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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 19, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 19, 2012

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

SAULT STE. MARIE'S CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 2012 marks Sault Ste. Marie's centennial anniversary. In our 100 years of history, the city has grown, prospered and expanded. Algoma Steel Corporation was created, the *Sault Star* began a daily publication and the Marconi Society was established. The list of community progress is endless and continues to this day.

To commemorate the year, city council established the Celebrate 100 team to coordinate community celebrations that welcomed home notable Saultites. Among them were the right hon. Governor General of Canada and his wife, their Excellencies David and Sharon Johnston. Also returning home was the honorary ambassador of Celebrate 100, Dr. Roberta Bondar, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of her space journey aboard *Discovery* as the world's first woman in space.

On this memorable occasion, I would like to commend the mayor, Ms. Debbie Amaroso, city council and the organizing committee for making Celebrate 100 such a huge success.

Here is to the next 100 years.

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[*Translation*]

LAYOFFS AT PACCAR

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, there have been some layoffs at the Paccar plant—200 layoffs, to be precise. That means 200 more unemployed workers

will have to wait between 35 and 45 days to receive their employment insurance cheque.

Paccar is the last heavy-duty truck plant in Canada, and yet it has never been awarded a federal government contract. The Paccar workers who have been laid off were counting on a responsible government that could have allowed them to keep working. Instead, they must negotiate with a government that refuses to listen to them.

Since the Conservatives came to power, Canada has lost 500,000 well-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector, 500,000 ways to build prosperity, 500,000 ways to build a better Canada. We in the NDP want to build this country.

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[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader dismisses the role that the natural resource sector plays in the Canadian economy. He claims that the strength of Canada's natural resources sector has been at the expense of manufacturing.

The economy of my riding is based on natural resource development, including agriculture, forestry, mining, energy and commercial fishing. As our natural resource sector expands to meet global demand, the growth will be reflected in the manufacturing sector. Indeed, in my own riding, I have a number of small manufacturing enterprises that serve the mining and energy sector.

We are seeing prosperity spread across Canada as a result of the demand for our natural resources. Recently, Statistics Canada reported that Canada's industry is operating at 81% of its capacity, 11% higher than the low point of the global economic downturn.

The NDP would stop the spread of this prosperity with its carbon tax schemes. What is more deplorable are the attempts by the NDP leader to pit region against region. We must grow our economy and ensure both a strong natural resources sector and a strong manufacturing sector. The two go hand in hand.

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HANTS COUNTY EXHIBITION

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the organizers of the Hants County Exhibition, which continues this weekend in Windsor, Nova Scotia. The exhibition was first held in 1765. It is the oldest agricultural fair in North America. It is operated by the Windsor Agricultural Society.

Statements by Members

I want to commend the president, Andrew Woolaver, and its entire board of directors, as well as David Coombes, the manager, for their tireless efforts.

Visitors to the Hants Country Exhibition can enjoy crafts, horticulture, horse shows, ox pulls, beef and dairy cattle displays, and competitions.

The exhibition is a great celebration also of the 4H movement. As someone who grew up in 4H, I know first-hand the important role that 4H plays in developing leadership for young people in rural Canada.

The exhibition will celebrate its 250th anniversary in three short years. I want to invite everybody to Windsor, Nova Scotia to visit the Hants County Exhibition. We welcome everyone to join us as we celebrate the important work of our farmers and the extraordinary success of this premier agricultural event in Windsor, Nova Scotia, the birthplace of hockey.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my utter contempt and complete disbelief of recent developments in the case of Azerbaijani military officer, Ramil Safarov.

On August 31, Safarov was transferred from Hungary to Azerbaijan to ostensibly serve out a life prison sentence for the brutal murder of an Armenian military officer in 2004. Upon his return, he was pardoned and released. These developments are a real concern to Canada, and in particular to Canadians of Armenian descent who want peace in their homeland. Murder should be condemned not rewarded.

Canada continues to support the ongoing peace process and we will continue to promote regional co-operation and reconciliation. We encourage all parties to take the necessary measures to increase trust and constructively contribute to the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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• (1410)

RIDING OF EDMONTON—STRATHCONA

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year marks 100 years since the former municipality of Strathcona amalgamated with Edmonton to form one great city.

In 1912, one of the last acts by the Strathcona council was to build a public library. Recently, beautifully restored and expanded, the library continues to serve our community.

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers with the Old Strathcona Foundation, the entire Old Strathcona historic area is a popular destination for theatre, music, shopping and socializing.

Today I wish to recognize and congratulate the efforts of the foundation, the Old Strathcona Business Association and the Strathcona Community League for their co-operative efforts to preserving and reviving the area. They are hosting a flurry of events celebrating the centennial.

Old Strathcona neighbour, the University of Alberta, along with others, have partnered with local businesses and organizations to find ways to make these treasured historic buildings more energy efficient, a laudable project for the centenary.

Old Strathcona is a truly special community and one I am proud to represent.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday night, I returned from a multi-party trade and Commonwealth delegation to southern India and Sri Lanka.

In India, we met political and business leaders in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala.

In the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Sri Lanka, I lead a workshop on conflict resolution and peace building. There I emphasized that while parliamentarians have a duty to represent their constituents, they also need to work constructively with other parties.

In that spirit, my private member's bill, Bill C-425, is soon up for second reading. My goals in this legislation are to promote integration, better recognize permanent residents who have served Canada, honour our Canadian troops and underscore the value of Canadian citizenship.

With these worthy goals, I humbly request and anticipate that my colleagues from all sides of the House will support this legislation.

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QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the next two weekends, I will have the great privilege of hosting ceremonies to honour 30 constituents of Vegreville—Wainwright by awarding them with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. This commemorative medal is a way for Canadians to honour Her Majesty as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of her accession to the throne as Queen of Canada and to recognize a select group of hard-working Canadians who have made and continue to make extraordinary contributions to our communities.

It is a difficult job indeed to narrow 140 extremely worthy nominations down to just 30 recipients. These are all people who have volunteered a lifetime of dedication and hard work to improving their communities and the lives of their families, neighbours, friends and often complete strangers. These outstanding citizens are truly the foundation upon which our remarkable country Canada has been built community by community.

I am thankful to them for a job well done.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

2012 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to acknowledge the performance of our Canadian athletes at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London this summer.

As citizens of this great country, we should be proud of what our athletes accomplished at these games. Our Olympic and Paralympic athletes, with their courage and determination, are an inspiration for all Canadians.

During these games, many of our athletes had the pleasure of reaching the podium; others just missed medals by mere seconds or millimetres. But they all inspired us with performances worthy of the best athletes in the world.

[English]

We can all be proud as Canadians of the performance of our athletes. To see women and men from every part of this great land performing under the Canadian flag makes us all proud.

I thank all who, with courage and determination and through the core values of excellence, respect and teamwork, showed the world what Canada is all about.

On behalf of all of my colleagues on this side of the House, I congratulate them and thank them for those great and memorable sporting moments. They gave their everything and Canadians are proud of them.

[Translation]

You gave it your all and Canadians are proud of you.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over a month ago, when this House was not sitting, a madman walked into the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin and opened fire on innocent Sikh men, women and children killing six people and seriously wounding a police officer.

The Government of Canada issued a statement of condolence when this tragedy occurred. On the day of the shooting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs noted:

Canada condemns this senseless act of violence.

On behalf of all Canadians, I offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of those killed and wish a full recovery to the injured.

I and my constituents join the Minister of Foreign Affairs in condemning these murders. We pray for the congregation in Wisconsin and for all those who are victims of violence because of their faith.

May such attacks never happen anywhere again.

● (1415)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, members of Parliament will have a third hour of debate on Motion No. 312, the Conservative government's veiled attempt to reopen the abortion debate in Canada.

We, the NDP, call on all members of the House, Conservative and Liberal, to vote with us, stand up for women's rights and vote against Motion No. 312.

Thousands of Canadians, women and men, are calling on their members of Parliament to stand up for women's rights. Many will be out in their communities sending this message this Friday.

Women's rights are human rights, and it is not just a catchy slogan. It follows from Supreme Court of Canada decisions and international human rights law. Around the world, countries are surpassing Canada in ensuring that women's fundamental reproductive rights are protected.

What is the government doing? It is reopening the debate through the back door. That is why so many young women, like myself, and women of all generations are proud to stand with the only party that stands up for women in Canada, the NDP. We will not let the government turn the clock back on women's rights.

* * *

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes public transit as a key part of our communities. Since 2006, our government has invested close to \$5 billion in public transit, more than any other previous government.

We recognize that municipalities are best suited to make their own transit infrastructure decisions. Our government's \$33 billion building Canada fund is providing historic investments in support of several transit projects.

Additionally, our government has passed legislation that makes the gas tax fund a \$2 billion annual permanent transfer to provinces and cities. This allows municipalities to continue to count on stable funding for their transit needs.

Tonight the House will vote on Bill C-305, An Act to establish a National Public Transit Strategy. Unfortunately, this strategy would fail to assist municipalities in delivering tangible results for the transit infrastructure priorities. On the other hand, our government continues to remain a strong, stable funding partner for our municipalities, and they can count on us to realize their transit goals.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Montreal protocol to protect the ozone layer, in which Canada played a leading role in acting to eliminate the causes of ozone depletion.

Oral Questions

After a new two million square kilometre hole was discovered in the ozone layer over the Canadian Arctic in 2011, the government negligently announced cuts to ozone science. Environment Canada's ozone science group was dissolved and its research scientists have largely been assigned to other duties. Moreover, two weather stations have stopped reporting ozonesonde data, and the fate of both Brewer and ozonesonde measurement networks remain up in the air.

Instead of addressing these deplorable cuts, the Minister of the Environment stood in his place yesterday and questioned the credibility of international scientists. Why is the minister turning the lights out on science and why did he kill Environment Canada's world renowned ozone science group?

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP will not back down on his job-killing carbon tax scheme, which will raise the price on everything, including gas, groceries and electricity.

One would think that if the NDP members were confident enough to put this in their policy platform, a \$21 billion revenue grab, they would be able to stand and defend it in the House of Commons.

Our government will continue to tell Canadians the truth: the NDP has a plan to put a tax on carbon.

We invite the NDP to finally start putting the interests of hard-working Canadians ahead of special interest groups and work with our government to deliver on the things that are critical, jobs and economic growth. They do not want to see higher taxes on their groceries, gas or electricity. Frankly, they do not want to see an increase of any type of taxes.

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● (1420)

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives care more about making up a tax on the opposition than acting on the priorities of Canadians: our shaky economy, massive job losses and rising costs.

Let us talk about those rising gas prices. Under the Conservatives, the price of gas at the pump has skyrocketed a whopping 36%. Record prices of \$1.53 per litre have been spotted, a fact ignored by the Conservatives.

After the last election, the President of the Treasury Board said, "Nobody can explain to me how they come about their prices". He promised to get to the bottom of it, and it is another broken promise.

Many Canadians are living paycheque to paycheque and skyrocketing gas prices hit them hard. Canadians deserve better.

Perhaps the next Conservative speaker will throw away his anti-NDP rant and instead tell Canadians exactly what the government is planning to do about rising gas prices.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been quite clear that the leader of the NDP has made a carbon tax the cornerstone of an NDP platform should the party ever form government in our country. What a shame it would be for hard-working families to see an increase in gas prices, an increase in groceries and an increase in electricity prices.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Prime Minister what his government was doing to help the unemployed. The Prime Minister's answer was to bring in more temporary foreign workers.

Could the Prime Minister tell us exactly how bringing in more temporary foreign workers will help unemployed Canadians find jobs?

[Translation]

Can the Prime Minister tell us exactly how bringing in more temporary foreign workers will help unemployed Canadians find jobs?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our approach has been to help the unemployed by creating jobs. In fact, notwithstanding a very fragile global economy, Canada has actually been leading the developed economies with the strongest job-creation record: 770,000 net new jobs. That is 770,000 people who did not have a job, who have a job since the economic downturn, thanks to the policies of our Minister of Finance, our Prime Minister and this Conservative government, focused on job creation, economic growth, not job-killing carbon taxes proposed by the NDP.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are still over 300,000 more people unemployed today than before the 2008 recession. That is the fact.

How will bringing in more temporary foreign workers help the unemployed in Canada? We wanted to help Canadians who are unemployed. The government is obviously helping the unemployed in another country.

The Conservatives have changed the rules to make it legal to pay temporary foreign workers up to 15% less than Canadian workers doing the same job. Is that their message to the unemployed, "Work for less or we will bring in someone to replace you?"

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our policies aim to create more jobs for Canadians. That is why we have brought in changes to our immigration policy that will actually put a preference on giving jobs to Canadians to see that Canadians get those jobs first. We want to see that happen.

Those are changes New Democrats oppose because they do not support that kind of measure to help Canadian job creation in the same way they do not support our low-tax plan for jobs and growth. That is why they have proposed an over \$20 billion carbon tax that would devastate our Canadian economy, hurt Canadian families in the pocketbook where it matters and bring the Canadian economy to its knees. We cannot afford those kinds of reckless NDP policies.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. Consider the Conservative plan to cut employment insurance. From now on Canadians will have to choose: take a 30% permanent pay cut or be kicked off EI. That means a legal secretary in Calgary, making a little over \$37,000 a year, will be forced to take any job that comes along paying at least \$12.95 an hour. That is what a 30% pay cut translates to in the real world. Is that the Conservative plan for helping the unemployed?

• (1425)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's policies are very simple. We believe Canadians prefer to have a job and do not prefer to be on employment insurance. I know the NDP thinks it is better to create incentives for people to be unemployed. We believe it is better to create incentives and opportunity for people to work. That is exactly what our policies do.

The problem is he will not address what he will do to kill jobs in Canada. He pretends it is not there, but it is here in black and white. It is called the "New Democratic Platform 2011" and it says a total expenditure—sorry, "Green Job Creation"—sorry, "Cap and Trade Revenues By Year", \$21.5 billion—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I will ask hon. members to hold off on their applause until the minister is finished answering the question.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the other side very much for reminding Canadians about our plan to create green jobs.

[*Translation*]

Let us consider the Conservative plan for unemployed workers. A financial officer who works at a credit union in Montreal and earns \$31,000 a year will have to take the first job that comes along that pays at least \$10.85 an hour or he will lose his employment insurance benefits. That is what a 30% pay cut translates to.

Are the Conservatives able to understand the effect that this will have on families? Is this the only thing they have to offer unemployed workers in Canada?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader's problem is that his commitment to Canadians involves a carbon tax.

[*English*]

It is in black and white. He denies it and pretends it does not exist, but the problem for him is that it is here. It is \$21.5 billion and it goes up every year. He ran on it in the last election and he pretends it is not there now. Then, when he wanted the leadership of his party earlier this year, what did he say? He said that he would go even further. That is something he has to explain to Canadians because that will kill jobs and will kill growth. That is a dangerous, reckless plan for Canada's economy.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seeing the hon. member with the notes that he is reading us, we can only assume that he is the one who provided the note yesterday that said that the solution to unemployment is to bring more temporary foreign workers into Canada. At this rate, I know who the next unemployed worker in Canada is going to be: it is going to be him.

A record trade deficit of \$50 billion, 500,000 good manufacturing jobs lost, and the highest level of household debt in the history of Canada, and what is their solution? It is to lower taxes even further for big business. Even the Minister of Finance recognizes that Canada is at a standstill.

When will the Conservatives wake up and start providing solutions to real problems that are affecting people's lives?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there actually is one thing the Leader of the Opposition has right. We actually believe the solution is lower taxes, not higher taxes and a carbon tax. That is why we have lowered taxes for the average Canadian family by \$3,300, because that is what affects families and their personal pocketbooks and improves their standard of living.

We finally got details of the NDP plan for the economy above and beyond the carbon tax. Tomorrow in its opposition day motion the NDP has set out its detailed economic plan. He has been asking for point-by-point details. What is the NDP plan? It is to have a meeting in a couple of months. That is his idea: more meetings. That is not going to solve the economy.

We have a plan. We are delivering. We are delivering jobs and growth for Canada.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister once said that providing for the poor is not a federal responsibility. He does not think it is his job to help those people. The Prime Minister was clearly having a Mitt Romney moment.

Oral Questions

EI recipients are worse off if they try to work. The government has failed to improve CPP while rolling back OAS. There are crippling mortgage rates on social housing. The Prime Minister does not care about those people.

Why is the Prime Minister trying to balance the books on the backs of the most vulnerable Canadians?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, what we have been doing is helping Canadians. Indeed, we have been helping taxpaying, working Canadian families. That is why today they pay \$3,300 less in taxes on average than they did when he was in government under the Liberal Party.

In fact, we are doing a great deal to help vulnerable Canadians, those who are seeking that assistance. We have done it through reducing taxes, through taking hundreds of thousands of Canadians off the tax rolls by increasing the basic personal exemption. We are helping seniors by taking them off the tax rolls with increases to the age exemption and the age credit. We have introduced the universal child care benefit, the child tax credit, the working income tax benefit. We have been taking action. They have opposed—

• (1430)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Beauséjour.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, economic inequality in Canada is continuing to grow, and the Conservatives' solution is to punish people who are receiving employment insurance benefits and who are looking for part-time work. What is more, the unemployment rate among young people has reached 15% and the Conservatives' solution is to close the employment centres that help them to find jobs.

When will this government realize that it must govern on behalf of all Canadians and not just on behalf of those it thinks voted for the Conservatives?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, we have taken measures to help all Canadians. For example, we have established the Canada child tax benefit, the universal child care benefit, labour market agreements for persons with disabilities, the working while on claim project, the working income tax benefit, and more. We have delivered results for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister can continue, but the reality is 165,000 young people have simply given up looking for work. EI recipients who want to work while on claim are worse off financially. They suffer from a secret clawback. Millions of Canadians are without a pension plan and the government is rolling back the OAS.

For our economy to thrive, all Canadians must be the object of federal government policy. When will it reverse these destructive policies and begin to govern for all Canadians, every one of them?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, we are doing that. That is why we are happy to see that Canadians, 770,000 more of them, have jobs today than after the economic downturn. That is 770,000

people whose families are benefiting from an income, who have a job, who are benefiting from the prosperity, notwithstanding a global economy that remains uncertain. When we look south of our border, when we look across to Europe, we see conditions far worse than ours. They are thankful for our measures. However, the Liberals keep voting against them, against the youth employment strategy, against the EI hiring credit, against the apprenticeship incentive grant, against the targeted initiative for older workers. I could go on, but we can see who is really taking it out on vulnerable Canadians. It is the Liberal Party.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is now only 24 days until the deadline for the proposed takeover of Canadian Nexen by CNOOC.

The China National Offshore Oil Corporation has poor environmental and human rights records and has left behind massive contaminated sites in Burma. Yesterday, the Minister of Industry had no answer for people concerned about this deal. He is refusing to consult and is even ignoring growing concerns from within his own caucus.

Why will the minister not allow Canadians concerned about this deal to be heard?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's investment review process is sound and ensures that foreign investment is a net benefit to Canada.

Our government has a clear track record of encouraging economic growth, job creation and prosperity in Canada. I will take the time required to carefully examine the proposed acquisition.

We will not take lessons from the NDP, whose reckless economic policy would deter investment, kill jobs and hurt Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep making things up, but the fact is that in 2011, there was a major spill in a CNOOC oil field off the coast of China. The public was kept in the dark for a month. And that was not the only incident. This company has been involved in several oil spills recently.

Are the Conservatives okay with that kind of behaviour? Has the oil spill issue come up behind closed doors with CNOOC and Nexen lobbyists?

Oral Questions

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's investment review process is watertight, and we make sure that every proposed transaction will provide a net benefit to Canada. That is what we assess. Every single transaction is scrutinized very closely, and this proposed transaction will be no exception.

As I said before, the NDP is not in a position to tell us how we should do things because its irresponsible economic policies would result in job losses and negative outcomes for Canadian families.

• (1435)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of taking all this energy just to make stuff up, the government should invest energy in listening to Canadians. That is what it should be doing.

The minister is refusing public consultations. He refuses to say how it will define a net benefit to Canada. He will not address CNOOC's human rights record or its history of oil spills and environmental devastation. This type of takeover needs more than this kind of shoddy backroom treatment.

Other than company lobbyists, who is the minister talking to? Why will the government not take advice from Canadians? Why will it not consult with Canadians?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the NDP policy is to get away from trade tables. The NDP wants to put certain types of industries out of business. We will not do it. We will make sure that each transaction that is proposed here in Canada will provide a net benefit for this country. Each single transaction will be scrutinized very closely.

We will not go down the path proposed by the NDP that would kill jobs and hurt Canadian families.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the final day for residential schools survivors to apply for compensation for abuse that they suffered. We know that many survivors, for many reasons, have not been able to apply. We also know that in the last three months we saw a huge increase in the number of claims.

How will the government ensure that the survivors who could not make the deadline still have the chance to access compensation for the abuse they suffered? Will the minister extend the deadline to cope with this last-minute rush?

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, our government remains committed to achieving a fair and lasting resolution to the legacy of Indian residential schools.

The Indian residential schools settlement agreement is court supervised and was agreed to by multiple parties, including legal counsel for most students and the Assembly of First Nations. The most important thing our government has done and will continue to do is respect the terms and honour its obligations under the Indian residential schools settlement agreement.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen flexibility in these deadlines before and we call on the government to have that flexibility once again.

This compensation is an important part of reconciliation. Survivors need more than just words from the government. Instead, last week first nations organizations across this country were stunned to hear about the across-the-board cuts to their core funding. This will affect their capacity to deliver programs which, among other things, support the healing process for residential schools survivors.

Where is the commitment to building a new relationship with first nations? Will the Conservatives reverse these reckless cuts?

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, we want to ensure that funding for aboriginal organizations is focused on the delivery of essential services and programs in key areas, such as education, economic development and community infrastructure. That makes sense. After all, we have developed these shared priorities with aboriginal leadership. Our government will continue to take concrete steps that create conditions for healthier and more self-sufficient, self-sustaining aboriginal communities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister can continue to avoid answering these questions, but it is clear that the Conservatives are refusing to take rebuilding a constructive relationship with first nations seriously. The minister made ill-considered cuts to first nations organizations across the country, and now residential school survivors have to wait while the government processes a backlog of 16,000 cases.

When will the minister start taking these first nations issues as seriously as they deserve to be taken?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

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, whether we are talking about Indian residential schools or our ongoing commitment to support healthier, self-sustaining communities, we remain committed to shared priorities. Flowing from the Crown–First Nations Gathering, we will continue to work with first nations community members and with their leadership to ensure that our shared priorities are met.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives like to talk about partnership, but first nations in my constituency and throughout Canada feel ignored by the government.

Aboriginal people face unique and serious health challenges linked to traumatic effects of residential schools, yet the government has slashed funding to the few organizations in the country that specifically address challenges faced by our aboriginal communities. Now these groups face additional cuts to their core funding.

How could the minister think that the best way to solve this problem is to further reduce resources to these organizations?

• (1440)

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, as I have already said, we want to ensure that these aboriginal organizations which have done great work in the delivery of essential services and programs continue to place the priority on just that, the delivery of essential services and programs, particularly in the areas of education, economic development and community infrastructure. As I said earlier, that makes perfect sense, because over the past couple of years we have identified these shared priorities with first nations leadership, and we are taking concrete action to move forward on those shared priorities.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us call this what it really is: the government is trying to silence anybody who speaks out against the government's agenda. It has targeted first nations and Métis organizations that speak out on behalf of aboriginal people. In Manitoba, the federal government has cut 80% of the budget of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, a leader in calling for action for something as critical as missing and murdered aboriginal women.

When will the government recognize that aboriginal Canadians will not be silenced? When will it reinstate funding to AMC, MKO, MMF, and other aboriginal organizations?

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, what is most unfortunate about the member's comments and the position of her party is that every time we have moved forward with allocations for resources to shared

priorities with first nations leadership, that party has voted against them. Let us be clear on that.

Like all Canadians, the government has a responsibility to manage finances carefully. Savings realized will preserve our ability to make important investments in key shared priorities for and with first nations. We will continue to take that action to ensure strong and self-sustaining first nations communities.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Fynes family is in Ottawa today to attend hearings of the Military Police Complaints Commission concerning the death of their son, Corporal Stuart Langridge. The family deserves assurances that the minister is listening and will accept responsibility. The family even had to pay over \$10,000 to correct an error made by DND in Corporal Langridge's death certificate and the minister is still withholding documents from the inquiry.

Will the minister apologize, hand over the documents and help the Langridge family with these expenses?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there he goes again. The member continues, sadly, to want to argue this case, which is before the arm's-length Military Police Complaints Commission, on the floor of the House of Commons. He ignores legal precedent, even though he is a lawyer. He overlooks the fact that the Government of Canada, through the Department of National Defence, has paid now \$2.5 million and has given additional funds for this hearing to continue.

This is a very tragic case. We continue to work with the commission. We continue to provide information. We continue to encourage the witnesses to give their testimony in an impartial way. The member wants to interfere with the process.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand again today to hopefully have the minister lay down her talking points and answer this serious issue. The last three times she has responded, she said that anyone who worked two or three days while on EI would benefit.

The fact is that low wage earners actually lose money under the new rules. I know the minister feels no obligation to those people, but the math does not lie. I would encourage the minister to maybe lay off some communications people in her office and hire someone with grade 10 math to walk her through this. People are being hurt. They are losing money. Maybe somebody on the front bench might have a calculator. The minister—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources.

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure members that under this new program the majority of people who work while they are on claim will benefit from this and be better off.

However, let us look at the hypocrisy of the member and the Liberal Party. They pretend that they care about hard-working Canadians and yet they voted against the youth employment strategy. They voted against the EI hiring credit, the apprenticeship incentive grant, targeted initiatives for older workers, tool tax credits and foreign credential recognition.

We are trying to help Canadians back to work. They are not.

* * *

• (1445)

[Translation]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives spent close to \$800,000 to fight the veterans represented by Dennis Manuge. RCMP veterans are in the same position. They have also had to give up part of their pension.

Do the Conservatives intend to waste time and money dragging RCMP veterans before the courts, or are they going to do the right thing and include them in the discussions that are currently taking place on this issue?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear. As you know, over here we are maintaining all the veterans' benefits, and we support the decision by the Minister of National Defence to ensure that the individuals who have been penalized—both the men and women of the military and veterans—will no longer be. We are going to continue to ensure that our veterans are entitled to all the programs and services they need and fully deserve.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned of a Winnipeg housing co-op wanting to refinance its 13.25% CMHC mortgage and being crippled by CMHC charges far higher than would be applied by a commercial bank.

Will the minister re-evaluate these mean-spirited policies and ensure that housing co-ops have the support they need? Or is this another Romney moment: proof the Conservatives think it is not their job to help those people?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is very pleased to be supporting 605,000 affordable housing households across this country.

The case to which the member refers is where these housing co-operatives made a deal with CMHC to get below market rate interest rates for fixed, closed mortgages. That means that the rate does not change, and individuals agree to that because they get a benefit. Those are the terms that these individuals agreed to and those are the

terms that we expect them to honour, just as we will honour those terms.

* * *

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are tired and frustrated with traffic jams, overcrowded buses or no bus at all. They want fast, reliable and accessible public transit. Gridlock is costing the Canadian economy billions of dollars. That is why mayors, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, CUTA, transit authorities, all want a national transit strategy.

Will the minister ditch his cozy limo, get on the bus and vote yes for the national transit strategy this afternoon?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like first of all to correct the member. I do not drive a limo. I think she can see that.

Our government has invested over \$5 billion in transit infrastructure across Canada since 2006. We respect the jurisdictions of the provinces and the municipalities. We work with them. The NDP seems to vote against all our initiatives rather than support our initiatives. Why?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is quite a difference between investing and having a long-term vision that supports those investments.

Quebec will mark “Car Free Day” this week. Each year, the number of participants goes up. In Montreal, it is estimated that congestion costs \$1.4 billion a year and that 77 million working hours are lost. That is a serious blow to the economy.

Will the minister take this loss of productivity seriously and support a national public transit strategy?

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, let me first say that we respect municipal and provincial jurisdictions.

Second, 20 years ago, municipalities operated without any federal investment in infrastructure. Over the past 10 years, the revenue of those municipalities has increased by 70% despite the fact that inflation and population have grown by 30%.

Finally, the NDP public transit plan is a carbon tax, which would make it impossible to pay for gas.

Oral Questions

● (1450)

[English]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives make up facts they are silent about a real problem: high gas prices.

Under the Conservatives, prices at the pump have skyrocketed a whopping 36%. Record prices of \$1.53 a litre have been spotted in some communities, yet Conservatives do nothing but rail against policies that do not exist. How high will prices have to climb?

Canadians deserve more than fake facts. How much gouging will they have to endure before Conservatives act?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us go with the facts. We reduced the GST by 2%, strengthened the powers of the Competition Bureau and brought in the Fairness at the Pumps Act.

In addition, when the Competition Bureau finds evidence of behaviour that violates the Competition Act, it does not hesitate to take law enforcement action to protect competition and consumers.

What about the \$20 billion fact? What about the carbon tax that those guys over there are proposing? That is where the real question is.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are fooling themselves, and people are being scammed every time they pull up at the pump. The Conservatives are asleep at the wheel.

Under their government, the only thing rising faster than the national debt is the price of gas: we have seen a 36% increase since Stephen Harper took power. The NDP proposes—

The Speaker: I remind the hon. member to please use riding names or titles.

Ms. Annick Papillon: Since the Prime Minister came to power, gas prices have risen by 36%.

The NDP proposes tightening up the regulations to put an end to collusion and creating an ombudsman position to oversee market prices.

Those are concrete solutions. What are the Conservatives' solutions?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. If that party had been elected, we would have an additional \$20 billion in taxes a year. That is what Canadians would pay through the carbon tax. Is that the scam?

Here are the facts: the Conservative government reduced the GST by 2%, strengthened the powers of the Competition Bureau and brought in the Fairness at the Pumps Act. These are concrete actions that ensure that gas prices are contained.

It would be really shocking if these people came in with their carbon tax and prices jumped 10¢ a litre. They should explain themselves and tell Canadians the truth for once.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP continue to mislead Canadians on trade. They forget that one in five Canadian jobs is generated through exports.

While the NDP snipes from the sidelines, our government is busy opening new markets for our exporters. We have signed free trade agreements with nine countries, investment protection agreements with eleven more, and are negotiating with some of the largest and most dynamic markets in the world.

Could the parliamentary secretary please share with the House how our government is standing up for Canadian exporters?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder that the NDP wants to hide from its anti-trade record. Its members opposed free trade with Norway. They opposed free trade with Liechtenstein. They opposed NAFTA. The NDP member for Burnaby—New Westminster even worked against Canadian exporters, calling Buy American a perfectly logical policy.

The NDP wants a Canada that hides from the world. Only our government's ambitious pro-trade plan is creating new opportunities for our workers and our exporters.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of International Cooperation said that there had been no cuts in his department. However, CIDA's 2012 budget was cut by \$320 million, and the percentage of GDP allocated to international aid is in free fall.

I know that this is a new portfolio for the minister, but did he take the time to get the right information? Will he continue the Conservative tradition of cutting aid to the poorest countries?

● (1455)

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I find it shameful that the member from the NDP would focus on the desperate situations affecting so many people.

There have been no cuts to the humanitarian side of the CIDA budget. It is the exploitation of human tragedy that we are hearing here with no concern whatsoever. This is the party that voted against any increase to our budget, period.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given the F-35 fiasco he served up, my guess is that the minister does not understand the numbers.

[English]

Most of the countries that have been cut by the Conservatives are in the bottom 25% of the UN human development index. These cuts hurt the people most in need around the world. We must do our share in the world.

Will the minister acknowledge that the government is cutting aid to some of the poorest nations in the country? Is that what he means by being selective?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not cutting aid to nations on a humanitarian level. We are meeting all of our commitments. Canada is lifting way above its level. I might also add that in spite of the criticism from that member, we are getting praise all over the world for the kindness and generosity of Canadians in helping those with greater needs. It is a shame that the NDP does not recognize that.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are looking for answers.

I asked the minister a number of questions about her poor management of the Canada Revenue Agency. Her response was to make cuts to services.

We are learning today that thousands of single-parent families have been deprived of millions of dollars because of a miscalculation. That money should have been used to buy school supplies, clothing and food.

Is the minister going to apologize to those families for this serious mistake? How long will those families have to wait before they are reimbursed?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very disturbed to learn that so many Canadian families had not received their full children's benefits. I have expressed very strong concern to the commissioner at the CRA and my clear expectation that this situation be resolved as soon as possible.

I want to sincerely apologize to the Canadian families who have been affected. I can also assure members that the CRA will be apologizing to the Canadian families affected by this error as well.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is going to take more than words to pay back those families.

Under the Conservatives, it has been anything goes at CRA. Not only have corruption allegations been mounting, but now we find the agency cannot even follow its own rules. More Conservative mismanagement means families across the country are being shortchanged.

When will the minister finally take responsibility and what is she doing to clean up the mess?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly do regret when these kinds of unfortunate errors occur and the impact that they have on Canadian families.

I can assure the hon. member that we are doing something. I have asked the Taxpayers' Ombudsman to conduct an investigation into this issue to ensure that this type of situation never happens again.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with unemployment stubbornly high with 165,000 young Canadians giving up on finding a job, with trade deficits rising and median income falling, it is time for MPs to bite the bullet on their own pensions. If Canadians need to suck it up, so do we. Liberals are ready for it.

I challenge the Prime Minister to commit today to that reform in the form of a single stand-alone bill that is not mixed in with other bills, like Bill C-38, so that Liberals can unequivocally vote for it.

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his exuberance. He must be ready for takeoff on some project of his own.

Insofar as the business of the House is concerned, of course, we have previously indicated that we think it is fair for parliamentarians to move up to a 50-50 cost share when it comes to their pension plan. Certainly the House will be seized of this issue in due course.

* * *

● (1500)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the City of Vancouver released its analysis showing that the cutting of the Kitsilano coast guard base, the busiest one in Canada, will put people's lives at risk. Perhaps the Conservatives do not think it is their job to worry about those people and that is why they are trying to pass the buck.

However, the City of Vancouver cannot pick up the slack from that service gap and that is why our mayor has asked for a meeting with the Prime Minister, to explain to him why this is a bad decision and must be reversed.

Will the Prime Minister meet with the mayor, and if so, when?

Oral Questions

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated many times, the first and foremost concern of the Canadian Coast Guard is the safety of mariners. The Coast Guard is confident that the changes proposed to the search and rescue network in Vancouver have been completed. There will be no negative impact on our ability to respond quickly and effectively to distress incidents on the water. In fact, the Coast Guard held a series of round table working group meetings in Vancouver over the summer to ensure a smooth transition to the new system.

* * *

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that you would be concerned to learn that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known. In fact, more Canadians now die from asbestos than from all other industrial causes combined, never mind the made in Canada epidemic that we have been exporting to third world countries and developing nations.

Putting a warning label on a sack of asbestos simply is not good enough. Why does the government not join the rest of the developed world and ban asbestos in all of its forms, ban the production, sale and export of this terrible carcinogen, as the World Trade Organization, the WHO and everyone else agrees should be done?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was in my riding last Friday to announce Canada's position: Canada will no longer oppose adding chrysotile asbestos to annex III of the Rotterdam Convention. At the same time, I also announced \$50 million in diversification funds for the workers and families of the affected regions. Our government cares about the future prosperity of the regions and families affected, and they can count on our Conservative government.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has taken months, but we finally fixed the broken record—hooray!

Last Wednesday, the Conservatives announced that they would stop opposing the classification of asbestos as a toxic substance and its inclusion in the Rotterdam Convention. Just one tiny piece is missing, and we will try to fix that. It is not enough to simply stop opposing it: the government must support the new classification. It is a question of public health and Canada's reputation.

Will the Minister of Industry do the right thing and admit that asbestos is harmful to public health?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in case my colleague did not understand my answer, I repeat that Canada's position is to no longer oppose the inclusion of chrysotile in annex III of the Rotterdam Convention. That said, in my own riding last Friday, I had the privilege of announcing a diversification fund for the regions affected. The families and regions affected can count on a Conservative government for their future prosperity.

[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a judge in Ontario decided that repeat violent and sexual offenders should not be forced to prove they are not dangerous offenders, that it was "A breach of an individual's...rights".

The individual in question is a repeat sexual offender who attempted to choke one victim by putting lace around her neck, and another victim was wounded, maimed and disfigured while the individual committed aggravated sexual assault.

Parliament has already decided that repeat criminals convicted of serious violent and sexual crimes should have to prove that they do not pose a risk to society. Is that too much to ask?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not at all too much to ask, and our Conservative government will vigorously defend the constitutionality of all our legislation to the highest courts in this country if necessary. We have acted to protect Canadian communities from repeat violent criminals. In fact, provincial attorneys general supported this legislation, law-abiding Canadians have supported it, and even the chronically soft-on-crime opposition parties voted for it. This government will not rest when it comes to strengthening our justice system and standing up for the rights of victims. That is what Canadians want.

* * *

● (1505)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year Chris McBride of Kingston helps 300 indigent people do their taxes and get their GST credit and Trillium benefit. Some have trouble passing the security tests on the phone because, for example, they go for years without filing and they move several times a year and do not know their last filing addresses. This used to be fixed with an in-person interview at their local CRA office, but that service is being cut.

Do the Conservatives think that it is not their job to worry about those vulnerable people? What has been prepared at CRA to protect the level of service to them?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House previously, the way that Canadians file their taxes is changing. The way that Canadians access information from CRA is changing. There are more and more services being offered online. Therefore, in-person interactions with the agency only accounted for about 2.5% of all interactions with the agency last year. A dwindling number of people are using the service.

Canadians can visit their local Service Canada location for assistance and the CRA will provide in-person meetings for issues—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pontiac.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this summer's drought is threatening the livelihood of thousands of Canadian farmers. In the Pontiac, hard-working men and women may lose their farms because of the disastrous state of their crops. They do not have water and feed for their livestock. This has been going on for months, and there has been no assistance from the government. They need help now, not a year from now, when it will be too late.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell us what he is going to do today to help our farmers?

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as in every region of this country, we have programming at the federal level and the provincial government level—our partners in this enterprise—to address these types of issues. There was a little thing in Quebec called an election, which has slowed down the assessment. We are more than willing to get back to work. I understand the new cabinet will be named later today. I look forward to working with my new provincial colleague from Quebec on this issue.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD, reiterated that our government's decision to deliver marketing freedom to western Canadian farmers is a positive change for Canada.

While the opposition wants to impose a job-killing carbon tax on food production and groceries, can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell the House how our government is supporting farmers?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Medicine Hat is absolutely right. His farmers, my farmers and farmers from all across western Canada are embracing the opportunities that they now have available to them under the Marketing Freedom for Grain Farmers Act that we passed earlier this spring. Today's OECD report said that the end of the single desk "is a positive step to enhance proactive risk management by farmers". We absolutely agree.

What farmers really consider risky is the NDP leader and his cohorts' job-killing carbon tax that would immediately raise costs for farmers and destroy their bottom lines. We will not let that happen.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like other war resisters, Kimberly Rivera came to Canada because she did not want to serve in the Iraq war, a war she believed was unjust. She built a life here in Canada. Two of her children were born here. Yet she is scheduled for deportation tomorrow.

Will the minister do the humanitarian and compassionate thing? Will he do the right thing and allow Ms. Rivera to stay?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, military deserters from the democratic United States are not refugees under the internationally accepted meaning of the term. However, all individuals have the right to due process, and once they have exhausted all of those legal avenues we expect them to respect our immigration laws and leave Canada.

The one thing on this side of the House that we understand is that President Obama's administration does not persecute American soldiers. Just a warning to the other side: I hope members agree with that statement.

* * *

• (1510)

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

We have two looming deadlines coming up. One is the proposed takeover of Nexen by the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, and the other is to see the fine print of the deal that the Prime Minister signed with President Hu of China just this September 8, when he was in Russia.

Under such an investment deal, CNOOC may have more rights than Nexen did to challenge environmental laws.

When will we see the fine print of the investment deal and will we see it before the Nexen deal gets approved?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the proposed transaction of Nexen will be scrutinized very closely. Our job here is to ensure that it provides a net benefit for Canada. This is what we will do.

I want to reiterate that our policies will always ensure that this is good for the economy, job creation and will not hurt Canadian families, as is proposed by the other side of the House.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Brian Peckford, former premier of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Pursuant to the order made on Monday, September 17, the House will now resolve itself into the committee of the whole to welcome Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

[*Translation*]

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

CANADA'S OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

(House in committee of the whole to recognize Canada's 2012 Olympic Summer Games and Paralympic Games athletes, Mr. Andrew Scheer in the chair)

[*And Canada's 2012 Olympic and Paralympic athletes being present in the chamber:*]

The Speaker: It is my pleasure today to welcome to the House of Commons athletes from Canada's Olympic and Paralympic teams who participated in the 2012 Summer Games in London: Zsafia Balazs, Peter Barry, Marie-Eve Beauchemin-Nadeau, Philippe Beaudry, Gabriel Bergen, Arjan Bhullar, Josh Binstock, Melissa Bishop, Tyler Bjorn, Elisabeth Black, Whitney Bogart, Isaac Bouckley, Aaron Brown, Jeremiah Brown, Alexandra Bruce, Ashley Brzozowicz, James Andrew Byrnes, David Calder, Katrina Cameron, Josh Cassidy, Candace Chapman, Samantha Cheverton, Custio Clayton, Ryan Cochrane, Karen Cockburn, Jared Connaughton, Rose Cossar, Jason Crone, Will Crothers, Patrice Dagenais, Mark de Jonge, Andrew Scott Dickens, Marco Dispalto, Martine Dugrenier, Jason Dunkerley, John Dunkerley, David Eng, Roseline Filion, Paula Findlay, Emilie Fournel, Hugues Fournel, Charles Francis, Nathan Gafuik, Robyn Gayle, Robert Gibson, Christine Girard, Elizabeth Gleadle, Thomas David Gossland, Krista Guloien, Geoff Harris, Emilie Heymans, Andre Ho, Richard Hortness, Benoit Huot, Anthony Jacob, Morgan Jarvis, Lindsay Jennerich, Josh Karanja, Justin Karn, Savannah King, Amy Kneebone, Kaylyn Kyle, Audrey Lacrois, Étienne Lalonde-Turbide, Adam Lancia, Alexandra Landry, Karina LeBlanc, Stéphanie Leclair, Hunter Lowden, Heather MacLean, Rosannagh MacLennan, Élise Marcotte, Darcy Marquardt, Martha McCabe, Conlin McCabe, Melanie McCann, Virginia McLachlan, Erin McLeod, Tyler Miller, Victoria Moors, Summer Mortimer, Curtis Moss, Anastasiya Muntyanu, Marie-Eve Nault, Cory Niefer, Patricia Obee, Derek O'Farrell, Mark Oldershaw, Richard Peter, Monica Peterson, Brian Price, Martin Reader, Anjelika Reznik, Aurelie Rivard, Brittany Rogers, Reuben Daniel Ross, Sandra Sassine, Jody Schloss, Rachel Seaman, Young Sean, Christine Sinclair, Gavin Smellie, Oluseyi Smith, Mary Spencer, Michelle Stilwell, Alisha Tatham, Michael Tayler, Mark Tewksbury, Karine Thomas, Kelsey Titmarsh, David Tremblay, Antoine Valois-Fortier, Tera Van Beilen, Adam van Koeverden, Rachelle Viinberg, Zhen Wang, Damian Warner, Justyn Warner, Richard Weinberger, Sarah Wells, Tara Whitten, Lauren Wilkinson, Dylan Wykes and Emily Zurrer.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

● (1515)

The Speaker: I know I speak on behalf of all members in this House and, indeed, all Canadians when I say how extremely proud we are of each and every one of you. Through hard work, sacrifice and determination, you have become truly world-class athletes and an inspiration to us all.

Young Canadians, including my own children, cheered for you and then pretended to be just like you in their own backyard Olympic Games across our country. As role models to our young athletes and our future Olympians and Paralympians, you have done us proud, representing the very best of what it means to be Canadian.

[Translation]

Today, we also have an opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women who support Canadian athletes. I am talking about the coaches, administrators, organizations like the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic committees and the athletes' families, whose love and moral support motivate them to push their limits.

[English]

On behalf of all members of Parliament, congratulations on your magnificent achievements and thank you for being such an inspiration to all Canadians.

The committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

It being 3.22 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Monday, September 17, the House will now proceed to routine proceedings.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1520)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled: Mutual Recognition Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the State of Israel for Conformity Assessment of Telecommunications Equipment done at Tel Aviv on June 24, 2012; an agreement concerning the interpretation of Article 25 of the Convention between the Government of Canada and the Swiss Federal Council for the avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on Income and on capital done at Berne on May 5, 1997, as amended by the protocol done at Berne on October 22, 2010, done at Ottawa on June 28 and July 23, 2012; the Food Assistance Convention done at London on April 25, 2012; and the Final Acts of the World Radio Communication Conference of the International Telecommunication Union, WRC-12, done at Geneva on February 17, 2012.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

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WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 12

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations and I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Ways and Means Motion No. 12, standing on the order paper, be deemed moved, the question be deemed put, and a recorded division be deemed requested and deferred to Wednesday, September 19, at the expiry of time provided for government orders.

The Speaker: Does the chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1525)

PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin with a petition from a total of 217 constituents of mine from Kitchener Centre. There are actually over five petitions, all of them referencing section 223 of the Criminal Code.

The petitioners point out that the section says that a child does not become a human being until the moment of complete birth, contrary to 21st medical evidence. They call on the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human.

I have a petition to similar effect with several dozen signatures from the riding of Northumberland—Quinte West also calling on Parliament to recognize the principle that every human being has inherent worth and dignity.

I have two petitions from the riding of Etobicoke Centre, totalling almost 120 people from those ridings to the same effect.

Further, I have almost 100 signatures on a petition from the riding of Palliser, Saskatchewan, another 25 signatures from the riding of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre and another 65 signatures in two petitions from the riding of Oxford.

The Speaker: I see quite a lot of members rising to present petitions so I will insist on very brief summaries so we can accommodate as many members as possible.

The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition to the House today calling upon the Government of Canada to enact a public transit strategy.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure I table a petition in regard to saving an ELA area, one of Canada's leading freshwater research stations.

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

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present.

The petitioners state that Canada's 400-year-old definition of a human being says that a child does not become a human being until

Routine Proceedings

the moment of complete birth, contrary to 21st century medical evidence, and that Parliament has a solemn duty to reject any law that says that some human beings are not human.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons and Parliament to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code.

These petitioners come from across Canada. I have a second petition from my own riding, another one from across Canada and a third one from my own riding.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition today calling upon the government to enact a national public transit strategy, which would be of particular benefit to my riding.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from my constituents asking Parliament to support Bill C-442 from my colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, the national Lyme disease strategy act.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition, mostly from constituents of Kingston and the Islands, calling upon Parliament to confirm that every human being is recognized as human by amending section 223 of the Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition signed by many of my constituents from Chestermere, Alberta. It is in support of Motion 312. It recognizes Canada's 400-year-old definition of a human being and calls for changes to section 223 of the Criminal Code moving it to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce a petition today signed by thousands of people from across the country in support of Bill C-305, which was introduced by my colleague, the member for Trinity—Spadina.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to implement a public transit strategy so that we have a permanent plan to provide sustainable, predictable, long-term and adequate funding in order to increase access to public transit.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two different petitions I want to table today.

The first is a petition from Manitobans in support of Motion 312. The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to amend section 223 of the Criminal Code so that it reflects 21st century medicine.

Routine Proceedings

● (1530)

HEALTH

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-386. I have almost 500 signatures here from across Canada supporting the prohibition of using tanning equipment by anyone under the age of 18 and properly labelling the equipment as carcinogenic-radiating equipment.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of signatories from Thunder Bay calling upon the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

PENSIONS

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition calling upon the Government of Canada to affirm that pension benefits are in fact deferred wages and to elevate and define pension benefit plans to secured status in the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Chilliwack calling upon the Parliament of Canada to amend section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

[Translation]

ABORTION

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition against Motion No. 312, which reopens the abortion debate. I am very pleased to present this petition today because I think it is important.

[English]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition on behalf of constituents from the Wetaskiwin area of my constituency asking Parliament to look at Motion 312. They state that Canada's 400-year-old definition of a human being says that a child does not become a human being until the moment of complete birth, contrary to 21st century medical evidence, and that Parliament has a solemn duty to reject any law that says some human beings are not human.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect—

The Speaker: Order, please. I would remind members that they are not supposed to read the text of the petition but just provide a brief summary.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[Translation]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on behalf of many Canadians who want the government to support the bill introduced by my colleague from Trinity—Spadina regarding the creation of a national public transit strategy in Canada.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition on behalf of residents of Kenora, Ontario and Winnipeg, Manitoba about the closing of the Experimental Lakes Area.

I will quote the words of David Schindler:

Few scientific projects of any sort have had the global impact of ELA, and certainly none can match it on the basis of scientific return per dollar spent.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition regarding CCSVI. Today marks one year and eighty-two days since the government promised clinical trials on CCSVI. There is still no action and in this time we have potentially lost more than 450 people to devastating multiple sclerosis and those living with the disease will have worsened on average by one disability score.

The petitioners call for the Minister of Health to consult experts actively engaged in the diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI to undertake phase III clinical trials on an urgent—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of Motion No. 312.

ABORTION

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition signed by women and men from across Canada who are opposed to the Conservative Motion No. 312, a thinly veiled attempt to reopen the abortion debate in Canada, a debate that Canadians have already had. Canadians are ready to move on. It is about time that all members of the Conservative benches support of a woman's right to choose.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition in support of Bill C-305, the bill to create a national public—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

Routine Proceedings

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to present a petition signed by dozens of my constituents.

The petitioners request that Parliament support Motion No. 312, which will be debated this week and voted on next week and reconsider the definition of what it means to be a human and amend section 223 of the Criminal Code to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present yet another petition from Canadians in support of the call for the Government of Canada to join other OECD nations to institute, by law, a national transit strategy.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions.

In two of them, constituents note that section 223 of the Criminal Code comes from 400-year-old British common law and the child only becomes a human being once he or she proceeds from the womb. The petitioners call on Parliament to have a discussion on that.

In the other one, the petitioners call on Parliament to amend section 223 of the Criminal Code to reflect current science.

Mr. Speaker, in the other petition, the petitioners call on the House to speedily enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

STATUS OF THE UNBORN

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present one of many petitions that we have received from people across Canada.

These petitions point out that the Supreme Court has already recognized that the medical and legal definitions of a fetus are two completely different things, and the petitioners are calling on the House to oppose Motion M-312.

[*English*]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present this petition today that calls on the government to provide a permanent investment plan for public transit.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am giving my support to all my colleagues. Therefore, I am pleased to present a petition signed by hundreds of Canadians who support a national public transit strategy. I would like to point out that Canada is the only OECD country that does not have a strategy of this kind.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition that calls on the government to create a national public transit strategy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today of presenting a petition that supports the member for Trinity—Spadina in her request for a national public transit strategy. The people who signed this petition are in favour of a national public transit strategy, which will surely help everyone across Canada fight pollution, among other things.

[*English*]

ABORTION

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present this petition signed by women and men from across Canada who are opposed to Conservative Motion Number 312 that will attempt to reopen the abortion debate in Canada and the debate that Canadians had a decade ago. Canadians are ready to move on. The women and men of Canada look to move forward and not back and finally achieve true gender equality in Canada.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present in the House a petition for an issue dear to the heart of the citizens of Vaudreuil-Soulanges. The petitioners call for a national public transit strategy.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two excellent petitions with me. The first calls on the Government of Canada to enact a public transit strategy.

[*Translation*]

ABORTION

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by many Canadians, men and women, who strongly oppose the motion. I hope that all members will support a woman's right to choose and that they will not reopen a debate that has already been dealt with.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present a petition today supporting my colleague's bill on a national public transit strategy.

ABORTION

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition signed by Canadians in Ottawa, Burnaby and Vancouver who are asking that the debate on abortion not be reopened and that Motion M-312 be rejected.

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[English]

LYME DISEASE

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

The first petition is from residents of Alberta, Nova Scotia, British Columbia and Manitoba. The petitioners support the private member's bill I put forward, Bill C-442, calling for a national Lyme disease strategy. I hope to have support from members on all sides of the House.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Ontario, British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

The petitioners urge the government to say no to the pipeline schemes across northern British Columbia leading to supertankers on the B.C. coast. These petitioners and many others say no.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present three petitions.

The first petition deals with the fact that Canada is recognized as the only nation in the western world, along with China and North Korea, as not having any laws restricting abortion. The petitioners call upon Parliament to do that.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): The other two petitions relate to Motion No. 312. The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact laws that would recognize the human and amend Section 223 of the Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

● (1540)

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

DROUGHT

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of an application for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Welland.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me today on what is in Ontario, Quebec and Eastern Canada an absolute emergency, and that is the drought we have seen for those of us who live in Ontario, Quebec and eastward into the Atlantic provinces, albeit not in every specific part of those provinces.

My home province and constituency saw record high temperatures in what should have been wintertime that caused the budding of apple trees, then they froze and 80% of that crop was lost. That was followed with a drought for the remaining 20% of the crop. That crop is now about half the size of what it should be. Not only did apple producers lose 80% of their crop, but the last 20% that managed to make its way through were about half the size.

One can only imagine the cause of this drought, but the effect on primary producers and farmers has been absolutely devastating.

Hay prices have tripled from what they were one year ago. A round bale of hay, a large bale, which was \$30 last year is now \$100. Farmers have basically liquidated their livestock because they can no longer afford to feed them or they can no longer find feed in eastern Canada for them. This is a catastrophe that we need to deal with on an immediate basis.

I was with my colleagues in Timiskaming just this summer talking to a blueberry producer. This producer tried to harvest his blueberries but they were all so small they literally fell through the screening to the ground and he harvested not one. His colleague just to the west of him reduced his herd by two-thirds because he could not find feed.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is holding fundraisers for farmers to buy feed because they cannot afford it. In this day and age why are we holding a fundraiser like it is a bake sale on a Sunday afternoon at church for primary producers who find themselves in such a predicament through no fault of their own because of a drought that we all recognize has been of a catastrophic nature?

We need to have a discussion in the House so we can find a way to remedy these problems in an expeditious way. We know the programs exist, albeit my friend the Minister of Agriculture has reduced those programs going forward. We need to find a way to remedy the situation now, not some time in the future.

I would appreciate your consideration of that, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the letter he sent me and for bringing this matter to the House. I do not find it meets the test under the Standing Orders. I note that supply days are starting to be allotted. I am sure the member could talk to officials in his party to see if that is one avenue he might be able to pursue.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***ENHANCING ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT**

The House resumed from September 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be sharing my time with the member for Welland.

Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act, addresses issues of urgent public concern with respect to the RCMP.

The men and women in uniform at the RCMP have a difficult and often dangerous job to do every day, a job that requires a great deal of judgment and conduct beyond reproach. We should be mindful of the fact that the majority are fathers and mothers who risk their lives to ensure our safety. However, the admiration we have for their courage and commitment should not prevent us from collectively examining the corporate culture of the RCMP and the repercussions this culture may have on workplace relations and the RCMP itself, which is accountable to the public and must be more transparent.

We have all heard that over 200 female employees and former employees of the RCMP have joined a class-action lawsuit alleging sexual harassment. Other individual lawsuits have also been filed. Sexual harassment has no place in our society. It should not be tolerated anywhere, least of all in the RCMP.

We have also heard about disciplinary measures imposed on RCMP officers accused of gross misconduct, measures that many believe to be too lenient. For the past few months, we have been urging the Minister of Public Safety to make sexual harassment in the RCMP a priority.

Bill C-42 appears, at least in part, to be a response to public concerns about this issue. But is it an adequate response? Does the bill go as far as it should to reassure the public that the government is doing everything it can to change the prevailing culture within the RCMP? Like many others, I have my doubts.

Let me be clear. Yes, Bill C-42 is a step in the right direction, but it does not go far enough. We will support it at second reading knowing that the committee will have to work hard to improve it.

I would like to commend the minister for the openness he expressed in his opening remarks earlier this week. He said that he was open to the committee amending the bill. I think that we should all make an effort to collaborate more here in the House.

As I said, we agree with the spirit of Bill C-42. For example, we agree that restoring public confidence in the RCMP is a priority. One would have to be blind or wilfully ignorant not to have noticed public confidence declining over the past few years. The tragic death of Robert Dziekanski and the force's response to it, along with the sexual harassment allegations that I mentioned earlier have done serious damage to the RCMP's reputation.

Second, we also recognize that civilian review is vital to promoting the RCMP's obligation to ensure transparency and public accountability; it is crucial. This is especially true because, without accountability and transparency, the goal of regaining public trust cannot be achieved.

As for the goal of promoting irreproachable conduct within the RCMP, that is self-evident. That being said, it would be in everyone's best interest to clearly specify the consequences of and the procedures to follow in cases of misconduct on the part of any employee. This is the kind of proposal that could be discussed in committee.

On both sides of the House, we share certain ideas about the goals we wish to achieve with this bill, but where we might disagree is on how to go about achieving them. While we support some aspects of the bill, we believe that it should be more ambitious regarding certain points.

● (1545)

It is not a question of criticizing for the sake of criticizing, but rather being constructive and proposing options and solutions.

For instance, we believe it is crucial to allow the RCMP commissioner to carry out reforms in the area of discipline in order to deal with the climate of sexual harassment that exists in the organization. No one is against virtue.

Everyone agrees that the current process to address problems and misconduct in the workplace is too complex and needs to be simplified. However, we also think it is crucial to bring in a clear anti-harassment policy. Specific standards of behaviour regarding sexual harassment and specific criteria for evaluating the performance of all employees must be put in place. It is also important to ensure that these reforms in the area of discipline do not lead to any arbitrary dismissals.

The RCMP is the only police force in the country that does not have a collective agreement. Under these circumstances, we must ensure a balanced disciplinary process in order to avoid any abuses.

We also support reforms to the old RCMP Public Complaints Commission. The public must have full confidence in the independence of that institution. I think the Conservatives and the NDP can agree on that.

Where we perhaps disagree is with regard to the degree of independence that the new civilian review and complaints commission should have. Everyone agrees that we should strengthen the RCMP's review and complaints body. However, Bill C-42 is not robust enough in that regard.

The bill sets out that, like the former commission, the new commission will report directly to the Minister of Public Safety rather than to the House of Commons.

Government Orders

We believe that this way of doing things does not promote the independence of the commission and the investigations that it will conduct. If we really want to restore the public's confidence in the RCMP, we have to guarantee that the civilian review and complaints commission is fully and completely independent.

In order to guarantee the civilian review and complaints commission's independence, we must also do things differently when it comes to the contracts of the commissioners who will oversee it. The current commissioner, Ian McPhail, inherited a one-year contract when he replaced Paul Kennedy. This one-year contract was recently renewed for just one more year.

One year contracts are meant to ensure that the complaints commissioner has an arm's length relationship with the government and to avoid any perception that he does not. Some people will wonder whether the commissioner is able to do his work properly if he does not know whether he will have the job from one year to the next.

The bill provides for contracts of more than five years. Now, we must ensure that this way of doing things does not open the door to a practice similar to the one that is currently in place, that of a one-year renewable contract.

In closing, I would like to emphasize the importance of working together within the House. Above and beyond our political allegiances, we all have the duty to best serve the interests of Canadians.

As I mentioned, we agree with the spirit of Bill C-42 and that is why we will support it at second reading.

However, there is still work to be done. We still have to fine-tune this bill in committee. I raised a few ideas that I hope will be incorporated. My colleagues will do the same. Together, the government and the opposition must ensure that we come up with the best bill possible.

• (1550)

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months now, the NDP has pressured the minister to give serious consideration to the sexual harassment issues in the RCMP. The fact that 200 women have launched a class action suit against the RCMP shows that there is a problem in Canada in 2012.

But I would like to ask the hon. member whether she shares my view that Bill C-42 will not address the systemic problem of culture within the RCMP. I actually think that the bill will not be able to change the culture and that the 200 women—like the other women who have worked or will work for this institution—will be subjected to this culture within the RCMP and are not very likely to see their conditions improve.

Does the hon. NDP member think that Bill C-42 will change the culture within the RCMP?

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, bills do not change culture. They certainly provide guidelines, rules and positions. However, the RCMP needs to develop policies, offer training, and create an open and transparent environment with a complaint system that individuals can trust, knowing that their problems will be looked

into. That is the only way, and we know it is because of past examples of sexual harassment or harassment in the workplace.

• (1555)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer for her excellent speech on Bill C-42. She raised some extremely interesting points, including the reason why we are pleased with this bill, the type of gaps in the bill and what needs to be improved.

We know that Bill C-42 is a step in the right direction, but unfortunately it does not go far enough. What is sad is that this bill was introduced following much pressure from the official opposition and questions that were put to the government. It was as a result of those questions that the government introduced this bill in haste in June.

I think it was an excellent opportunity to address the problem directly, to really take on the RCMP's internal culture and to ensure that women are protected in the workplace.

I know that my colleague worked very hard in her career for the rights of workers. Is she not a little disappointed to see just how far short of the mark this bill falls, in our view?

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the question, because, having worked on preparing and developing workplace policies, I know that, even with such policies in place, it is still not enough. As I said, you have to create a work environment where women and men feel comfortable; they have to be able to lodge complaints at a specific place and feel safe when they do.

Other things that are important include workplace training on harassment and the right to say no. That is equally important. But even when you have this type of workplace, we very well know that, when new officers are hired—and that goes for all workplaces—when the person is new and there is a minority, changing the culture does not help. The culture has to be changed at all levels, starting at the top, and people need to have the opportunity to advance in line with their career plans.

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new civilian complaints commission is oddly enough very similar to the existing one where the public can complain about the RCMP.

I would like to thank the hon. member for her remarks and I would like to know what her thoughts are on how independent or dependent the new commission is.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, one of the problems that has been raised has to do with giving the commissioner the arbitrary power to fire people. We feel that this approach is not sufficiently clear or transparent and that a tremendous amount of power is being placed in the hands of one single person.

So there should be a commission or an independent office that reviews the complaints. As we know, since there is no workplace representative, it is difficult to have a fair process. As a result, we would like the committee to study that part of the legislation.

[*English*]

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Hull—Aylmer for allowing me the opportunity to speak to this very important bill.

Government Orders

We have said quite openly that we support the bill at second reading, but we see opportunities to amend the bill to actually make it better. There are things that have been omitted simply because they were not thought through. They are not omissions by default or just because, but there are other things we could actually do.

My colleague pointed out the systemic nature of this, but I will quote Commissioner Paulson's testimony before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, where he said:

It's the culture of the organization that has not kept pace...We haven't been able to change our practices and our policies, or provide systems that would permit women to thrive in the organization and contribute to policing, which they must do....I've said it publicly, and I'll say it again. I think the problem is bigger than simply the sexual harassment. It is the idea of harassment. The idea that we have a hierarchical organization overseeing men and women who have extraordinary powers in relation to their fellow citizens, which requires a fair degree of discipline.

What he talks about is what I saw as a very young person, when I was a student and worked in the auto sector. That workplace was dominated by men. There were very few women in that workplace. There was a culture that had evolved over the years. That culture needed to change as we saw the workplace change. However, when we saw the workplace change, its culture lagged behind. We took steps to remediate that, such as through harassment training in the workplace, so that people felt protected. They could come forward knowing there was an investigation process that was neutral and unbiased, that was not going to be heavy-handed for either party, regardless of who the complainant was or who the person being complained about was. People knew the process was available and that they could take part in that process.

Unfortunately, we have seen over the last year or so that former women officers of the RCMP have come forward after leaving the RCMP. It was a career that they desired and cherished, but because of the actions and the culture inside the organization, they felt they had to leave. Now they have finally come forward and said that all of that needs to change. They are standing up and saying to us as the policy-makers that we need to change the organization so that does not happen to other officers ever again, that people would have to leave their job because of the culture they faced within that workplace.

This is the 21st century and the national police organization finds itself mired in the 19th century. I guess this is better late than never, as one would say, but it is too late for those who have left. We will have to find a way to remediate that. The appropriate authorities will have to do that.

It has been mentioned that there are some misgivings in the sense that the powers in Bill C-42 would be arbitrarily given to the commissioner. The commissioner would become the absolute judge.

In every organization there is always a final decision maker, whoever that may be, but in this particular case, there is no balance. There is no balance for the person who perhaps would be subject to discipline and dismissal. One needs to find the balance, because what could happen is it could have the opposite effect. Folks would be forced into not coming forward because they thought the charge may end up in a dismissal and they would not want that to happen. We would end up with a system that still would not work.

The RCMP is our national police organization. I know that a lot of folks who live in Ontario and Quebec do not necessarily see the RCMP, but for folks in the west, the RCMP is a very visible police organization. We want to have an organization that functions well, which it does.

• (1600)

I also need to say that the vast majority of RCMP officers in this country do remarkable work. They go to work every day, work hard at what they do and do the things required of them under the act. They are good employees and good folks to work with. Unfortunately, there is an undercurrent of the situations that we have witnessed. We have heard about the nastiness of those things and we are now trying to address them. Bill C-42 is a step in the process of finding a way to resolve the issues that came up in the past and to ensure they get rectified and do not happen again.

In my view, we need a sense of independence and an independent body that can look at this organization and not appear as if it were the army. The army has a process as well, which is an internal one. That is justifiable and fair for it. However, this is a police organization that deals with citizens, the folks who interact with it. We need to have a civilian oversight authority that actually has authority and teeth. This is the only policing organization in this country that does not have civilian oversight. Municipal, regional, and provincial police forces in the case of Quebec and Ontario have civilian oversight. The RCMP does not.

That being the case, Bill C-42 has to address the issues of how we can give authority to civilian oversight so that folks can see that complaints are indeed taken seriously, are dealt with effectively and that the remedies that come out the other side are fair and just. I say this because in every remedy, there are two parties. There is always the complainant and there is the one who is aggrieved, and they deserve justice on both sides of the ledger. If we end up with an arbitrary process, there will always be someone who feels as if his or her grievance or complaint has not been handled judiciously in a fair and even-handed way. We would end up back at the same place we are now, with people coming forward and saying that the system did not work when they were involved with it.

I have heard members on both sides of the House say many times that they do not believe people should go to work to be harassed. They should go to work to do the work that we ask them to do, regardless of where they happen to go. Mr. Speaker, you say that you will not condone harassment in the House. However, we have this national organization that for far too long has allowed that to happen and a system to take hold that perpetuates it. It is not even the nudge, nudge, wink, wink routine. It really is a systemic issue, which is much harder to remedy than situations where someone simply does something untoward to someone else, which can then be dealt with by an immediate supervisor by taking the person aside and remedying that particular situation.

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When it becomes a systemic issue, it literally inculcates the entire organization and then it becomes okay. If one takes oneself outside of such an organization and steps to the side, outside of the organization one would say in everyday life that others should not do that. However, because it is systemic, when one steps back into that role, it becomes a case of, “Well, that’s what we do”. Moreover, because it becomes the norm, “We will continue to do it”. Even though individually we might think something is morally reprehensible, that we would never do it at home, never do it to our neighbours or to our broader community, as soon as we step inside the organization we think it is okay, because the system says to us, “That’s what we do”. We need to put an end to that. I think everyone in the House wants to put an end to that.

That is why New Democrats want to send this bill to second reading and improve it. There are opportunities here to improve it. I believe the minister is telling us to bring our amendments forward, that he wants to work on the bill together. I commend the minister for that. Ultimately, we need to make Bill C-42 work for the good women and men in the RCMP and, indeed, the broader public across this country. Let us put the pride back in the RCMP that Canadians have always had in it, and which I know the officers in the RCMP truly want back again so that the organization is the proud organization that we all know it can and will be in the future.

• (1605)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for a very good presentation setting out all the issues that are before us in this bill.

The bill certainly is a step in the right direction, but I must agree with my hon. friend that there needs to be more, perhaps a civilian oversight body, going along with these proposed improvements in legislation.

The member raised the issue of women in the RCMP who faced sexual discrimination and had their careers ended. I have talked to some of those women and they say it is somewhat of a convenient myth that there is systemic sexism within the RCMP. They say their experience is that there are one or two bad apples who keep being promoted and do not get punished. Therefore, the overall message is that if one speaks up, one’s career will end and that the person causing grief will continue on a career path by perhaps moving sideways or to another detachment.

I would like my hon. friend’s comments on how we can protect women in the RCMP so that they do not face sexual discrimination and harassment.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the folks the member has talked to say that they do not believe it is systemic, but what I witnessed in the auto sector in the mid-1970s is indeed exactly the same thing within RCMP. It was systemic.

If someone is being told they will be promoted or will be moved sideways, it is the system that is doing that. The system is saying that it is okay for them to do what they did and that it will just shuffle them and put them in a different place, and that it will do so again.

The issue is that we actually have to stop it. We have to have the leadership to say that if this continues the person will not be there any more. It is not good enough to simply say “Oops, that was

nasty”, and give them a slap on the wrist and a promotion to do something else. Rather, this issue has to be condemned and must be ended.

Where women and men are in the workplace, they must always be equal. They can be nothing less than equals. We put a stop to it when men in an organization, and I say this with purpose, actually accept women as equals in the workplace.

• (1610)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to button the systemic nature because it is not only the leadership that is responsible for this but also the co-workers. If they do not say something, then obviously those actions are being condoned.

We also need more exploration in the bill of the fact that these RCMP officers are also dealing with citizens. There is an old saying: “What happens in the family is practised outside the family”. Therefore, if contempt for another person’s rights is systemically condoned within the family, within the house, then that person will take that same attitude out onto the streets in how they deal with other people, including women, in the course of their daily work.

I would ask my hon. colleague to comment on whether or not there is another level to why the bill should be explored more, specifically putting into place things that dissuade members of the RCMP from continuing this behaviour.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, to reaffirm the position my friend laid out, we cannot remain silent. Those of us who see it need to speak up and say no. That is how to deal with a system that is unequal. That is how we put an end to it. It cannot just be a memo or an instruction. It has to be about everyone within the culture saying, “That is not how we operate, and we will not get away with that”. We have to stand tall as men when it comes to harassment of women in the workplace and say no to male co-workers, telling them that they cannot get away with it. We have to help with that.

I think the member is correct. If this is what someone does inside, then why would they not do it somewhere else? It is not as if someone on the job is saying that they would not do those things out there, because the tendency is for one to reiterate the same sort of feelings and contempt outside. That is why a civilian complaint authority is absolutely needed. There are complaints from civilians and we have seen them. The Dziekanski case is out there. We need to have a civilian complaint oversight body to actually take care of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Transport; the hon. member for Churchill, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

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Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech I would like to read a bit of the summary of the bill because it puts into context some of my forthcoming remarks. The summary states:

This enactment enhances the accountability of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police by reforming the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act in two vital areas. First, it strengthens the Royal Canadian Mounted Police review and complaints body and implements a framework to handle investigations of serious incidents involving members. Second, it modernizes discipline, grievance and human resource management processes for members, with a view to preventing, addressing and correcting performance and conduct issues in a timely and fair manner.

It establishes a new complaints commission, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (CRCC). Most notably, it sets out the authority for the CRCC to have broad access to information in the control or possession of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, it sets out the CRCC's investigati2powers, it permits the CRCC to conduct joint complaint investigations with other police complaints bodies and it authorizes the CRCC to undertake policy reviews of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

People viewing this will see that the bill is a comprehensive one with many pages of amendments.

I want to refer briefly to the speech by the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, where he clearly outlined the NDP position on Bill C-42. In that outline he indicated that the NDP does support getting this bill to committee for second reading, but he also raised some concerns. Those are a couple of concerns that I am going to deal with.

The member said:

We on this side agree that there needs to be action to strengthen the RCMP review and complaints body. The RCMP Public Complaints Commission has provided a valuable service but we have concerns about its full independence and its ability to oversee independent investigations...

Finally, there needs to be action in the area of modernizing discipline, grievance and human resource management processes. The minister has cited anecdotal evidence of things that take way too long and we all know that is true. However, what is lacking is clear guidance for RCMP members of what those standards are and how failure of those standards will be dealt with in a judicious and fair manner. In addition, when RCMP members have grievances they need to have the understanding that their concerns can be brought forward in a timely manner and that those grievances can be resolved and not drag on for years and years...

In his conclusion, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca stated:

—I would stress the importance of both the independence of the RCMP from government and the independence of investigations into RCMP conduct from the government and the RCMP, and also the independence of the commissioner, who really ought to be the chair of this new civilian agency and report to Parliament rather than to the minister of the day.

Those are a couple of aspects that I am going to focus on during my brief time before the House. We have been clear that we welcome the minister's comment that he would entertain amendments to the bill. Although we support the principles of the bill, as I mentioned, we do have concerns. I am going to specifically focus on those concerns around the independent complaints commission and the issue of sexual harassment.

I want to put this into context as well. There was a report back in September 2007 called "Rebuilding the Trust". Part of the reason I want to read excerpts from that report is that it does set the table for this legislation, but it also reinforces to the Canadian public the importance of the RCMP to them.

My own province of British Columbia is largely policed by RCMP officers. As many others have pointed out, by and large most RCMP officers are excellent at their jobs. We rely on them and trust them. However, there have been some very serious cases in British Columbia that have called into question some of the disciplinary aspects within the RCMP.

The report, "Rebuilding the Trust", indicates that the RCMP is a national symbol. It states:

The "red serge" has been a source of national pride and is recognized around the world as a symbol of who we are and what living in Canada means. However, in the last few years, trust in the management of the RCMP has been shaken. This has had a stunning impact on the members and employees of the RCMP and on the Canadians they serve. Trust in the management of the RCMP needs to be rebuilt.

• (1615)

That is an important point because it is not only Canadians who rely on the police for its services who need to have that trust but fellow workers, the men and women who serve in uniform, also need to have the trust of their co-workers. That is an important piece. Members need to have confidence that their co-workers are behaving in an appropriate manner.

Although these numbers are from 2007, they are important. They may have shifted slightly but it does show the breadth and scope of the men and women serving in uniform, and the civilians who support them. This is the section titled, "The Business and People of the RCMP". It says:

The RCMP is arguably the most complex law enforcement agency in the world today. The RCMP provides, under contract, rural and municipal policing services in all but two provinces, in all three territories and in approximately 200 municipalities and aboriginal communities.

It then states:

There are currently over 27,000 members and employees of the RCMP comprising regular and civilian members of the Force and public servants. The approximately 17,000 regular members are trained as qualified peace officers, are entitled to wear the uniform and are entitled to carry weapons. There are also approximately 3,000 civilian members of the RCMP who are not trained as peace officers. Civilian members provide specialist support to the Force in areas such as forensic science and technology. Additionally, the RCMP employs approximately 4,700 public service employees who are not members of the Force, but who provide specialized services in key areas such as human resources and financial management.

In the report, it was discovered that the task had to expand because they realized that during their consultations there were problems around "accountability, governance and cultural issues that ran far deeper and were more fundamental to the Force than those described in the earlier Investigative Report".

At the end of this report, there were 49 recommendations for things like board management. One of the recommendations was that:

Legislation should be enacted by the Parliament of Canada as soon as possible to establish a Board of Management of the RCMP responsible for the stewardship of its organization and administration including the oversight of the management of its financial affairs, resources, services, property, personnel and procurement.

There was a recommendation "to establish an Independent Commission for Complaints and Oversight of the RCMP having the attributes outlined in Chapter 2" of this report, and that it "should be established and commence operation as quickly as possible following legislative enactment".

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However, there were far-ranging recommendations that also included issues around health and safety for officers, training, education and ongoing support, such as backup and what happens when an officer is disabled.

Again, it is a comprehensive report with 49 recommendations. Although some of these recommendations were undertaken in this piece of legislation, not all of them were and it would be important for the government to indicate why some of these recommendations were not taken under advisement.

Another report in December 2010, called “From Reform to Continuous Improvement: The Future of the RCMP”, also outlined a couple of other key recommendations, and I will just touch briefly on this. It indicated:

Canadians understand the importance of the RCMP in both its local and its national roles. They want the Force to live up to its well-earned reputation in meeting their needs for community safety and national policing. They know, of course, that in carrying out its complex responsibilities and interacting daily with tens of thousands of Canadians, the RCMP will inevitably get some things wrong – sometimes badly so – even as it gets most things right. When it does make mistakes, they expect the Force to be accountable and to respond openly and effectively to scrutiny. If, as we fully expect, the RCMP acts decisively to improve its performance in the future, Canadians will know that it has learned from its errors as well as from its successes.

The report goes on to say:

To meet new challenges and ever-higher expectations, it is clear that the RCMP must be committed to fundamental change and must have the means to bring about that change. Everyone now understands that – the federal government; the provinces, territories and municipalities for which the RCMP delivers police services; the general public and, perhaps most importantly, the leaders of the Force itself. They also need to understand that change must become a permanent condition of the RCMP.

I know other members have referred to the need for cultural change.

There were a couple of key reforms that the report focused on. One was that “the Council was convinced that the RCMP requires a new framework of governance and management, including a continuing source of outside advice and challenge for senior management, as well as a redefinition of the status of the organization”.

● (1620)

They go on to say that they consistently endorse the concept of a civilian board of management. The other recommendation was also around the board of management. In this particular one, they are suggesting that a board of management for the RCMP would be made up of eminent Canadians chosen for their independence, insight and expertise. The council sees such a board as bringing a broad range of benefits to the RCMP, including things like challenging senior management to make better substantive decisions, and it would add to the credibility of the RCMP management inside government.

Those were a couple of other key recommendations. We can see that all of this has to do with increasing and maintaining the credibility of the force because of the importance of its policing role domestically. I am not even going to begin to speak about the international role that we play.

I wanted to point out that some other provincial jurisdictions are undertaking work around independent police watchdogs. An article

out of the Canadian Press on September 10, 2012, indicated that starting Monday, police incidents in British Columbia that end in fatalities or serious injury will be investigated by an outside agency.

This outside agency's primary recommendation came about as a result of public inquiries into two high-profile police-involved deaths: Robert Dziekanski, who died at the Vancouver airport in October 2007 after being stunned with an RCMP taser, and Frank Paul, who froze to death in the Vancouver alley where he was taken by Vancouver police after being ejected from a drunk tank. We also had the very sad case of Mark Surakka's daughter who lay dying for four days after an RCMP officer failed to properly investigate a 911 call.

There are still some concerns in British Columbia, and although this is the province, I just want to point out that there are some steps happening here. David Eby of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association said that his group, which has long advocated for the creation of an independent watchdog, was glad to see this day finally arrived. Its members think that although this is an improvement in the accountability of the province, they would also like to see it have a somewhat expanded role, including looking at previous cases which have been closed.

There was also the shooting of Ian Bush, a 22-year-old sawmill worker who was arrested after having an open beer at a hockey game in Houston, B.C. He ended up being shot in an RCMP cell in 2005. Although that was investigated and the case is closed, many community members and family members are still not satisfied. They would like to see that independent body have some oversight there.

Ontario has an arm's-length watchdog to conduct investigations into police-involved deaths. Alberta has its own oversight unit similar to Ontario. Nova Scotia has now appointed a watchdog. Quebec is considering the same. My point in raising these is that there are other examples of independent watchdogs, and presumably one of the things that the government is looking at and considering is what works with some of those independent bodies, what does not work and what we can learn from it.

In the time remaining I want to turn to the issue of sexual harassment lawsuits. I agree with my colleague from Welland that there is a systemic problem within the RCMP. When more than 200 women, both current and former RCMP officers, join Constable Janet Merlo in a class action lawsuit against the RCMP on the grounds of sexual harassment, those numbers speak to a broad problem. That does not even begin to touch on the number of female officers who have not come forward.

A story in the *Globe and Mail* stated that it obtained an internal report which said that a survey of 462 members of RCMP's “E” Division in British Columbia has found that female members do not trust the force's system to deal with harassment complaints and frequently avoid reporting instances of perceived wrongdoing:

Participants strongly expressed that they were fearful of coming forward to report harassment as it could hinder promotional opportunities, have a negative impact on their careers, and possibly cause them to become a scapegoat for anything supervisors wanted to fault them with.

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The opinion was also expressed that the RCMP is known for moving the complainant rather than dealing with the problem. I am going to touch on a very recent case in British Columbia. It goes on to say that the internal report makes it clear that there remains much work to be done inside the RCMP to solve a problem that has persisted for decades. The author of the report, diversity strategist Simmie Smith, pointed out there is confusion with the RCMP between harassment and bullying.

• (1625)

In addition, the report points out that the majority of respondents did not feel that harassment was rampant inside the force, but they still expressed frustration at the handling of existing cases and the high number of unreported cases.

A point has been made that certainly not every female officer has been harassed and not every male officer does the harassing, but again, I point to the 200 officers filing a class action lawsuit. It does speak to a much broader problem.

A majority of the respondents expressed that they had no faith in the current reporting system.

The Summary Report on Gender Based Harassment and Respectful Workplace Consultations decried the “significant failure to report incidents” by Mounties, adding that the lack of formal complaints has resulted in “pent up” frustrations in the force.

Again, although Bill C-42 does reference some changes around human resource management, it does not specifically address the issues around sexual harassment and the ongoing problems.

The report talks about removing the complainant rather than dealing with the problem, and we recently had a case in British Columbia that was adjudicated. It was a staff sergeant who ended up being moved into British Columbia after there were several serious complaints against this officer's conduct within the force. I will read a couple of lines of the synopsis of the decision. It says:

Seven allegations of disgraceful conduct were established against the member... The board considered both dismissal and a considerable demotion but paid great deference to a joint submission and imposed a sanction consisting of a reprimand, the forfeiture of 10 days' pay, a demotion from the rank of Staff Sergeant to Sergeant, a recommendation for transfer, and a recommendation for continued counseling.

When I read through this report, in the decision on the sanction, the board indicated that:

The seven incidents of misconduct describe a disturbing pattern of activity covering a period of years, involving inappropriate behaviour affecting a number of women who, in one way or another, were directly involved with [the staff sergeant] in his capacity.

It goes on to name his various jobs, and that the “gravity of this misconduct in its totality is such that dismissal was in the forefront of the Board's collective mind”. It also says that:

Victim Impact Statements were particularly troubling, revealing wounds which on a personal and an institutional level will require some time and attention to heal. It will take considerable effort to rebuild the damaged trust in our organization, and the Board can only hope that its decision in this matter will prove to be an important step along that path.

The member forfeited 10 days' pay and received a demotion, and the warning in the board's conclusion says:

The board recommends a transfer to a suitable position. In the Board's opinion, such a position should ideally be one which removes this member from working in the direct vicinity of the complainants and takes into account the potential (albeit limited, given the expert evidence) risk to other employees.

The member for Welland and the member for Hull—Aylmer mentioned that there are cultures within organizations and if we do not establish clear anti-harassment policies in these organizations, women would not feel comfortable coming forward.

In conclusion, we will be supporting the bill going to committee for review. We hope that the minister will truly entertain amendments that look at strengthening some of these aspects of the bill.

• (1630)

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I am always impressed with the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan. She does her homework. She does good analysis and she has very thoughtful and reflective comments. I basically sometimes wish I lived in Nanaimo and was one of her constituents.

My non sequitur question today is that we have a national police force that is also functioning as a municipal and provincial police force in much of Canada. It clearly needs scrutiny and reorganization. I am wondering if the hon. member shares my feeling that perhaps it is time for us to think about making it a national police force again and have the provinces and municipalities find other ways of doing local and regional policing.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting concept. Part of the reason that New Democrats are supporting sending the bill to committee for review is to look at some other options, and that might be an interesting issue for the committee to study.

When speaking about RCMP members, I talked about quite a few negative circumstances with the RCMP but it is really important to emphasize that, by and large, most men and women in the force do an excellent job. It would be really important to include them in conversations about reformation of the force. I am presuming that the RCMP members themselves would be included on the witness list. It would be interesting to talk to some of the rank and file because my experience in working in other organizations is that the people on the streets doing the job are often the ones who have the best suggestions about how to make the system work better.

• (1635)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member always does thorough research and brings the issues down to the ground in our communities.

I have had the privilege of working in environmental enforcement agencies and one of the most important things for those officers, whether they are environmental officers, food inspection or Criminal Code enforcement, is their morale. If those officers do not feel their agency is behind them or the government, if they feel the public is not confident with them, if they feel they have no one to genuinely turn to for independent advice and assistance, that can really affect their ability to deliver their job. Could the member speak to that and expand a bit more.

Government Orders

The current RCMP Commissioner has raised that very strongly and the member has raised the point. That is why a number of New Democrats say it is good to have legislation and it could use some improvement, but we also need action on the morale and on the code of conduct.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the member for Edmonton—Strathcona is absolutely correct. One of the challenges is that, anecdotally, the morale within the force has been really hit because of the number of serious allegations and complaints.

I did not have an opportunity to speak about this, but the part that has been left out of the bill is that this is the only police force in Canada without a collective agreement. Having a democratic process within a workforce allows members and people a very clear way to bring forward their concerns and suggestions and they have a representation that works between them and management around resolving some of those issues.

Another thing the committee might want to consider is that the bill does not deal with the fact that unionization of the RCMP has been on the table for a number of years and it might be one of those remedies to deal with some of the poor morale in the force.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat troubled by Bill C-42. I would like to ask my NDP colleague what she thinks. I find that what the Conservatives are proposing—the creation of an organization that has very close ties and reports to the minister—is a little troubling.

Does my colleague not think that it would be better to have an independent oversight body that would report directly to Parliament and that could subsequently make binding recommendations concerning the RCMP and even conduct a complete, civilian investigation into the RCMP?

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, part of the issue the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has outlined is the fact that perhaps the model that has been suggested in the legislation is not the one that will give sufficient oversight.

Although this is not what has been proposed, I want to refer to the annual report of the Commission for Public Complaints for 2011-2012. In that report there are a whole series of recommendations that the commission has been putting forward to the government for a number of years and they still remain outstanding. These range from a policy on releasing details regarding sensitive investigations, which has been outstanding since February 2008, and a policy dealing with requests for exhibits consistent with the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, March 2009. A whole series of recommendations have been outstanding for a number of years.

It points to part of the problem when there is not that independence, that direct reporting to Parliament. If there were direct reporting to Parliament on matters like this, then Parliament would not only respond to the report, but also be in a better position to hold the government of the day to account, whichever government that might be, for those recommendations that have been made.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to speak more about the challenges with regard to recruitment in light of problems with sexual harassment. The employer is trying to achieve gender equality and 200 harassment complaints have been filed. What message does that send? I would like to point out something else. The commissioner has all the rights, such as the right to fire an employee, without there being a trustworthy and transparent process for dealing with a complaint.

In that regard, I would like to hear from my colleague about young women, the message being given to young women and minorities who would like to be recruited and hired by the RCMP. How is their morale?

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, for a number of years, the member for Hull—Aylmer has worked with women within organizations in order to ensure pay equity.

With respect to the issue around recruitment, and again this is anecdotal, but I spoke to a former first nations police officer who said that he got out of the force after years because he just could not handle the discrimination that was happening. The issues around sexual harassment and the very high profile cases are a deterrent for women wanting to join the force. Therefore, it is a real problem with recruitment. We would like the RCMP force to reflect the makeup of Canada. The last time I looked, roughly 51% of Canadians were women, so we would presume that at some point the force would more accurately reflect the number of women who live in Canada.

We have a problem when there is a culture within an organization wherein these kinds of high profile discrimination cases cause women to ask themselves why they would put themselves out there. Why would they put themselves in that kind of a position where they would always have to struggle to be considered an equal member or to get their well-deserved promotions? If they dare to raise those issues, they could be sidelined or worse. We know that sometimes when people speak up, they are punished even more or they are ostracized by their fellow officers because they said something about what was going on.

Other people have talked about the legislation and regulations simply not being good enough. They are absolutely correct. We need to ensure there are human resource policies and practices in place that look at recruitment, training and education, retention and that examine the reasons for turnover. A good human resource practice is when officers quit the force before their retirement date, they should be interviewed to find out the real reasons why they left and they should be protected throughout that interview process. That would give the force a good overview of why people were quitting.

Therefore, comprehensive human resource planning and management practices would be critical to ensuring the force could recruit and retain women, visible minorities, first nations, Métis and Inuit.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would like to inform hon. members that there have been more than five hours of debate on the motion before the House. Consequently, the maximum time allocated for all subsequent interventions shall be ten minutes for speeches and, as usual, five minutes for questions and comments.

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to speak to Bill C-42, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

Before I do that, I want to take this opportunity to thank the men and women who are currently serving in the RCMP and those who have served in the RCMP for their dedication and hard work in making our communities safer places to live.

Also I have had the opportunity to work with a number of retired RCMP officers at my previous job. I want to thank a former colleague of mine at the Justice Institute of BC who I worked with for 15 years, Al Lund. He retired from the RCMP after serving our country for 29 years. I thank him for his service.

Having worked with RCMP officers, I know the dedication and the hard work they put into the job to make our communities safer places. I thank all of them.

First, it should be a priority of the House and of the government to restore public confidence in the RCMP. A functioning, effective RCMP that holds the public trust is critical to building safer communities in our country.

On this side of the House, we support the stated intent of the bill and we agree with some of the measures in it.

The minister has said that the legislation should have come to the House sooner. I completely agree with him. In fact, I have stood in the House countless times and called upon the government to step up and deal with the problems that years of Conservative mismanagement have caused in our national police force.

The goals stated in the preamble of the bill, transparency, improving conduct, strengthening the review and complaints body and dealing with the climate of sexual harassment that exists in the RCMP, are all good ones and are what New Democrats have called for over and over in the House.

We support the bill at second reading. However, we firmly believe it does not go far enough, particularly with regard to those issues of sexual harassment in the RCMP. The bill does not go far enough in directly addressing the concerns of women serving in the RCMP who are calling for urgent action to foster a more inclusive and safe environment for women.

The bill has been introduced without the benefit of findings of the internal gender audit of the RCMP ordered by the commissioner, which is currently under way but not yet completed.

It is clear that sexual harassment is not a problem of merely discipline. It is endemic to the internal culture of the RCMP. The approach of the Conservatives does not make women in the RCMP a priority, which is necessary if we want to deal substantially with the problem.

My primary concern is that over and over we see the government's attempt to gloss over real issues within the RCMP and implement quick fixes instead of truly trying to take the steps necessary to fix the force.

For the sake of those serving in the force, to restore public confidence in the RCMP and, ultimately, for the safety of our communities, we need transparency and accountability in the RCMP and solutions that would get to the heart of the problems within the force. On those accounts, the government has failed time after time.

The scope of the problem of sexual harassment in the RCMP is massive. More than 200 women, both current and former RCMP officers, have joined Constable Janet Merlo in seeking a class action suit against the RCMP on the grounds of sexual harassment. That does not include other lawsuits against the RCMP from proceeding, including Corporal Catherine Galliford and Constable Karen Katz.

My NDP colleagues and I have pushed the minister for months to prioritize the issue of sexual harassment in the RCMP. Unfortunately, Bill C-42 does not directly address systematic issues in the culture of the RCMP. It is clear that the bill by itself will not change the current climate in the RCMP.

Despite our repeated questioning and urging in both the House and in committee, the Conservatives have chosen to only focus on the issue of RCMP discipline and RCMP sexual harassment. They did not take a leadership role in presenting solutions. Now we have a bill that would not address the root cause of the problem.

• (1645)

The bill does give the RCMP commissioner the ability to create a more effective process for dealing with sexual harassment complaints, which is an important step in the right direction, but it is not enough. We need to go further on this issue. There needs to be a clear anti-harassment policy in the RCMP that contains specific standards for behaviour and specific criteria for evaluating the performance of all employees. Such a policy is needed to serve as a basis for fair disciplinary hearings.

The Minister of Public Safety has stated, "Canadians' confidence in the RCMP has been tested over the past few years and this legislation will ensure that the RCMP is fully accountable for its actions and is open and transparent in its service to Canadians."

Bill C-42 would not lead to more independent and transparent oversight of the RCMP. It is simply the same body that reports non-binding recommendations to the minister but with a new name.

The minister has also adopted the simplistic solution of giving the commissioner the final say on the dismissal of employees.

Once again the Conservatives have rushed through this legislation. As one member has already stated, some grammatical and translation amendments are going to be made at committee.

Government Orders

We agree with Commissioner Paulson that legislation alone is not enough to keep the public's trust and that profound reforms to change deep underlying cultural problems within the RCMP are needed to foster a more open, co-operative and respectful workplace for all employees. The minister has clearly failed to provide leadership on these larger issues facing the RCMP. That must change.

The proposed new civilian complaints commission looks remarkably like the current RCMP Public Complaints Commission, especially since it would not be a fully independent commission reporting to the House of Commons. Instead, it would continue to report to the Minister of Public Safety.

As well, the new commission would have serious restrictions on its ability to undertake independent investigations. Also, its findings would be presented only in the form of non-binding recommendations to the commissioner and the Minister of Public Safety. These restrictions on the independence of the new commission will be a major issue for us at committee stage.

The proposal also fails to create an agency with any teeth, since primary investigations into incidents of death or serious bodily harm would largely be contracted out to provincial or municipal forces even though some have no civilian investigation bodies, or still would be conducted by the RCMP itself. The government must take the next step and allow binding recommendations and full civilian investigation of the RCMP through a truly independent watchdog panel that would report directly to Parliament.

The NDP believes that this bill is a step in the right direction, but it does not go far enough. We will be working to improve the bill at committee.

I would stress that in my community of Surrey and in communities across the country, crime and violence are a reality. Two weeks ago in Surrey, a known gang member was shot and killed in broad daylight. This kind of violence is unacceptable. However, instead of investing in measures to prevent crime in our communities by supporting the work of the RCMP, the Conservatives are making it harder for the police to do their job.

Just last week I spoke in the media about 42 RCMP support staff in B.C. who had received notices stating that they could lose their jobs. Pay cuts affect staff who help our police officers to do their jobs. These are people who work in forensic labs and records, member pay, and recruitment.

We need to support the work of the RCMP, not make its job any harder. This bill is being rushed. I hope the committee will be able to make some amendments and make those improvements that I have talked about.

An effective RCMP force is a matter of public safety and real action is long overdue.

• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing we need to recognize after listening to a number of New Democrats speak to the bill is the need to change the current system. Some of the strongest advocacy for that change is coming from the rank and file members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. They

believe that not only is it in their best interest but it is in the collective best interest of Canadians who look to the RCMP as being the best police force in the world. There is a huge expectation that the government will be open to amendments at committee stage because there are some deficiencies. We recognize that. We want the bill to go to committee. There is a great deal of value to having a debate and the Liberals are disappointed that the government decided to rush the bill through.

The member made reference to provincial responsibilities within the bill. Does the member believe that the provinces should have some responsibility in terms of when a review, for example, might take place? That is being suggested in the legislation, from what I understand.

• (1655)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege to work with members of the RCMP and they have raised a number of very important issues over the years. Some current members of the force have come to my office and I have had the opportunity to talk with them about structural issues within the RCMP that need to be dealt with.

After six years of being in government, I am glad the Conservatives are finally bringing something forward. This bill deals with some things, but it does not go far enough. I liked the member's comments with regard to having the opportunity to make amendments at committee and to look at the issue the member talked about, as to whether provincial jurisdiction should be looked at when we are dealing with RCMP issues.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my NDP colleague just mentioned that he does not think the bill goes far enough. This comment made me think about what Commissioner Paulson said. He said that the bill does not go far enough and will not help restore public trust in the RCMP.

I would like to ask my NDP colleague whether he thinks this bill will be enough to make people trust the RCMP and how it operates? If not, what could an NDP government have proposed and brought forward in such a bill?

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I have heard from people in my constituency and from across the country with regard to the public oversight of the RCMP. Under the current government, we have seen what has happened to the RCMP's image over the years. One thing Canadians and New Democrats would like to see is public independent oversight of the RCMP complaints process. I would urge the government to consider some of the NDP's amendments that would lead to a more transparent and accountable RCMP in the future.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent speech on Bill C-42. He raised a number of points that the NDP would like to examine in committee.

I have a very simple question. Is my colleague not disappointed to see that this bill does not go further, when this is an opportunity to make some significant changes within the RCMP?

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. The government had an opportunity to restore public confidence in the RCMP and one thing that people in my constituency and across the country have been asking for is public independent oversight of the RCMP complaints process. I urge the government to consider some of the NDP's amendments that will be put forward at the committee stage and look at having public oversight so that we can restore the public's confidence in our national police force.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned previously in the House, I have had the great privilege of working in the field of environmental enforcement during my career. I have done this overseas, in Yukon, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Montreal and Ottawa. I have had the privilege of working with very dedicated men and women who are inspectors, investigators and enforcement officers. One of the most important things is morale. It is very important to those officers because they tend to be at the bottom of the totem pole in getting staffing, proper equipment, and attention within their respective agencies.

The bill is absolutely imperative for the protection of officers who may feel they are being maligned by sexual harassment. The bill is also important for the purposes of protecting the credibility of the RCMP and the rights of the public to bring forward complaints and to have them properly reviewed in an independent manner. The bill is also important for the credible and effective enforcement of the laws in this country.

I stand with my fellow members of the official opposition in support of sending Bill C-42 to committee. However, I implore the government to give serious consideration to not only some of the proposals that will come forward by our members but also likely some of the same witnesses who have appeared in the many reviews that have gone on over the last decade. These are wise people with a lot of experience. I would also encourage that some of the enforcement officers be brought in. Who knows better than those who are working on the front lines what is needed to do a proper review?

As has been mentioned, we commend the government for finally bringing forward this legislation, which is long overdue, to improve harassment review procedures, to deal with discipline in the force, and also to provide for an improved complaints review process. It is also important that the agency be properly staffed and resourced.

Mr. Speaker, I am having a hard time hearing myself speak. Perhaps members could take their conversations outside.

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I know hon. members are interested to know what the hon. member for

Edmonton—Strathcona has to say. It is difficult to hear the member when other members are having conversations. I would ask them to take those conversations out to the lobbies and we will carry on the debate.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the conviviality among parties in the House but do appreciate the respect for those who are standing to speak. This is an important matter and it is important that we all participate in the discussion which means that we listen to what each other has to say as well.

I stand in support of this bill going to committee. There are a lot of very good measures in this bill but there are a lot of measures that could be improved, particularly to respect and observe the many recommendations from as broad a group as the current RCMP commissioner and previous witnesses, including the complaints commissioner.

Many of these legislative reforms are addressing outstanding issues, including the RCMP complaints process and the sexual harassment processes within the RCMP, most notably, a lot of complaints recently about the harassment of women officers and the right of the RCMP to unionize. Regrettably, those have not been addressed in the bill and have not been addressed by the government. We look forward to the government giving those officers the equal right to organize and be represented and to have proper grievance procedures.

As mentioned, there have been numerous reviews, commissions and official calls for action. This is a good start. Perhaps we can embellish the work that has been tabled in committee and come back with a more adequate bill.

These tabled reforms come in the wake of the deep concern expressed by the Canadian public around such incidents as the sexual harassment of female RCMP. I think there are more than 200 former and current officers who have filed a court action. Also, of course, there is the very regrettable Dziekanski incident in Vancouver. It is time to strengthen the law and policy in investigation and complaints, disciplinary measures and sexual harassment procedures.

On the RCMP commissioner authority, we commend the government for coming forward and strengthening the powers of the commissioner to address discipline and potentially discharge RCMP members. However, there have been valid concerns raised that to give complete wide open discretion is perhaps not the route to take, and that there should be very clear criteria laid out and disclosed so that all officers and the public know the reasons for taking disciplinary action.

Of equal concern is the fact that the legislation does not actually stop with giving the commissioner that totally discretionary power. He or she can in turn delegate that down and in turn sub-delegate it. We do not know from one day to the next who will actually be taking disciplinary action, including releasing officers from duty.

Government Orders

In addition, on the RCMP oversight and investigation of complaints, there have been many calls for an independent oversight body which exists in many of the provinces. It is time for the federal government to step up to the plate and institute an equally credible process. That is not only important for the purposes of the public, which has been raising a lot of questions about the way that some of the RCMP officers have been conducting their affairs and exercising their powers, but it is also important for the morale of the officers themselves. They need to know that there will be a process where the review is done in a fair, open and independent way, that the findings will be final and that measures will be taken. Instead, the government has chosen to do the same thing it is doing with regulatory environment agencies, which is having well-informed independent officers appointed, hearing witnesses and then saying that it will make the final decision based on, what, we do not know.

It is very important that the bill also limits the powers of this supposedly independent commission to initiate reviews. That needs to be strengthened. The decisions are not binding. The final decisions are vested in the political order and that is not appropriate. People are calling for independent scrutiny, like other jurisdictions.

We would prefer that they continue to report to Parliament and not only to the minister. That would enable all members of Parliament to hold the force accountable and ensure that any recommendations move forward.

Also, there has been a call from a number of bodies, notably Paul Kennedy, the former complaints commission, that there is a need for specific deadlines for response by the RCMP to commission reports. This is all good, sage advice. The bill could be embellished by adding these kinds of reforms.

In the area of response to complaints of sexual harassment, it is good that a new process is being put in place but we need more than legislation.

• (1705)

In April of this year, when Mr. Robert Paulson, the RCMP commissioner, appeared before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which was studying the role and challenges to women employed by the RCMP, he said:

It's the culture of the organization that has not kept pace. ... We haven't been able to change our practices and our policies, or provide systems that would permit women to thrive in the organization and contribute to policing, which they must do. ... I've said it publicly, and I'll say it again. I think the problem is bigger than simply the sexual harassment. It is the idea of harassment.

We commend the commissioner and we hope the government will also listen to his sage advice and take this further than simply bringing forward legislation. We look forward to potentially his testimony in committee where he could embellish on his recommendations.

Surely it is the responsibility of Parliament to be instituting the measures that ensure our federal law enforcement agency is protecting the rights of its officers and is able to take action to actually prevent harassment and ensure a healthy working climate.

I do not think it is sufficient for us simply to have provisions where a brave member of the force might actually come forward and file that complaint. What is important is that measures be taken

upfront to prevent this kind of harassment, so that we actually have a climate with high morale and equal opportunity for both men and women and people of different backgrounds to contribute to law enforcement.

I will just repeat my high level of respect for our federal enforcement agency and I look forward as a member of Parliament to try to bring back improved processes to strengthen its ability to protect our communities.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments on the bill and she has really pointed out some of the areas in the bill that need to be strengthened and improved.

I would like to give her the opportunity to talk a little bit longer about those suggestions for improvement and why she thinks it has taken the government so long to get the bill before the House.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his incredible work in this area. He makes a fantastic critic in this area, both for the RCMP and for the Canadian public.

I do not think I have much chance to elaborate. Many who have spoken in the House have raised the issues very thoroughly. I just want to reiterate that bringing forward these measures is not just for the benefit of the public, nor is it just for the benefit of some of the officers who may be feeling harassed. It is very critical that we have solid foundations for our federal enforcement agency.

There are many isolated communities in Canada. I think of those along the highway between Edmonton and Fort McMurray and the major accidents that are occurring that various levels of government are trying to address. Those officers need to go to the scenes of those very gruesome accidents time after time and are sometimes deployed on their own.

It is very important that we work together to get the strongest measures in place to protect our forces and the public.

• (1710)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the comments by my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

As the member for Edmonton—Strathcona has said, for an institution as important as the RCMP, it is so important that the members within that force know they can rely on proper procedures around sexual harassment.

I, like many others, have a lot of questions about why, with so many incredible and disturbing cases that female officers of the force had to experience, it took so long before any action was taken. It seems to me that when we look at the RCMP, surely the most basic right is for the members to work in a harassment-free environment. As the member for Edmonton—Strathcona has pointed out, often those members are working in very difficult conditions in isolated communities.

It is really just a comment to underline what the member for Edmonton—Strathcona has said about these measures being incredibly important. It is disappointing that the government, even though I heard the minister many times say that he was concerned about it, basically did nothing about it, so it is long overdue.

Government Orders

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely critical for the morale of our federal enforcement agency.

As one of our colleagues mentioned earlier in her speech, it is not just the female members of the RCMP who are resigning because they are concerned about the way that female officers are being treated. There are a lot of great men and women in the force.

I think particularly of some instances of hearing concerns about some of our first nations members of the RCMP who are feeling that they are being treated in a discriminatory fashion.

It is absolutely critical that, if we are going to recruit the best of our youth into this important agency, we stand up for them and encourage them to enter these enforcement agencies.

We are a democratic nation. We operate by the rule of law. We need to ensure that all those mechanisms are in place and that we are putting that into effect, which means staffing, support and, frankly, giving the forces a union.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Edmonton—Strathcona, as I asked the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, whether it is perhaps time now, as part of a review, to think about what we really want as a national police force rather than one that also tries to serve many provinces and municipalities in a more day-to-day policing operation.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that I am the one to venture into that. It may well be an activity that the parliamentary committee reviews. I know that some jurisdictions prefer to have their own provincial force. My province is beginning to have sheriffs supplementing RCMP. The national police is still valued very much and the police in the city of Edmonton. I am not necessarily convinced that the forces we have right now should be replaced. It would certainly be the kind of thing that we would refer to the committee or to the various associations of police chiefs to review.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The question is on the motion that the question be now put. 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): Call in the members.

[*And the bells having rung:*]

• (1715)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the vote be deferred until the end of government orders today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly, the vote stands deferred.

* * *

INCREASING OFFENDERS' ACCOUNTABILITY FOR VICTIMS ACT

The House resumed from September 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I welcome you back after our recess over the summer. This is the first time I have had an opportunity to rise in the House and speak since we came back and I hope everyone had a good summer. I know that we were all busy in our ridings taking care of constituents and constituency business. I certainly was and it was very good to connect with people because we are so often here in Ottawa in the House. We are nevertheless glad to be back in the House debating various pieces of legislation again.

As was just pointed out, Bill C-37, proposes to amend the provisions of the Criminal Code on victim surcharges, namely section 737 in the Criminal Code. It would double the amount that offenders must pay when they are sentenced. It would also make the surcharge mandatory for all offenders.

By way of background, we know that a victim surcharge is an additional sanction imposed at the time of sentencing on offenders who are found guilty. It is collected by provincial and territorial governments and is used to provide programs and services for victims of crime in the province or territory where the crime was committed.

Obviously that is a very important service provided and I am sure we are all aware of situations where people or their family members have suffered as a result of their being a victim of crime. It is very important to have the support services and programs in place. This kind of program is something that is very important in our society.

We know that the bill being debated at second reading proposes to amend the provisions of the Criminal Code relating to the amount of the victim surcharge, which the bill would in fact double. The proposed surcharge would be about 30%, or higher than the current 15%, of any fine imposed on the offender. Where no fine is imposed, it would be \$100, again representing a doubling because it is currently \$50 for summary conviction offences, and \$200 for indictable offences, from the current \$100.

Government Orders

That sounds reasonable and is something that we have supported in principle. However, we do have some concerns about the bill that some of my colleagues who have spoken previously have put forward. I wish to put them on the record as well.

One of our concerns is that the bill removes the ability of the court to waive a victim surcharge if the offender can show that paying the surcharge would result in undue hardship to either himself or herself, or to his or her dependants. This is now contained in subsection 737 (5) and would be repealed by the bill.

The second concern we have is that while on the one hand judges would retain the discretion they have to increase the victim surcharge if they believe the circumstances so warrant, on the other hand their discretion would be removed as to whether or not there was some undue hardship. This is quite problematic and part of a pattern that we have seen in many of the so-called law and order bills the Conservative government has brought forward. The thrust of these bills, and certainly this one is now another example of this theme, has been to undermine the discretion of the court system, and judges in particular.

We have a lot of concerns about the bill. We believe that it needs to be studied at committee, particularly with regard to the decreased discretionary power of a judge to decide if paying a surcharge would cause undue hardship. Why do we believe that? It is because we believe very much in the importance of discretionary powers of a judge and the autonomy of judges within our judicial system. That will be restricted by the bill.

The withdrawal of the undue hardship clause and the provision seeking to double the surcharge could be problematic for low-income offenders. It would not always be the case, but certainly there are situations and experiences where this would be a consideration.

● (1720)

Therefore, it seems very puzzling that we have a government that would bring forward yet another bill that would seek to restrict the scope and discretion of what our judicial system can take into account at the level of the decisions that judges make and what information they can look at.

That has a lot of consequences. When we look at this particular bill in the context of all of the other bills we have dealt with that also have the same kind of purpose in restricting judicial discretion, then we can see that we are fundamentally changing what our judicial system is about and how it operates. As legislators, members of Parliament representing our constituents across the country in so many diverse ridings, this is actually something that we should be concerned about. It is very easy to look at legislation one by one and say it is not a big deal, that maybe we could live with it. However, when we begin to add it up and we see the incremental changes in a more comprehensive way, we begin to realize that there are some fundamental changes taking place.

That is something that concerns us. We believe there should be proper analysis. We should look not just at this piece of legislation but at all kinds of legislation to see what those impacts on the judicial system are.

For example, the Elizabeth Fry Society is very concerned about the impact of these additional fines on, for example, aboriginal

people and people who do not have the means to pay. The John Howard Society has also expressed concern that the fines could be disproportionate to the crimes committed. These are two very notable, hard-working, credible organizations in our society. They operate across the country. They know the system first-hand from the ground up. They deal with offenders as they come out of the system and are making a transition back into society. When we hear organizations like the Elizabeth Fry Society and the John Howard Society express their concerns based on their real experience in dealing with offenders in a community setting, this is something that we should take note of. It really worries me when Conservative members will just sweep that concern under the carpet and say it is of no consequence. Someone in this place has to take note of what the impacts and consequences are.

What I am trying to argue here is that the principle of sanctions against offenders is a good principle. It is something that we have supported. We have supported the ombudsperson's report on this matter. However, we have to look at the very fine details of this legislation and examine whether or not it has gone further than it needs to go and cause more negative impacts by removing the discretion we now have. This is something that we very much need to examine at the committee level.

Over the summer I had the pleasure of attending the Canadian Medical Association's general council meeting in Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. We heard an extraordinary speaker, Sir Michael Marmot, one of the world's renowned experts and researchers in the social determinants of health. He made a quite remarkable presentation to all of the doctors assembled there as members of the CMA. He spoke about how our society has moved so far away from establishing some of the basic foundations of a healthy society, like a decent income, a good education and proper housing. He was speaking about these matters as they related to the health of our society, not just in terms of our personal health but also our overall health. I wanted to bring this into the debate today because to me it is very pertinent to what we are looking at in Bill C-37.

● (1725)

Again, what really worries me about the government we have in power right now, which hopefully will not be there for too long, is its emphasis on punitive measures addressing issues after the fact. As Sir Michael Marmot said, we need to go upstream. We need to be developing much stronger foundations for healthy communities and healthy people, ensuring that people have proper education and decent incomes. The evidence is overwhelming that all of these things ensure that a society is more sustainable, not just in terms of the environment but also in social terms.

When we ignore those questions and focus so much on fixing everything with a new piece of legislation, or changing the Criminal Code and saying that somehow that is going to fix issues and problems in our society, we are under a terrible illusion. I know the members across the way in the Conservative government cannot look beyond that. They are very focused and driven by that simplistic approach. I am very glad to say that we on this side of the House in the NDP have a much more progressive, complex and intelligent analysis of what we need to do to make safe and healthy communities.

Government Orders

In speaking to this legislation today, I know we are going to hear a barrage of questions and comments, if we get to them, because if we dare to question any of the Conservatives' law and order provisions then we are said to be favouring the criminals. It is such a simplistic, ridiculous debate that they try to engage in. We do as much as we can on this side to resist that kind of ridiculous, absurd debate.

We are here to look at legislation based on its merit and its consequences for our society overall. That is a matter of balancing the rights of victims. This is something we believe strongly in. Victims have rights. They have the right to be supported. They have the right to know that a judicial system will work for them and that prosecutions will be dealt with in due diligence. However, we also have to ensure that our judicial system is balanced and ensure that discretion is there so that people are not penalized unfairly.

I represent a community that has many low-income people. Many of my constituents have been through the judicial system and have had horrible experiences. They would have been better out of prison. They would have been better with programs that might have focused on restorative justice. They would have been better in programs where there was attention paid to youth at risk, so that youth would not even get into the criminal justice system. However, yet again we see a government that has moved away from that kind of approach and has focused on the need for yet another law and punitive measure.

In conclusion, my colleagues and I have voiced our support at second reading for the principles in this bill. We have reservations and concerns and will take our responsibility to ensure that if this bill goes to committee, we will examine it clause by clause. We will look at it very carefully. We will propose amendments, I have no doubt. Our justice critic is very able in doing that. Our aim is to ensure that this bill becomes one that would not cause problems or unintended consequences.

I have been pleased to speak to this bill today. I look forward to its going to committee and the amendments that I know we in the NDP will propose to improve it.

● (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Vancouver East will have five and a half minutes remaining for her speech, should she wish it when the House returns to debate on the question, and then of course the usual 10 minutes for questions and comments.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 12

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC) moved that a ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to

the taking of the deferred recorded division on Ways and Means Motion No. 12.

Call in the members.

● (1810)

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

(*Division No. 456*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Casey
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dion
Dreeshen	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Eyking
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Foote
Galipeau	Gallant
Gameau	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hyer	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kent
Kerr	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
May	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murray	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Pacetti
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Plamondon
Poilievre	Preston

Government Orders

Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Seeback	Sgro
Shea	Shiple
Shory (sor)	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valerioté
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 183	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brosseau
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hughes
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scott
Sellah	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel— 98

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[English]

**ENHANCING ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at the second reading stage of Bill C-42.

● (1820)

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

(Division No. 457)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Dykstra
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent	Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)

Nicholson
Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 151

Norlock
O'Connor
Opitz
Payne
Poilievre
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Williamson
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Foote
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beausejour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinity
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Freeman
Gameau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls

Private Members' Business

Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Pécllet
Pilon
Quach
Ravignat
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valeriote— 131

Pacetti
Petry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Raynault
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour 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.

I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. (Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL PUBLIC TRANSIT STRATEGY ACT

The House resumed from June 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-305, An Act to establish a National Public Transit Strategy, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-305.

• (1825)

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

(Division No. 458)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington

Private Members' Business

Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe	Chong	Clarke
Boivin	Borg	Clement	Daniel
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet	Davidson	Dechert
Brahmi	Brison	Del Mastro	Devolin
Brosseau	Byrne	Dreeshen	Dykstra
Caron	Casey	Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Cash	Charlton	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Chicoine	Chisholm	Fletcher	Galipeau
Choquette	Chow	Gallant	Gill
Christopherson	Cleary	Glover	Goguen
Coderre	Comartin	Goldring	Goodyear
Côté	Crowder	Gosal	Grewal
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day	Hawn	Hayes
Dewar	Dion	Hiebert	Hillyer
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly	Hoback	Holder
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé	James	Jean
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Dusseau	Eyking	Kent	Kerr
Footé	Freeman	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Fry	Gameau	Lauzon	Lebel
Garrison	Genest	Leaf	Leitch
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère	Lemieux	Leung
Godin	Goodale	Lizon	Lobb
Gravelle	Grogulé	Lukiwski	Lunney
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)	MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Hassainia	Hsu	Mayes	McColeman
Hughes	Hyer	McLeod	Menegakis
Jacob	Julian	Menzies	Merrifield
Kellway	Lamoureux	Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)
Lapointe	Larose	Nicholson	Norlock
Latendresse	Laverdière	Obhrai	O'Connor
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Leslie	Liu	Paradis	Payne
MacAulay	Mai	Penashue	Poillievre
Marston	Martin	Preston	Rajotte
Masse	Mathysen	Rathgeber	Reid
May	McCallum	Rempel	Richards
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Rickford	Ritz
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Saxton	Schellenberger
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Seeback	Shea
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair	Shipley	Shory
Murray	Nantel	Smith	Sopuck
Nash	Nicholls	Sorenson	Stanton
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti	Storseth	Strahl
Papillon	Patry	Sweet	Tilson
Péclet	Perreault	Toet	Toews
Pilon	Plamondon	Trost	Trottier
Quach	Rafferty	Truppe	Tweed
Ravignat	Raynault	Uppal	Valcourt
Rousseau	Saganash	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia	Vellacott	Wallace
Scott	Sellah	Warawa	Warkentin
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Williamson
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan	Weston (Saint John)	Yelich
St-Denis	Stewart	Wilks	Young (Vancouver South)
Stoffer	Sullivan	Woodworth	
Thibeault	Toone	Young (Oakville)	
Tremblay	Turmel	Zimmer — 151	
Valeriote — 131			

NAYS

Members

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

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[*Translation*]**CHILDREN'S HEALTH**

The House resumed from June 20 consideration of Motion M-319.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have an unusual request.[*English*]

I have been very attentive to all the speeches on this motion. I suspect that if you ask for unanimity, you might get it.

• (1830)

The Speaker: The hon. member is asking for unanimous consent to adopt the motion. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

The House resumed from June 21 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Finance concerning the extension of time to consider Bill C-377.

• (1835)

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

(Division No. 459)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Angus
Armstrong	Ashfield
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Baird
Bateman	Bellavance
Benoit	Benskin
Bergen	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Blaney	Block
Boivin	Borg
Boughen	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Braid	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Clarke	Cleary
Clement	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Daniel	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Dykstra	Fantino
Finlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)

Flaherty
Freeman
Gallant
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goguen
Goodyear
Gravelle
Grogché
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Hughes
James
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapointe
Latendresse
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Marston
Masse
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nicholls
Norlock
Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon
Papillon
Patry
Péclet
Perreault
Plamondon
Preston
Rafferty
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rempel
Rickford
Rousseau
Sandhu
Schellenberger
Seeback
Shea
Shory
Sitsabaiesan
Sopuck
Stanton
Stoffer
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Toews
Tremblay
Trottier
Turmel
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 251

Routine Proceedings

Fletcher
Galipeau
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Godin
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Harper
Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Jacob
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kellway
Kerr
Lake
Larose
Lauzon
Lebel
Leaf
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nash
Nicholson
Numez-Melo
O'Connor
Opitz
Paradis
Payne
Pénashue
Pilon
Poilievre
Quach
Rajotte
Ravignat
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Saganash
Saxton
Scott
Sellah
Shipley
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Smith
Sorenson
Stewart
Storseth
Sullivan
Thibeault
Toet
Toone
Trost
Truppe
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (Sky Country)
Williamson
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Andrews	Bélangier
Bennett	Brisson
Byrne	Casey
Coderre	Cuzner
Dion	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eyking	Foote
Fry	Gameau
Goodale	Hsu
Hyer	Lamoureux
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	MacAulay
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Murray	Pacetti
Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
St-Denis	
Valerioté — 31	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[Translation]***CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT**

The House resumed from September 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-370, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-370 under private members' business.

● (1845)

[English]

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

(Division No. 460)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bélangier	Bellavance
Bennett	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Casey
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement

Coderre	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dion
Dreeshen	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Eyking
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Gameau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	Hyer
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent	Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	May
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murray
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Pacetti	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Plamondon	Poillievre
Preston	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Seeback
Sgro	Shea
Shiely	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Valerioté	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Williamson	Wilks
Yelich	Woodworth
Young (Vancouver South)	Young (Oakville)
	Zimmer — 184

NAYS

Members

Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau

*Private Members' Business**(Division No. 461)*

Caron
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Jacob
Kellway
Larose
Laverdière
Leslie
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Patry
Perreault
Quach
Ravignat
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Sitsabaiesan
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay

Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Julian
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Marston
Masse
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nicholls
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Rafferty
Raynault
Saganash
Scott
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel — 98

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

* * *

**PREVENTING PERSONS FROM CONCEALING THEIR
IDENTITY DURING RIOTS AND UNLAWFUL
ASSEMBLIES ACT**

The House resumed from September 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-309, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (concealment of identity), as reported (with amendment) from the committee be concurred in.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, noting the great co-operation we received earlier regarding unanimous consent of the House, I want to reach across the aisle in the hope that all parties would seek to protect the citizens of our cities from those who would riot and hide their faces while doing so. Therefore, I am asking for unanimous consent on this motion.

The Speaker: I do not get the sense that there is unanimous consent.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in Bill C-309 at report stage under private members' business.

• (1855)

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

YEAS

Members

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Coderre
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Connor
Opitz
Payne
Poilievre
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Williamson
Woodworth
Yelich
Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 153

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Eyking
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote — 127	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-350, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (accountability of offenders), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are two motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-350. Motions Nos. 1 and 2 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[Translation]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 and 2 to the House.

[English]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-350, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 0 on page 0 to line 6 on page 2 with the following:

“result of an order for maintenance, alimony or family financial support”

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-350, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing lines 6 and 7 on page 2 with the following:

“result of an order made by a court of competent jurisdiction requiring the payment of support in respect of a child, spouse or person who cohabited with the offender in a conjugal relationship for a period of at least one year;”

[English]

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to propose an amendment to the wording of the bill as it relates to spousal and child support payments. As currently drafted, the wording found in clause 2 leaves the bill open to interpretation due to the narrow definition of spouse in the French language. While the word spouse applies to both married and common-law couples in English, the corresponding French word only applies to those who are married. As a result, the courts may determine that common-law spouses are not eligible to receive payments under the bill, which was certainly not its original intent.

In order to clarify this section of the bill, I propose a new text for clause 2 that would now read, “any amount owing by the offender as a result of an order for maintenance, alimony or family financial support”. With this change, we remove the focus on spouse and bring the bill in line with the language found in the Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act. This ensures better consistency with both the federal and provincial laws.

I would ask all hon. members to accept this amendment to the bill.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak to Bill C-350, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Private Members' Business

The purpose of this bill is to make offenders accountable so that they fulfill their obligations to society by establishing an order of priority for the disbursement of any amounts received as a result of a court decision.

According to the bill introduced by my colleague opposite, the order of priority of disbursement of amounts will be received by an offender following a court decision. That order will be established as follows: any amount owing as a result of a spousal or child support order; any amount owing to a victim as a result of a restitution order; any victim surcharge; and any other amount owing as a result of a judgment awarded by a court. Any amount remaining after all payments have been made is paid to the offender.

The NDP supports this bill. We recognize the fact that it is important to enhance the accountability of offenders and that the idea of ensuring that offenders use the amounts received as a result of a court decision to fulfill their outstanding obligations is very good in principle.

However, we do not believe that this bill is the best approach for ensuring the accountability of offenders. In order to develop a sense of accountability, an offender must participate directly in decisions related to the payment of restitution to victims and other monetary decisions. The offender should therefore be involved in the process.

In meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, we heard the testimony of experts who share our opinion. We therefore wonder whether this bill will really enhance the accountability of offenders and the rehabilitation process since it will affect very few offenders.

The accountability of offenders is an extremely important step in an offender's reintegration into the community. By imposing accountability on offenders, we could weaken their chances of reintegrating into society, which is why it is important to let the offender participate in monetary decisions.

The NDP advocates comprehensive rehabilitation programs that reduce recidivism. This will make our communities safer.

We have some concerns about this bill, which could have a negative effect on such rehabilitation and reintegration measures, given the limited resources available to offenders, particularly those who are serving short sentences.

Another concern we have about this bill relates to the lack of clarity regarding federal and provincial jurisdictions. In fact, the focus of the bill comes under provincial jurisdiction. In reality, the provinces have jurisdiction over contracts and related private law matters, including the order of priority of debts.

Unfortunately, we did not manage to get testimony in committee about the matters of constitutionality that could have helped us shed some light on the subject. I think that the help of constitutional experts would have been useful, in order to ensure that this bill is really something that falls under federal jurisdiction.

Despite these important questions that unfortunately went unanswered, the Conservatives refused to study this bill further, limiting the number of meetings to just four.

So we can understand that there are still a lot of questions and concerns about this bill.

We understand the good intentions behind Bill C-350, and we also understand the importance of offender accountability and rehabilitation.

Fortunately, we managed to get two major amendments by working with our colleagues from all the parties: one exempted from the bill funds received through the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and the other slightly reduced the responsibility of Correctional Service Canada for administering this bill by putting more emphasis on the measures taken by the creditors.

With this last measure, we can anticipate a decrease in red tape and move on to the implementation of Bill C-350.

So that the bill is consistent with the reality of a number of Quebec families, I would like to put forward an amendment, which reads as follows:

- (1900)

That Bill C-350, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing lines 6 and 7 on page 2 with the following: "result of an order made by a court of competent jurisdiction requiring the payment of support in respect of a child, spouse or person who cohabited with the offender in a conjugal relationship for a period of at least one year;"

At present, Quebec's Civil Code does not allow common-law partners to request support payments for themselves, which is not the case in the rest of the country. This does not apply to the responsibility for child support, which is the same across the country, but only to spouses and common-law partners.

The issue was raised in the highly publicized case in Quebec of Lola versus Éric, which is pending. In November 2010, the Quebec Court of Appeal ruled in favour of Lola stating that the Quebec rules were discriminatory as they did not allow common-law partners to ask for support payments. The justices of the Quebec Court of Appeal ruled that this section is unconstitutional and contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The issue of common-law partners affects 1.2 million Quebecers.

According to the Quebec justice department, in the Quebec Civil Code, the legislator voluntarily decided to not give common-law partners the same rights and responsibilities as married couples or couples in a civil union, no matter how long they have lived together, in order to respect the decisions of those people who have chosen this form of cohabitation.

The Conservatives are clearly showing that they do not respect the differences that exist in Quebec concerning the rights of couples in a civil union or marriage and couples in a common-law relationship. In Quebec, 34.6% of couples are in a common-law relationship, which is a significant portion of the Quebec population. Yet, the Conservatives refuse to take this into account.

Fortunately, the NDP is here to ensure that Quebecers are properly represented in the House of Commons. It is all too easy for the members opposite to forget that the Quebec Civil Code contains certain provisions that do not exist in other provinces.

Private Members' Business

Clause 2 of this bill, as it is currently written, prevents Quebecers who have been living in a conjugal relationship for at least a year from receiving this money. Although the aim here is to make offenders accountable and ensure that they pay support payments for any children or spouse they have, this ignores a good portion of Quebec households and favours couples that are married or have civil unions, even though common-law partners in the rest of Canada would be entitled to this money.

In conclusion, I believe that this bill has good intentions regarding restitution for victims and holding offenders accountable. However, I still have a number of concerns regarding federal and provincial jurisdictions in relation to this bill, as well as its feasibility and effectiveness.

As the correctional investigator, Howard Sapers, pointed out to the committee, the issue raised by Bill C-350 is very important. Part of an offender's reintegration should include the repayment of debts to the best of his ability. However, Mr. Sapers expressed concern that the proposed approach would be both impractical and, unfortunately, ineffective.

It would have been good to examine this bill more carefully in committee, and to not have had just four meetings about this important bill, in order to eliminate concerns about jurisdiction and to address the issue even more directly, to ensure the offender directly participates in his reintegration process into society and to ensure that victims and families benefit.

It is very important to adopt my amendment so that this bill reflects the differences in Quebec that affect many Quebec families. I noticed that my colleague who introduced this bill also introduced a similar amendment. However, if we compare the two amendments, we can see that there are some differences. I would like each of my colleagues in this House to take the time to look carefully at the differences between the two amendments and to see that we must absolutely protect common-law spouses in Quebec.

As I mentioned, 1.2 million Quebecers could unfortunately suffer. As I was saying, the amendment proposed by the Conservatives needs some clarification. Simply removing the reference to child or spouse causes a problem, since support orders can apply to people other than children and spouses. For example, in Ontario, they can apply to parents. Therefore, if the text is amended as such, the French version would not at all be the same as the English version.

• (1905)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise and speak to this bill. From the outset, I recognize the noble intention of the sponsor of this bill, the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. We can see a sincere desire to increase the accountability of those who have been found guilty of a crime against society. However, I feel that the bill applies to very rare and specific cases, but that does not mean that it is not commendable. It simply means that its impact on the prison population will be rather limited.

That being said, it will certainly bring some tangible assistance to an offender's family, for example. I look forward to studying the two proposed amendments. At first glance, those amendments seem very similar, but, according to the hon. member who just spoke, there are

some rather significant differences. So I am going to examine the two amendments to try to draw the appropriate conclusions. We are all rowing in the same direction and we want the same thing. We just have to find the most effective way to reach our common goal.

Will the bill increase the accountability of offenders who have successfully taken legal action against the federal Crown for a crime they were a victim of and who have received an amount of money as compensation? Perhaps. There are always some small miracles in life, including in the prison system, I am sure. That is one of the two objectives of the bill. The bill seeks to help those who are victims of crime, both the victim of the act committed, and the person, for example, whose parent committed the crime, was sent to jail, and was thereby unable to provide for their spouse or children.

Generally speaking, making a human being accountable has to do with developing a sense of respect for other human beings. This starts with planting a seed that helps us recognize our responsibility for the well-being of another human being, often the well-being of a loved one. It is more of a journey than a one-time thing. It is a journey, a path that leads to having an open mind and a sense of duty; it can even lead to feeling satisfaction from helping another person.

As I said, that does not mean that an inmate required to give the amount received in compensation to one of his family members could not, all of a sudden, develop a sense of responsibility. This sense of responsibility is generally developed through programs given in Canadian penitentiaries. These programs are recognized worldwide. For decades, Canada has developed very effective inmate programs. These programs have been successful, according to experts not just in Canada but around the world, experts who have seen fit to adapt the programs in their own countries.

• (1910)

It is mainly through these programs that an inmate will develop a sense of responsibility. So we need to continue to focus on these programs, such as the CORCAN program, which everyone is familiar with. CORCAN is a business that reports to Correctional Services Canada and is run within the prisons themselves. This business builds cabinets and all kinds of very marketable things, which gives the inmates a sense of well-being and responsibility. So we need not to forget about these programs.

The purpose of the bill is obviously very noble, and it is a step in the right direction, but we need to continue to focus on rehabilitation through programs that are well-funded by the federal government.

A number of objections to the bill have been raised. For example, what happens if an offender wins his case against the Crown? He gets his money, the money goes to his family, and at some point in the future, it turns out the person was not guilty and was incarcerated for a crime he never committed. What happens then? Yes, the money would have been given to his family. That does not mean he wants the money back. Anyway, he would probably take the government to court and would probably get back the money that had been taken away after he was compensated the first time around. Practically speaking, I do not think that this is a problem even though the bill does not address this possibility.

However, it is possible that the bill could be struck down because it encroaches on provincial jurisdiction. We know that all matters relating to property, such as firearms management, fall under provincial jurisdiction. So there could be legal action at that level. Also, as we heard from one of the witnesses who appeared before the committee when we studied the bill, someone could try to have the legislation struck down because it involves expropriating the property of a Canadian citizen, even if that is done for a good cause. We will see whether the threat of that kind of lawsuit materializes.

That being said, the government must make absolutely sure that, when it creates a bill, that bill can stand up to attempts to strike it down based on the Constitution or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If not, we will see what we saw yesterday when, for the third time, a judge struck down a government crime bill because it was not drafted properly to begin with. In the long run, that could result in injustice.

•(1915)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first let me commend the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry for bringing this legislation forward in the House. He always works very hard for his constituents. He is one of the people who, after I was first elected, was very helpful in helping me better understand the role of a member of Parliament and how things work in this place.

This is a great bill that the people in my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham are very excited to have me support. It adds to the many great positive pieces of legislation that we have brought forward to protect Canadian families and individuals. It is another reason why Canadians know that they can put their faith in those of us on this side of the House to always look after the rights of hard-working, law-abiding Canadians.

The NDP has put forward an amendment and I want to say a couple of things on the record about that. I know that while the NDP amendment aims to reconcile the potential discrepancy in definition of a spouse between the French and English versions of the bill, I note that it is limited to only child, spouse and conjugal cohabitant support orders. The problem with this is that it may actually exclude other forms of family law orders established by provincial law, such as parental support.

The reason why the amendment by the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry is far superior is that it would achieve a better resolution. It relies on the language of existing federal legislation to make sure that this loophole is closed. I applaud the member for putting that amendment forward because that is what parliamentarians always try to do, to bring forward private member's legislation in the House. This government is very well known for consulting with and listening to Canadians and making sure we have the opportunity to truly respect the will of Canadians. We make the changes that are necessary to do that. I applaud the member for doing that.

The member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry's amendment would ensure better consistency with both federal and provincial laws. For those reasons, I cannot support the NDP's

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amendment and will be supporting the amendment by the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. I will take a quick moment to thank the hon. member for bringing this bill forward. It is very important and another example of how this government and members on this side of the House are working every single day to make sure our communities are protected. Hard-working, law-abiding Canadians can count on this government to make sure that we do everything possible to keep communities safe.

I will be supporting the amendment by the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry because of the things I have mentioned.

•(1920)

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of our analysis of the bill currently before us, I would like to begin by discussing a certain angle that appears to form the basis of the Conservative media platform.

I must candidly admit that I tend to do a little cherry picking—that is, I pick and choose the files I wish to take on, depending on their legal flavour, because, I must admit, I sometimes miss practising law and arguing cases.

This file allows me to revisit my first love. It is important to understand that I am first and foremost a criminal lawyer, although I do not have a great deal of legal experience. I worked for a few years—two years—and a little more than two years for legal aid. During those years, I was called upon to handle several hundred cases, perhaps even a thousand in total. I would like to point out the elements that need to be brought to the attention of the general public, including the limited impact this kind of legislative initiative can have. I encountered this kind of situation only a couple of times in the context of my legal practice. Indeed, many Innu and Naskapi people—about 15,000—in my riding received compensation for the time they spent in residential schools. That is why these people had been detained and why they received that money. That is the only instance.

I mentioned the media platform. My experience in this House for a little over a year now has allowed me to form my own personal opinions, which tend to be reinforced every day. Often, the legislative and real-world initiatives proposed by the Conservatives are intended primarily to garner media attention. They want to win votes. These initiatives are usually designed to please a specific group of Canadians.

In this case, the Conservatives are trying to side with the victims—in a very obvious way, in my opinion—by trying to demonize the other side. They simply say that the New Democratic Party is siding with the criminals and the people who commit offences.

Private Members' Business

This is somewhat of a trend and we are seeing it again today. I would say that the legislation, as it stands right now, is rather ill-advised both factually and legally, since my argument—I will bring up some points during this speech—will show that this would contravene some well-established legal norms and principles that one learns in the early years of law school, for example, the non-seizability of money received in compensation for physical harm. That is some of what I will be discussing.

My argument will introduce the fact that this bill, which technically aims to increase the accountability of offenders—which is a valid point with a valid purpose—has little basis when it comes to Canadian reality.

I spoke about the uniqueness of my own riding. Chances are that not all ridings have a large aboriginal population. As a result, I do not think that this kind of case, the payment of money to a detainee as part of compensation for former students, is standard across the country.

A quick glance at the opinions held by a number of leading correctional experts highlights the uncertainty over the number of offenders who receive settlement funds as a result of a court ruling.

As I was saying, it is a special case. In my practice, I have handled hundreds of cases. I could perhaps recall three or four cases of clients who were detainees, including some who were serving federal sentences. They were incarcerated and only some clients received the money. That is rather marginal. I am not trying to say that the Conservatives are only focused on the recipients of this monetary amount, but I wanted to share this. I have not seen this type of situation a lot across the country, where an incarcerated individual is awarded money as a result of a ruling, regardless of where it is from—perhaps even compensation for victims of crime. This opinion is shared by a number of experts.

●(1925)

These are likely special cases that are few and far between. I read reports and opinions of experts in this regard. The Conservatives should have invested more time in seeking the opinions of experts in the field. Laudable goals have been mentioned by my colleagues; however, they were poorly advised in fact and in law.

Under the Civil Code or Quebec law, the type of restitution that is made to an individual is based on compensation for physical harm. I did not do comparative law, but I think that the same type of rules apply in the other provinces. Such amounts are also exempt from seizure in the other provinces. This is a principle that law students learn in the first years of their studies, and I remembered it when I was examining this bill.

To date, I have not heard any of my colleagues talk about this. Mr. Speaker, in your capacity as a lawyer, you no doubt know that it is very likely that there will be court challenges. The way I see it, there is a very strong chance that these provisions will be struck down in Quebec. In the end, this will clog up the justice system.

The lifestyle of offenders is another factor that must be taken into account. These people are often marginalized. The same is true of people who are incarcerated. They have a lot of free time. They will likely object to these types of measures and will file grievances. There are some self-styled lawyers in prison and they will give

advice to their fellow inmates. It is therefore very likely that these provisions will be challenged.

Although this legislative measure may have noble goals, using this rationale, I must point out that such an initiative will very likely have its share of court challenges. The Conservatives are trying to please part of the population and improve their media image across the country. Over the past year, they have done the same thing with other bills. They had certain objectives that were not necessarily the best. Even though the objective of this bill is technically noble, this is a not a direct way of achieving it. Given the number of members who sit on the opposite side of the House, each of these opportunities can be used by the party's strategist to try to improve the party's media image.

I submit this respectfully, and I hope that my comments were relevant.

●(1930)

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House and speak to this bill. Many hon. members have already talked about the summary of the bill, so I will not dwell on it. It has already been done. I will instead focus on some of the points in Bill C-350.

First, I would like to applaud the intent behind this bill, which is to provide support to the families of the accused and to victims by ensuring that offenders are required to fulfill their responsibilities toward them. That is a very noble intention. I am glad that we have the opportunity today to discuss this issue and that the bill will be referred to committee for study.

I would also like to point out that we have just witnessed something exceptional and remarkable: a Conservative member and an NDP member have introduced two very similar amendments, two amendments that go along the same lines. We often talk about disagreements between parties and about how impossible it is for them to work together. Today's event is a fine example that, despite disagreements, the various parties also have some common interests. All hon. members of the House are thinking people, knowledgeable and well informed about the issues they are working on.

The proposed amendments are very interesting and are heading in more or less the same direction. It will be interesting to see how they will be received in committee and how the members will work together.

The government wants to put the protection of families and victims first. However, this bill should not replace measures designed to better inform and advise victims and provide them with better financial support.

Private Members' Business

This bill currently states that offenders who are awarded monies will compensate victims. However, many cannot be accountable to the victims and families. We have to take these people into consideration. We must also ensure that this bill is not one we can use to say that we did everything we could. We can do more for the good of the victims and the offenders' families, for the children of offenders. That is my concern with this bill concerning victims.

Bill C-350 seeks to make offenders accountable, as indicated by the title of the bill. We must consider what will result in true accountability of offenders. Once again, a very specific approach is being taken to a problem, which is fair, because that is what we have to do in our work. But we must not lose sight of the broader issue of interest in Bill C-350.

The NDP believes that this bill is not the best way to make offenders accountable. Based on the testimony of many experts, among others, who appeared before the committee, an offender must be directly involved in decisions about paying compensation to victims and other financial decisions in order to develop his sense of responsibility. If such decisions are made for him and he is not asked for his input, he will not necessarily develop that sense of responsibility. He does not have a say, he does not even have to think about his situation. Will that really make him more accountable? The NDP believes that this question must be posed. Many experts are also wondering about this.

I spoke about the victims and accountability. I would now like to talk about rehabilitation and prevention. These issues are not addressed in this bill, and the Conservative Party has not talked about them much in connection with this bill. I continue to find this unfortunate and worrisome.

Accountability, yes. But what about rehabilitation? We support comprehensive rehabilitation programs that will reduce recidivism and make our cities safer. When we were debating mandatory minimum sentences, there was a lot of talk about safety in our streets and communities. However, the two concepts do not necessarily go hand in hand. If we want to make our cities and communities safer, we have to talk about rehabilitation and prevention.

In a 2007 report, Public Safety Canada recognized that former inmates face a number of challenges, such as limited access to jobs, that compromise their ability to become law-abiding citizens.

● (1935)

If we really want to help offenders fulfill their financial responsibilities toward their communities and their families, we have to think about what we can do to improve their access to jobs. The two go hand in hand, and that issue has to be part of a debate like this one. If the Conservative Party really cares about offender accountability, what is it prepared to do to ensure that offenders who are released from prison can find work and shoulder their responsibilities toward their communities?

Quebec's Centre de ressources pour délinquants comes to mind. The centre works to enhance the skills and employability of its clientele in order to facilitate integration or reintegration into the job market. These things exist and have already been implemented in several departments and provinces in different ways. The Centre de ressources pour délinquants is an example of that. Experts are

available to offenders to ensure they have the legal, social and educational support they need to give them the best possible opportunity to reintegrate into the job market. The centre is part of the Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec. Yes, Quebec. So we have to think about just how involved we can get in this issue, but it is worth mentioning.

Now let us talk about prevention. Once again, we do not hear this word enough when talking about safety and the role of inmates or offenders in our society. It is important to prevent crime, and not simply punish people. This point cannot be over-emphasized, especially when working with a Conservative government like this one. Why not invest in prevention? A report entitled "Cost and Effectiveness of Federal Correctional Policy" stated the following:

The skyrocketing costs associated with new bills [like Bill C-10 and Bill C-25] will put a great deal of pressure on rehabilitation programs, which could suffer if the new influx of prisoners is not accompanied by the additional resources needed to handle them.

We could learn from the mistakes of other countries that also favour punishment, but did not put enough additional resources into the system and whose rehabilitation programs are suffering a great deal as a result.

I think it is now time to discuss Bill C-36. I can make an interesting link here. This bill deals with elder abuse. This bill contains measures that give judges another tool for punishing crimes committed against seniors. If we really want to tackle the problem of elder abuse, then we also need to ask ourselves how we can prevent it and how we can support seniors to make it easier for them to report cases of abuse.

In fact, a number of bills claim to be fighting a problem, but they do not really get to the heart of that problem and do not take into account the factors of vulnerability and prevention that go along with all that.

Lastly, I would like to talk about the work that the committee did on Bill C-350. I am pleased to see that amendments were made to the bill after the work in committee with all the parties. However, from what I heard from my colleagues on that committee, a number of questions have yet to be answered. I do not understand why members who know their stuff cannot manage to get some answers. For example, does this bill encroach on provincial jurisdictions? Is there not a risk of limiting a judge's discretionary power?

How is it that we have not yet gotten answers to these questions, and how is that we are seeing limited debate and testimony in this type of committee?

In conclusion, the NDP will support this bill at second reading, but it is important that prevention and rehabilitation be included in these discussions and these debates. Restitution is possible for a theft or items broken by an offender, but the psychological or physical damage done during a crime cannot all be repaired, and someone who dies as a result of a crime cannot be brought back.

● (1940)

That is why punishment is not enough; we need to take action beforehand to prevent the crime.

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Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment.

Since this is my first speech in the House this fall, I would like to share with you my intention to adopt a new approach to make my comments more accessible to all my colleagues and the general public. Even if the Conservative government continues to evoke in me—and I will say it—a certain sense of disgust when it comes to its understanding of democracy, I intend to take measures to keep my vocal chords intact for the remainder of my mandate. This will make many of my colleagues, both on this side of the House and the other, quite happy. I just want to make sure that I still have a voice when the time comes for the NDP to take power in 2015.

That being said, let us come back to the subject at hand, which is Bill C-350, which amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, particularly with regard to the accountability of offenders.

The principle of accountability was introduced into the Criminal Code in order to make offenders aware of the harm they caused another person, the victim. Thus, it seems that, in an effort to make restitution for harm done, in the case before us today, the legislator wanted to give itself a way to recover amounts that should normally have been given to recipients that I would say are much more deserving, for lack of a better word.

This bill does not conflict with the Criminal Code because, here, the idea of compensation is not to further punish offenders by taking away amounts that are due to them but, rather, to develop in them a sense of accountability, which is already found in section 718 of the Criminal Code. This section talks about reparations for harm done to victims in order to promote a sense of responsibility in offenders—that great virtue of acknowledging the harm that they have done to victims.

In committee, the NDP asked whether this bill would really enhance the accountability of offenders and improve the rehabilitation process. The NDP also asked whether this bill is really necessary, given the small number of offenders who would be affected by it. We said that we would support comprehensive rehabilitation programs that reduce recidivism and make our communities safer. In that sense, the meaning of the word “victim” must be expanded because there are often collateral victims, entire communities that are affected and that have their histories marked by crime

Although the role of the legislator is not to replace the court, we note that we must address the measures put in place to recover the amounts that the Crown owes to the imprisoned offender and to define the concept of victim that I just mentioned.

We are supporting Bill C-350 at this stage, and we will continue to support it, even though we find it limited in scope, despite the proposed amendment. We are wondering and have some reservations about the mechanics, about the actual application of the bill. Unfortunately, this is not the first time the Conservatives have given us a recipe without knowing how to cook.

The ombudsman for victims of crime has made some recommendations. Among other things, he suggested authorizing Correctional Services Canada to deduct reasonable amounts from offenders' income so that they cover their unresolved responsibilities relating to

finances or specific compensation. In fact, in addition to responsibilities to the victims, a number of offenders also have responsibilities to their own families, which are often negatively affected by the offences committed by their loved ones.

The NDP acknowledges that it is important for offenders to be more accountable and that the idea of ensuring that the money they receive following a court judgment to pay their unresolved responsibilities is very good, unquestionably.

• (1945)

We also support the order of precedence set out in Bill C-350 regarding any monetary amount awarded pursuant to a court ruling. More specifically, we are in favour of priority being given to the child or spouse support order. That is fundamental.

But have I understood correctly? Why is there no mention of common-law spouses or partners, as proposed in the amendment? Are they not part of today's family landscape, especially since statistics are increasingly taking them into account because there are so many blended families and families that live under the same roof? That is a fact, and the concept of a common-law spouse is really part of the demographic landscape of the 21st century. Or is some ideology being subtly incorporated into this bill?

I was talking about disgust earlier in my speech. Well, it is unfortunate that this Conservative government is not often inclusive in its actions and deliberately forgets people for whom some administrative measures would be useful.

We are also concerned about the fact that this bill will probably just fall under federal jurisdiction and that it might unintentionally work against the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. These people will be put off and some will even go before the various courts. Some offenders actually have ways to challenge a decision.

Mr. Fineberg from the Canadian Prison Law Association had this to say about the bill:

Bill C-350 pits itself not only against provincial legislative and administrative efforts, it seeks to undermine Correctional Service Canada's own operations.

It is important to mention it.

According to the NDP, this bill is not the best way to make offenders accountable. According to the testimony of experts, an offender must be directly involved in determining the payment of compensation to victims and other financial decisions in order to develop his sense of responsibility. That is rehabilitation. With this bill, some decisions will be made for and imposed on offenders. In many cases, this repressive approach will only make them more angry and rebellious.

With this bill, section three of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act will be replaced by:

(c) encouraging the accountability and responsibility of offenders, with a view to ensuring that their obligations to society are addressed.

It is a lovely thought, but by only having a very small number of victims benefit from this bill, the very intent of this statement is lost.

The same act is amended by adding, after section 78, the following:

78.1 (1) In furtherance of the purpose referred to in paragraph 3(c), any amount owed to an offender as a result of a monetary award made to the offender by a final decision of a court or tribunal pursuant to a legal action or proceeding against Her Majesty in right of Canada, or an agent or employee of Her Majesty for any act or omission in the performance of his or her duties...

Only amounts owed by the Crown would be subject to the “obligations to society” rule. Once again, the legislator is quite shy about including the indecent amounts of money offenders sometimes collect while they are still incarcerated.

I would have liked to see the government present figures on the offenders who receive settlements as a result of a court ruling. But we do not have any, and we have no idea of the real effect this would have.

Instead of getting caught up in less important issues, the NDP thinks that the federal government should focus its efforts on crime prevention, as we said earlier, and rehabilitation, two key factors in reducing the number of offenders and reoffenders.

In conclusion, I repeat that I support Bill C-350, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, albeit with reservations. However, like my colleagues, I urge the Conservatives to be fair and I invite them to work with my colleagues and me in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in order to find a satisfactory and constructive compromise.

• (1950)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The 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: Pursuant to Standing Order 98, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 26, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Adjournment Proceedings

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1955)

[English]

TRANSPORT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, may I take this opportunity, since it is the first time I have had the opportunity of addressing you as duly appointed Deputy Speaker, to say what a great pleasure it is and how wisely I think the powers that be have moved to put you in the chair.

The question that leads tonight's adjournment proceedings was a question I put in June, before the House rose for the summer. Unfortunately, the response came from a minister whose areas of responsibility do not actually fall within the parameters of the question I asked. It means that this time the representative for the Minister of Transport is here. However, my question did not specifically relate to transport. It was a tangential issue.

My question was one of constitutional authorities. In particular, I put it to the Prime Minister that since he was well known in opposition as an individual who believed that the provinces should exert their jurisdictional authorities to the maximum to press back against heavy-handed federal intrusion into their areas of authority, I wondered if he had now changed his mind. Those of us in British Columbia felt very clearly that the Prime Minister was pushing a particular project on the people of British Columbia whether we liked it or not.

Just to make it clear to all present today, to refresh their memories, the question I put was the following:

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister for many years expressed concern as an Albertan about the heavy-handed intrusion of federal policy on the will of Albertans.

Right now, British Columbians oppose supertankers on the coastline, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities opposes supertankers and today's polls show by a margin of three to one that British Columbians do not want oil tankers on their coastline. Will the Prime Minister run roughshod over the will of British Columbians for his pet project?

In that brief question I was alluding to something that is famously known as the firewall letter. This was back in January 2001, when our current Prime Minister was not serving in the House but had left a position as MP to become the executive director of the National Citizens Coalition. In that capacity, he co-signed a letter with University of Alberta professor Tom Flanagan; with Ted Morton, who was described in the letter as Alberta senator-elect; with the head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation; and with other Albertans, particularly Ken Boessenkool, who is now an advisor to Christy Clark.

The irony is not lost on British Columbians. This famous letter was designed to do the following. The current Prime Minister wrote in 2001 about what could be done to extend provincial powers to “limit the extent to which an aggressive and hostile federal government can encroach upon legitimate provincial jurisdiction”.

Perhaps I will have better luck tonight. I will put my question again.

Adjournment Proceedings

Has the current Prime Minister lost track of his previous concerns that provincial rights, privileges and powers, and particularly the will of the people of a province, should be respected and that in fact he should be guided on the matter of the Enbridge proposal and the supertankers, which British Columbians do not want, by the will of the people of British Columbia and not his own preference for expansion of bitumen production?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by addressing the constitutional and jurisdictional questions that the member posed. I would point out the very obvious, that even the most strong believer in the principle of subsidiarity would accept that the federal government is responsible for regulating shipping and the associated industries. That is because ships cross borders. It is an international business and it would be impossible for it to be adequately regulated on a province-by-province basis.

The member mentioned oil tankers and the safety-related issues around them. The reality is that oil tankers have been moving safely into west coast waters since the 1930s. This, contrary to the member's remarks, is nothing new. In fact, a total of 82 oil tankers arrived at Port Metro Vancouver in 2011. During the last five years there were 1,302 tankers that arrived at that same port. During that time period, nearly 200 oil and chemical tankers safely visited the ports of Prince Rupert and Kitimat. They follow international and Canadian requirements, including double hulling of ships, mandatory pilotage, regular inspections, and aerial surveillance. With double hull, the bottom and sides of the vessel have two complete layers of water-tight hull surface. Tankers that are not double hull are being gradually phased out. For large crude oil tankers, like the *Exxon Valdez* was, the phase-out date for single hull vessels was 2010, which means that all large crude oil tankers operating in our waters today are double hull.

In compulsory pilotage areas, the pilotage authorities require tanker operators to take on board a marine pilot with knowledge before entering a harbour or busy waterway. The department ship inspectors are on board and they inspect foreign vessels, including oil tankers, entering Canadian ports to ensure they comply with all of our rules. In 2011, there were 1,100 inspections carried out across Canada, 147 of them on oil tankers.

We also have the eye in the sky which watches tankers as they approach our shores. Transport Canada performs aerial surveillance over Canadian waters to detect pollution from ships. In 2010-11, crews observed more than 12,000 vessels, nearly one-third of which were over west coast waters. It is an effective prevention tool because potential polluters know that Canada is watching and we have the power to prosecute.

What I am about to say is very important, so I ask that the member listen carefully. The good news is that over the last 20 years there has not been a single major oil spill in Canadian waters. We will work to ensure that the next 20 years are as successful as the last.

• (2000)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friend has been picking up speaking points from former president Bill Clinton and the style of his Democratic convention speech.

I would ask that he listen closely, because what I am going to say is important. My question in June and my question today relate to respect for the will of British Columbians. Let me speak to the will of British Columbians.

It is the will of British Columbians not to have supertankers on our coastline. That is why since 1972 there has been a moratorium. Although the port of Vancouver was grandfathered at the time, the coastline of British Columbia, and Hecate Strait in particular, which according to Environment Canada is the fourth most hazardous body of water on Earth, is not traversed by supertankers carrying oil because we have had a moratorium since 1972.

That moratorium is the will of British Columbians, and we will, as a province and as a people, continue to insist that the Prime Minister of this country respect the British Columbia firewall.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed the member wants to build a firewall around British Columbia, particularly on the issue of international shipping.

There is not an expert in the world on regulatory matters that would believe it in the interest of Canada to go to province by province regulations for shipping. We would have five or six different regimes just entering the St. Lawrence into the Great Lakes, and that would not be practical.

The reality is that we have had tankers going in and out of the British Columbia west coast since the 1930s, a total of 82 tankers last year, 1,302 tankers in the last 5 years, and 200 oil and chemical tankers safely visited the ports of Prince Rupert and Kitimat.

We have strong regulations, aerial surveillance, onboard inspections. For 20 years, as a result of these strong regulatory actions and the co-operation of industry, we have not had a single, solitary major oil spill in Canadian waters. That is a success story we should celebrate, not something we should tear down.

• (2005)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate you on your appointment as Deputy Speaker. We are excited to have you in the chair, even at this late hour.

I am also pleased to have the opportunity to raise what is a critical issue for so many Canadians.

One of the paramount needs that we all have is to feel safe and to live in a safe community. In that context there are many factors that come into play, but one of the most important is policing.

While we recognize that critical work is done in this area, many Canadians, particularly many women in Canada, have raised real concerns around the allegations of sexual harassment in our national police force, the RCMP.

Adjournment Proceedings

As the status of women critic for the NDP, I have the opportunity to work through Parliament's status of women committee, which is looking at this issue. Within the next couple of weeks we will embark on a broader study, looking at sexual harassment in the federal workplace, including, we hope, a special focus on the RCMP.

All of this connects to my question to the government in late spring. At that time, I asked what specific commitment it was making in terms of funding and financial support as well as political support and political direction to ensure that the issue of sexual harassment in the RCMP became a priority going forward.

The government has repeatedly referred to the ongoing court case by the women who have brought forward these serious allegations, women who have talked about verbal abuse, sexual assault, post-traumatic disorder, depression, having to leave their work as a result and not being able to go on with their lives and, in some cases, not finding gainful employment as a result.

Every Canadian would agree that it is unacceptable that the people who are charged with keeping us safe would also have an environment in which some among them would feel not just unsafe, but also abused. While we all acknowledge the severity of the problem, the Conservative government has been unwilling to draw specific attention to it.

Earlier this week I was in the House taking part in the debate on Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, something that we voted on today. It was clear in the deliberations in the House that the focus of the legislation was not on sexual harassment. That is where I want the question to be once again.

When will the government commit to funding and giving political priority to the need to find out what is going on in terms of sexual harassment in the RCMP and ultimately put an end to it now and for all?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your recent appointment.

[*English*]

I am very pleased today to rise and to be able to address the question by the hon. member for Churchill. All of us, men and women alike, civilians, politicians, the RCMP, and Canadians generally are very troubled by the idea of and recent reports about harassment and, certainly, sexual harassment within the RCMP. I agree with the hon. members that the RCMP should be free to face the daily challenges of protecting our streets and our communities without harassment, which makes their workplace that much more difficult.

That is why the Minister of Public Safety, in consultation with Commissioner Paulson, referred this matter to the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP. On the specific allegations, nonetheless, it would obviously be inappropriate for us to comment because they are before the courts.

What I think is so important for my hon. colleague to realize is that harassment of any kind needs to be addressed, and to segregate

the various types of harassment actually lends less credibility to the issue. What we have done is to have introduced Bill C-42, the Enhancing Royal Canadian Mounted Police Accountability Act. I am very pleased to see that the House agreed to send our recent bill to committee.

Many of us participated in the debate, and tonight we are sending it to committee. I look forward to all of us working together. The member for Churchill is not on the public safety committee but serves on another committee. The public safety committee is working to see this bill pass, getting it through committee and working together.

We have heard calls for better civilian oversight, more accountability and a stronger framework to handle investigations of serious incidents involving RCMP members. We have also heard the calls for a more modern, and I think that is a very important word, disciplined grievance and human resource management framework, one that would bring about a cultural shift within the RCMP.

We have responded, working together with our stakeholders. Our government believes that the time has now come to put this legislation onto the books and set out a pathway for the future. This legislation is vital to the future of Canada's national police force and indeed vital to the future of our community safety initiatives over the short and long terms.

Bill C-42 addresses the call for increased oversight and accountability of the RCMP, and builds on the progress that is already being made by the management and the workforce. It is a comprehensive bill. It will allow us to move forward with certainty in our transformation exercise. I think all of us agree that we have an excellent RCMP force but there is a change that needs to be made, not only with sexual harassment but also with harassment of any kind, in the complaints process, and in the way civilian oversight is addressed.

Bill C-42 addresses these issues, and I think that as we work together to see it pass, we can see a new culture shift happen in the RCMP. We can see both men and women working and enjoying their jobs, contributing not only as protectors of Canadian society but also in the individual jobs they do.

We look forward to the NDP working together with us in the public safety committee. Let us get Bill C-42 through committee quickly. Let us work through the different parts of it. Let us bring more accountability to the RCMP. Let us help stop sexual harassment in any workplace and harassment of any kind.

● (2010)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, as the member will have heard, I also referred to Bill C-42 and the important debate that took place in this House, including looking at the various aspects that are indeed raised by this bill. I certainly know that our critic on public safety has spoken to that as well.

Adjournment Proceedings

However, the reality is that there is only one court case where about 200 women have come forward with serious allegations of sexual harassment, based on the fact they are women working in this workplace. There is no other workplace for which there is such a court case presently. There is no other allegation of abuse within the RCMP where 200 people have come together to put forward such a court case.

The specificity of sexual harassment remains the question at stake. Men can also be sexually harassed, although we know that the greatest number tends to be women in our society, and certainly in the case of the RCMP the allegations have been made by women. That specificity must be considered and financial and political priority must be placed on it.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the concern that the hon. member brings forward to this discussion.

Our government is trying to lay a strong foundation within the RCMP so that things like sexual harassment can be addressed. Under the current act that the RCMP works under it can be very difficult to address these issues. Sometimes it is at the initial level, whether it is education or people working together.

We are trying to get Bill C-42 through committee and passed into law so that there can be a stronger foundation for the RCMP, for direct supervisors, the commission and members themselves to deal with these specific issues. I believe we are on the right path.

Again, there is always more work to be done, whether for the government or the people working together and being respectful to each other.

We want to lay the foundation with Bill C-42 to enhance and change the RCMP Accountability Act so that it can move forward, change the culture and have an even better police force.

● (2015)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:15 p.m.)

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