossible to forge potential economic development opportunities, good governance can disappear.

• (2340)

[*Translation*]

I know that many first nation leaders in this country agree that Bill S-6 presents a better election system than that found under the Indian Act. After all, they played an indispensable role in creating Bill S-6. Two first nation organizations deserve our special recognition for bringing this bill to life.

[*English*]

The first is the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs under the leadership of former grand chief Ron Evans, who is the former chief of Norway House first nations, a community that I had an opportunity to spend some time in as a nurse in northern Manitoba. The second is the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs. Both of these organizations recognize the deficiencies of the Indian Act election system and their destabilizing negative effect on first nations governance.

In their own parts of the country, they held several consultation sessions with first nations leaders, governance experts and community members. The consultation led to a list of potential electoral reforms, which included *inter alia* terms of offices of four years and the ability for first nations in a given region to line up their terms of office and hold their elections on the same day.

They called on the federal government to develop a new law, but the process did not end there. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Atlantic Policy Congress partnered to lead a national engagement effort to further discuss electoral reform with first nations leaders and members across the country. They communicated with leaders of the 241 first nations communities that hold elections currently under the Indian Act, inviting feedback on their recommendations.

These two organizations also set up websites to post important information and receive inputs and comments from first nations members. All who responded agreed that the proposed reforms would be a major improvement over the election system under the Indian Act. When we took the recommended election reforms and prepared a draft version of Bill S-6, the former Minister of Aboriginal Affairs then wrote to every band council elected under the Indian Act to outline the new bill's contents. He encouraged the councils to share the draft with their community members and to provide comments on the draft bill directly to him.

The minister did not receive a single negative comment during this exercise. All the credit for this achievement goes to first nations members and leaders, especially the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs, for their creative and collaborative consultative efforts. In particular, I would like to recognize the work, as I said earlier, of the former grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Ron Evans; Atlantic chiefs, Lawrence Paul, the late Noah Augustine and Candice Paul; as well as the Assembly of First Nations regional chief Morley Googoo, for their remarkable leadership and for the essential roles they played in helping create Bill S-6 as we have come to know it today.

[*Translation*]

These leaders saw the need to reform their election system and then took action to bring about practical changes. They all deserve our heartfelt thanks. They have brought to life the Prime Minister's words and found creative ways to move beyond the Indian Act. They did so because they know the value that stable, effective governments can bring to first nation communities.

Government Orders

• (2345)

[English]

They know that political stability makes it possible for first nations communities to attract investors and business owners and thereby create new jobs, rising incomes, higher standards of living and quality of life on reserve. They know that empowered elected officials and effective councils can access capital, plan and carry out long-term projects, and work productively with partners to unlock the economic promise of first nations lands and resources.

Perhaps most important is the empowerment gained by their people when they exercise their fundamental right to vote within an election system that is strong, open and transparent.

This is why I ask all of my colleagues to join us in support of Bill S-6 to support and encourage all members of first nations communities to realize their aspirations and good governance in their communities.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the parliamentary secretary on the addition to his family. That is always a wonderful event for all of us. I am sure that the smile on his face may indicate the same.

His statement about the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs leaves me a little short. Here is a quote from Grand Chief Derek Nepinak:

This proposal does not fulfill the recommendations put forth by the AMC. It appears to be an attempt by the Minister to expand governmental jurisdiction and control the First Nations electoral processes that are created pursuant to the Indian Act or custom code. I am hopeful that Canada will engage in meaningful consultation with First Nations in Manitoba in order to fix some of the problems, instead of unilaterally imposing a statutory framework that will greatly affect the rights of First Nations.

That is the Grand Chief who is in power today, not the one mentioned by the parliamentary secretary. I would ask him to clarify which particular grand chief he was talking about. Is it the one who is currently in power, who has said that he does not support this particular legislation?

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question, our friendship and the important work we do on the standing committee.

I would suggest, respectfully, that there is a process with legislation. I can only speak to the mandate and the participation of the Grand Chief as he was when we went through a consultative process. As I said, I know him to be an excellent individual, from a personal and professional frame of reference, having spent considerable time in Norway House first nation in northern Manitoba.

We are trying to create within the confines of first nations elections what could be described as a fourth option. We have what we have described under the Indian Act, and I listed some of the problems. We have options for community or custom election codes. There are self-governing first nations. This is a possible fourth option that has been consulted on thoroughly, in particular by these two organizations. The Atlantic Policy Congress is the other.

This process drew on the perspectives of leadership from across the country, with direct input to the minister. At that time, and we believe moving forward, in view of the options available, these were

the kinds of things first nations were asking for in a bill that would deal with first nations governance, specifically around elections.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with the bill. However, the court recently said that the Conservative Party has been accused of certain electoral irregularities. I am wondering if the government is in any position to be tabling any type of election act, especially for first nations. The question is pretty direct.

• (2350)

Mr. Greg Rickford: Yes, it is pretty direct, Mr. Speaker. His questions are a lot like the way he plays hockey. He is kind of rough.

There actually are no specific allegations against the Conservative Party in that regard.

What we are trying to do is bring a serious tone to this discussion. We are trying to improve the conditions in which elections take place in first nations communities. Importantly, it was born from a consultative and participative process that came organically, if I may, from major first nations organizations through thorough consultation with leadership and community members across the country, and, as I said before, with direct input to the Minister of Indian Affairs at the time.

We believe that this legislation would create another viable option that would help stabilize governance in first nations communities and would meet the expectations that we understand derive from those important consultative exercises.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has been working closely with first nation organizations to bring about real improvements to the election process for first nations.

We know that a strong election system will help first nations create the political stability necessary for solid business investment, long-term planning and relationship-building that will lead to increased economic development and job creation for first nations communities.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development please explain how this legislation is different from the archaic election system in the Indian Act?

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's participation on the standing committee and in the important work that we do.

It is hard to believe it has been almost 20 years that I have been living and working in and with first nations communities in a variety of professional capacities, perhaps most recently until becoming elected, dealing with, in my legal practice, some of the issues and matters that arise out of election issues.

I am struck by four elements that I alluded to in my speech, but by way of review, they are as follows.

The first is a four-year mandate. The band council will have four years instead of two to give effect to longer term planning and relationship-building with other levels of government and private sector partners.

Government Orders

The second is a more stringent nomination process. We want to address those deficiencies.

The third is an election appeals process. The bill would remove the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development from the election appeals process.

The fourth is offences and penalties. It would provide offences and penalties surrounding corrupt activities and interference with the electoral process, similar to the Canada Elections Act that we operate under.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech. He spoke at length about public consultations.

The first part of my question is to find out what type of consultations we are talking about. Were there any face-to-face meetings?

All summer long there was a huge movement called Idle No More. I was wondering whether the public consultations took advantage of this movement to meet face-to-face with the different leaders who were there, and whether anyone took advantage of this large gathering to hold public consultations. This was a golden opportunity to allow people to express themselves. I was wondering whether anyone took that opportunity.

[*English*]

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, with 42 first nations communities in my riding, I have had the opportunity, then and subsequently, to sit down with first nations people in particular who were involved in those.

It is fair to say that we found a lot of common ground. The *Winnipeg Free Press* said as much, that the government could and would find common ground with first nations that were perhaps frustrated in reality with all levels of government, including their own.

This first nations election act takes an important in that direction to deal with some of the issues that were mentioned during those protests and some of the debate that ensued around the difficulties they had with some of their own levels of government in their respective communities.

There are other issues, for sure. We are certainly working through those. In terms of the consultative process, as I said before, there were several consultation sessions with first nations leaders, governance experts in the first nations academic community and community members. In addition to that, as I said, the minister of aboriginal affairs, as he was then, received direct inputs from community members and stakeholders, including first nations leadership during that consultative process.

We appreciate that it was in fact led by first nations organizations. That is the hallmark of real leadership and success.

To that end, I am satisfied that the test or threshold has been met and this bill reflects their express views and wishes with respect to the kind of legislation that would support good governance of first nations.

● (2355)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the opportunity here, quite late on Tuesday night, to speak to this particular bill.

It has been my viewpoint over the past two years on the aboriginal affairs committee that the Conservatives really have not been consulting in the correct fashion with first nations across the country. They come in with the wrong attitude. What we really need is to have first nations design the legislation that they would like to see enacted for their governments, their people and their nations. We can then take that in Parliament and understand how we can amend it so that it works.

However, we have the opposite way and we saw that with the accountability act, an act that really was an unfortunate piece of goods that came from the government. It was universally condemned by first nations. They did have a couple of supporters there, but they were some very specific people who had problems in their own particular communities. Those who understood the nature of the first nations-Canada relationship rejected the accountability act.

We are now at Bill S-8, the safe drinking water act, which we would think that everyone could get behind and support. However, once again, we see that the method of consultation and delivery of these bills is simply not working. The Conservative government is not providing the first nations with the opportunities to design the legislation so that it works for them. In this case, with the Senate putting forward Bill S-8, we also have the additional problem that we cannot make requirements for resources to ensure that first nations can actually meet standards that they would all want to meet.

The history so far of the majority government has been of one that refuses amendments. I think of Bill C-47, when we put forward some 45 amendments on a bill that only affected Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Of those 40-some amendments, the Conservatives turned down all of them, even though the amendments were designed to make the bill work better. They were not coming from people who had great opposition to the bill. They were coming from people who were concerned that the bill should work right.

In other words, once again the Conservatives failed to provide a methodology of consultation that delivered a product that people could get behind. I see that this pattern is being repeated with Bill S-6. The Conservatives did go into some consultation. They did hold meetings with first nations. They got recommendations from first nations about how this bill should be set up. The problem is that when the bill showed up, those recommendations were not carried forward in the fashion that the first nations had assumed.

We can see that in the problem with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The first Grand Chief, who was involved in the consultation side of it before the bill was put out, was pretty happy with what was going to happen. He said that, but then when the bill arrived in the Senate, the Manitoba Chief that I quoted in my question to the parliamentary secretary said, "no, that is not what we are after".

Government Orders

The consultation process is wrong. The consultation process does not deliver the goods for first nations. That is the problem here and the government has to change its direction in order to make legislation that truly represents first nations' points of view. The legislation is for the first nations. This legislation does not affect other people in Canada. The legislation is for the governments of the first nations. Therefore, it should really have those elements as the prime elements within the legislation.

That seems to be simple. We are not here to force our way upon other governments. We are here to provide guidance and accommodation and to make the system work.

● (2400)

Conservatives have a different view. They view it from that economic development lens. We heard the parliamentary secretary say that. Implicit within all the work that the Conservatives are doing is the idea that economic development for the first nations is the most important element. The most important element is not what the first nations want, not what the first nations deserve, but what will make economic development work. That is the Conservatives' point of view.

What we see in legislation over and over again is that message. What is important for economic development is the primary thing that we will see in legislation that comes from the Conservatives on first nations issues. If first nations go along with that, and the government can get some to go along with that, those will be the quotations that are used. Those will be the validations that Conservatives seek.

What really is needed? We really need to listen to the first nations. This legislation is for them, it is not for us. It is not telling us how we are getting elected. It is working with the first nations to come up with a system that they endorse, that they want for their very valid self-government efforts.

In the consultation process there was probably a little more give, a little more understanding, but when it came back to Ottawa, the changes were made to ensure that it worked for the government and it plans. That is the reality of what we are dealing with.

We have trouble with the bill. We also have trouble supporting it at second reading and taking it to committee. We have done this over and over again, but we are not getting any results. We are not getting the government to come onside for valid amendments to bills.

That is the process by which we all want to engage in here. This is what we want to do at committees. We want to have the opportunity to take what the people want, take what the government wants, come up with some compromises. We do not want this hard line attitude about the committees and about how amendments are dealt with at committees. That is not working for us. What we are saying is that will oppose this bill at second reading because it does not what the first nations want.

It is a tragedy that we cannot take the bill to committee with some kind of assurance that some of the important elements that need to be fixed in the bill will be fixed. However, when we beat our head against the wall and do not get results, then we should quit beating our head against the wall. That is sensible.

We can fight it here in Parliament. We can go to committee and hear the witnesses who will say that they want amendments and to make the bill work properly. That is what we have heard over and over again. With all the legislation that has come in front of us, it has always been the case that the first nations witnesses who testify want solutions. They do not want to go away empty handed.

It is a tragedy and it is wrong. That is not the way we should do government. Government is for the people. The people who are affected by legislation are the primary concern of the legislation. This is not for all of Canada. This is for first nations. They have the primary say here. If we go against that principle, we are really going against the principle of democracy if we are not allowing the people who are affected by the law to have the dominant say over how the law is put together.

If a law affects all Canadians, then we all have a say in it. The responsibility is different. However, in the case when we are making laws for first nations, first nations that have a constitutional right of self-government, that have been in this land for thousands of years, who signed treaties, they should have a say in it. We did not take the land away from them, we signed treaties with them. The Queen agreed about how these treaties were taken care of in 1763.

● (2405)

That is our history. Do we want to rewrite history? We should write it the way it has been done.

I really would like to get along with the government on legislation for first nations when it starts getting along with first nations and when it starts listening to first nations. This is what the legislation is for. These are the people who are affected by the legislation. It is not for businessmen, not for those who look upon reserves as potential new sources of land and resources. No, it is for those people. Let us remember that when we deal with legislation. If we do not, we are simply not doing the job that, as Canadians, we know we should be doing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech.

I find it interesting that we have something to learn from the first nations with regard to governance and particularly with regard to consultation.

The first nations hold band councils and they meet together to discuss issues and reach a consensus. They have reached a number of consensuses over the years. We could learn from this dialogue. It would be worthwhile to use this approach as a model for the way we work together in politics.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, having grown up with, gone to school with and spent my life with first nations people, I find them to be some of the warmest and most accommodating people I have known. They are people who are there for each other.

Adjournment Proceedings

It is interesting that in the Dene language there is no word for “thank you”. They had to invent a word for it because their culture says that taking care of each other is not a “thank you” issue, but an issue of responsibility.

It is a wonderful culture. It is a culture that all Canadians could learn from, and we should respect that culture in every way in the legislation that we pass in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: That concludes the time we have for debate at this time. The hon. member for Western Arctic will have approximately eight minutes for finishing questions and comments.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (2410)

[*English*]

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here, even at this late hour, to follow up with the government on the HRSDC data breaches. It is a very important issue and Canadians deserve to hear the answers, no matter what the hour.

I am hopeful that the Conservative government will finally take the privacy of Canadians seriously and investigate the decade-long data breaches of government departments. The Conservatives owe an explanation to Canadians and have an obligation to ensure that proper rules are put in place to protect the personal information of individuals. The federal government, quite frankly, dropped the ball on this and allowed the release of private information for millions of Canadians. Many questions still remain about how this happened.

The NDP has been very clear on this issue and has been asking the tough questions. In a written response to the member for Timmins—James Bay, the government admitted to more than a million breaches of personal data over the past decade, with little or no action taken nor any follow-up done with the office of the Privacy Commissioner.

It remains unclear exactly how many Canadians were affected, nor is it known if any of the data breaches were used in terms of identity theft. This is unacceptable and the government's actions are slow and scattered.

The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development admitted that the department lost personal information for more than half a million people when an external hard drive went missing last November, exposing those individuals to the possibility of identity theft.

The privacy breach is one of the biggest ever seen in Canada. The personal information of 568,000 individuals who took out student loans through the Canada student loan program between 2000 and 2006 is at stake, including names, social insurance numbers, dates of birth, contact information and financial information about loan balances of borrowers, in addition to personal contact information of about 250 HRSDC employees.

The breach is yet another reminder that the Conservative government refuses to take privacy rights seriously.

It is imperative that the government take the privacy rights of individuals in Canada seriously. The government needs to offer a more comprehensive, long-term solution to the individuals affected by this privacy breach, such as long-term credit monitoring or identity fraud insurance.

I would like to add that the response to this breach has been dismal. The government merely expressed concern and offered limited assistance, and still refuses to cover the cost for credit monitoring that those affected have to incur.

The minister, more than 10 weeks after the breach was discovered, finally announced a policy change in the department so that portable hand-held devices will no longer be used.

New Democrats will hold this minister to account. I would very much like to hear how the government plans to address the privacy concerns of Canadians who have been affected because of what the government has done. What it has done at this point is nowhere near enough.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the loss of personal information is completely unacceptable.

[*English*]

Last fall, there were two unfortunate security incidents in the department involving missing portable storage devices containing personal information.

One incident involved a USB stick containing information on the Canada pension plan disabilities plan. In the second incident, a portable hard drive with information on Canada student loan borrowers went missing. These were two separate incidents and not related to each other in any way.

[*Translation*]

Clearly, this kind of incident is unacceptable. The Privacy Commissioner and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are aware of this case. An official investigation is under way to get to the bottom of how the hard drive went missing.

• (2415)

[*English*]

The minister has ordered the department to strengthen its protocols on the security and storage of personal information.

The department is taking action in three areas. With regard to hardware, unapproved portable hard drives are no longer permitted, and unapproved USB keys are not to be connected to the department's network.

[*Translation*]

With respect to software, a new technology to prevent data loss will be implemented.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

Finally, on departmental culture, mandatory training for employees will be provided to reinforce the importance of proper handling of personal data. Disciplinary measures are also in place for staff who do not conform to security procedures, including termination. The department has also taken actions to mitigate the impact on the affected Canadians. The department informed the affected clients of the steps they should take to help protect themselves after this incident. Furthermore, we have provided information and support on various government websites. These websites have toll-free numbers that people can call if they are concerned that they were affected.

The affected social insurance numbers have been flagged in the social insurance register to indicate that the social insurance number was involved in a security breach and to ensure that any requests for modifications undergo an enhanced authentication process. As a further precaution, the department has purchased a customized package from Equifax Canada to protect the credit ratings of the affected people. This is a solution that is tailored specifically to this incident, and it is available free to everyone who may have been affected.

[Translation]

Credit protection is an appropriate and reliable strategy that will help prevent misuse of personal or credit information.

[English]

The minister has acted quickly to make sure the department takes immediate action to ensure a situation like this does not happen again.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the member that the NDP has actually drafted legislation that would help to address privacy breaches. The member for Terrebonne—Blainville has introduced Bill C-475. This bill would create mandatory data breach reporting in the event that a data breach causes a risk of harm to an individual. The bill would also increase the enforcement powers of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to ensure that organizations comply with PIPEDA when handling the personal information of Canadians.

This kind of protection has long been called for by key experts and citizens groups. It is time to act to meet the challenges of the digital age, not just for today but tomorrow as well. Bill C-475 is scheduled for debate at the end of June. I would like to know if the member opposite will support this legislation that will better protect the privacy rights of Canadians.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, in response to the actual question that was raised that precipitated this interaction today, as I previously stated, this kind of incident is unacceptable. We all agree on that. We have taken action to strengthen the protocols related to the protection, security and handling of personal information.

[Translation]

Let me be clear, the government takes this issue very seriously. We have carried out thorough investigations and reviewed our internal policies. We also informed the clients affected by this incident as well as the general public.

[English]

We are working diligently to safeguard the personal information entrusted to the government.

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that I am speaking to this topic today because this morning I was able to meet with the Association of Public Service Alliance Retirees; its president, Mr. Chevalier; and its executive committee. They wanted to discuss two or three issues, and the government should be worried about one in particular.

In November 2011, the Supreme Court of Canada made a unanimous ruling on pay equity and ordered Canada Post to compensate its employees. Of the slightly more than 6,000 employees who were affected, the majority are women and 80% are now retired. What is worse, this morning members of the Association of Public Service Alliance Retirees told me that 28 of those people are now deceased. There may be more, but the members know that 28 of them have died.

The Supreme Court handed down its ruling a year and a half ago and Canada Post still has not respected the unanimous decision of the highest court in the land.

In 2005, Canada Post set \$50 million aside in case it might lose. It lost after a lengthy battle. These people, 80% of whom are retired, live on an income averaging less than \$20,000 and the money they are owed would help them a great deal. It would probably add \$100 to \$150 a month to their pension.

A year and a half after a unanimous Supreme Court decision, Canada Post, backed by the government it seems, refuses to pay what it owes these people. It makes no sense.

I asked the question in April and in response I was told that Canada Post is an independent corporation that is responsible for its own affairs, especially when it comes to human resource management.

I am sorry, but Canada Post has only one shareholder and that is the Government of Canada. When it came to interfering in Canada Post's business in June of 2011, the government did not hesitate to introduce a bill in the House to force the employees back to work before the strike even began. We all remember that saga.

In Bill C-60, which is currently at committee stage, the government also gives itself the right to intervene in collective bargaining processes.

The government cannot tell us that Canada Post is an independent corporation that is responsible for its own affairs when it comes to labour relations and then turn around and say that it can interfere whenever it wants to.

Why does the government not want to interfere to force Canada Post to pay its employees what it owes them, as per the Supreme Court's decision?

Adjournment Proceedings

Who does Canada Post want to appeal to now? It is trying to negotiate with the unions and the courts to pay less interest than it owes. A Supreme Court judgment cannot be appealed before lower courts. If Canada Post wants to appeal the Supreme Court's decision, it should bring its case before Parliament, where its appeal will be denied rather quickly. Canada Post has to pay that money to over 6,000 current employees and former employees who are now retired. It is not doing so.

As I said the other day, it very unlikely that the bigwigs and managers at Canada Post would agree to wait a year before getting what they were owed.

I hope that the government will take action and force Canada Post to abide by the Supreme Court's decision.

• (2420)

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Post Corporation was created to provide a standard postal service that meets the needs of Canadians across the country, no matter where they live. To do this, Canada Post has employees across the country and is one of the largest employers in Canada.

To begin, I would like to remind the member that Canada Post, as an independent, arm's-length crown corporation, is responsible for its own operations. As a result, the government, like previous governments before it, does not interfere in its operations. However, our government expects Canada Post to respect the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling on this decades-old dispute that originated years before that member was elected to this House.

Our government continues to expect Canada Post to take the necessary steps to implement the decision as soon as possible. It needs to be recognized that applying the court's ruling is a complex and massive undertaking. In November 2011, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and upheld the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal award to eligible employees for compensation of 50% of the wage gap found to exist from August 24, 1982 to June 2, 2002.

Canada Post has publicly assured Canadians that it is moving forward as diligently and efficiently as possible to implement this ruling. To make payments, the corporation must complete a thorough review of the employee data to determine eligibility and, as required by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, reach an agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada that provides certainty and finality on all compensation issues. Canada Post and the Public Service Alliance of Canada must come to an agreement on a number of key issues, most notably the amount of compensation to be provided by individual, each individual's wage gap, and other calculations on which that amount would be determined.

Canada Post has a dedicated team of Canada Post employees that has been working through the complex data gathering and review process. This complex work involves reviewing tens of thousands of individual employee files. That member should know that some of these records are available in digital format. Many are available in paper format only, some of which date back many decades.

The corporation continues the massive job of gathering data, while attempting to reach an agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada. In order for Canada Post to be able to make the payments according to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's requirements, Canada Post also needs a clear and final agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada on all issues raised.

• (2425)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, when I hear that Canada Post is an arm's-length crown corporation and the government cannot do anything about it, I think it is a bit of a crock. In June 2011, the government did not hesitate to interfere by introducing legislation forcing people back to work when the strike had not even begun. On Bill C-60, the Conservatives would not hesitate to interfere in the negotiations; they have given themselves that authority.

Does the gentleman across the way think that if the managers had something owed to them that they would wait a year and a half before it was paid to them? Does he think that the only shareholder, the government, would wait a year and a half before receiving its dividend that it receives annually? Would it wait that long? I do not think so. Therefore, why would they then be treating their employees and their retired employees with such disdain?

Let us hustle a bit here and respect the Supreme Court. Do not negotiate, as there is no negotiation here. It is settled. The Supreme Court decided, so do what is right and pay these people their due.

Adjournment Proceedings

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, our government expects Canada Post to abide by the Supreme Court's ruling and implement its ruling as soon as possible to end this decade-long dispute. While the ruling is clear, and Canada Post is abiding by the ruling, there remains a lot of negotiation between the union, in this case the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and the employer, Canada Post.

Canada Post is an arm's-length crown corporation and, as I mentioned earlier, a separate employer. As such, the government

does not intervene in these matters. Canada Post has assured us that it remains committed to the implementation of the pay equity award.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Wednesday, May 22, 2013, the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:27 a.m.)

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