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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, December 4, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 4, 2013

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of our national anthem led by the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

CONCERTATION-FEMME CENTRE FOR WOMEN IN AHUNTSIC-CARTIERVILLE

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, in this special week, during which we mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of the Concertation-Femme team in Ahuntsic-Cartierville.

In addition to developing an excellent information tool in 10 languages addressing women's rights and the prevention of all forms of violence, this organization's workers and volunteers reach out every year to women from over 55 countries who have just arrived in Canada. They work with mothers and elderly women to foster their emotional and economic independence.

More recently, Concertation-Femme has held a number of activities with students in high schools, during which they address such issues as relationships between girls and boys and self-respect.

Congratulations and a sincere thank you to Concertation-Femme.

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[English]

CRIME STOPPERS

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Crime Stoppers of Halton is an independent charitable organization, governed by a volunteer board of directors, made up of citizens representing all areas of the Halton region. Put simply, it is a three-part approach to solving crime problems. Crime Stoppers relies on

co-operation between the police, the media, and the general community to provide a flow of information about crime and criminals.

Since its creation in 1988, Crime Stoppers of Halton has helped the police make over 1,000 arrests, recovering nearly \$20 million in money and assets, and it has paid \$54,000 in rewards. Halton has been named the safest municipality in Canada. Its Crime Stoppers branch receives 600 tips per year.

Norm Bellefontaine, the chair of Crime Stoppers of Halton, said that he would like to think that Crime Stoppers has been a tool in the toolbox to keep his region safe.

On behalf of the citizens of Burlington, I congratulate the Crime Stoppers of Halton for their 25 years of fantastic service to the community.

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• (1405)

TIBETAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, *Tashi Delek*. I rise today to welcome to Ottawa the new representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for North America, Kaydor Aukatsang. I would also like to welcome the 17 Tibetans who arrived over the weekend through the Tibetan resettlement project. They are the first of 1,000 Tibetans who will relocate to Canada through this program.

Tibetans face religious and cultural oppression in their homeland. In Canada they also face unacceptable delays in family reunification. In my riding of Parkdale—High Park, I have seen people wait as long as nine years to reunite with loved ones. This resettlement program shows great promise, but clearly, we do need a fair and more efficient immigration system.

Today I hope all members of the House will join me in wishing a heartfelt welcome to Mr. Aukatsang and the participants of the resettlement program.

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TIBET

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the human rights tragedy in Tibet continues under the watchful eye of the Chinese authorities. Reports out of Tibet are that yet another monk set himself ablaze in November. This sadly brings the total to 122 in Tibet who have self-immolated.

Statements by Members

Imagine what it must take to set oneself on fire as a means of protest. The circumstances are clearly getting worse, but we do not hear much about it, because journalists are prevented from reporting from the Tibetan areas in China.

We in the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet continue to shine the international spotlight on the worsening situation. That is why some members of the House heard directly from Mr. Kaydor Aukatsang here on Parliament Hill earlier this afternoon. Mr. Aukatsang is His Holiness the Dalai Lama's representative in North America and is part of the Central Tibetan Administration, the government in exile. He updated us on the developments and reiterated the Dalai Lama's call for peace and for the Chinese leadership to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Tibetan people.

Time is of the essence. The world is watching.

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TIBET

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with other parliamentarians in welcoming Mr. Kaydor Aukatsang to Ottawa today, the new representative to North America of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, our distinguished honorary citizen.

The painful plight of Tibetans, where more than 120 from all sectors of society have self-immolated, is the ultimate cry of protest and witness against the ongoing persecution and repression.

Tibetans value democracy, freedom, religious liberty, and the rule of law, while adhering to non-violence in the pursuit of genuine autonomy, pursuant to the Chinese constitution. Regrettably, while Chinese President Xi Jinping speaks of transparency and the rule of law, the repression of political dissent, the silencing of independent media, and the criminalization of innocent Tibetans intensifies.

These actions shame a superpower that is a trustee of a great Chinese civilization and heritage. We urge the Chinese authorities to respect that great heritage, respect the rule of law, and see the Dalai Lama as a solution for a just and lasting peace for China and all Tibetans.

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CHRISTMAS SEASON

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to stand in this House to pay tribute to the thousands of Peace Country residents and the millions of Canadians who will make a special effort this Christmas season to give back to those who are less fortunate.

Community organizations, church congregations, the Salvation Army, food banks, native friendship centres, and others will lead the effort to make this festive season a true celebration for those who would otherwise go without this Christmas. Generous citizens throughout our communities will make a difference by giving their finances, donating goods, and sacrificing their own time during this busy time of the year, and for that we all want to say "thank you".

I count it a privilege to represent the Peace Country, and I am proud to be part of a region that is so caring and whose residents lead by example, each and every day, to make our community a better place to live.

As we approach this Christmas season, I want to thank those who will give generously of their time and resources to help others. Let us all be inspired by their generosity and dedication, and let us join the effort to make this Christmas season a season of hope for all.

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● (1410)

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian immigrant families have to wait up to eight and a half years to be reunited with loved ones. That pretty much sums up the Conservative commitment to family values.

Blinded as the Conservatives are by an ideology that reduces people to line items on a budget, it is surprising that they cannot even see the economic argument in ensuring that families reunite quickly with their grandparents and parents. With the cost of child care and housing so prohibitive, something they are not doing anything about, it is often grandparents who provide child care while parents are working.

The cornerstone of Canada's commitment to newcomers should be bringing families together, not making immigrant families wait years and years to be reunited with loved ones. Surely we can all agree that families belong together. That is a value we all share as Canadians, do we not? However, it has become clear that the Conservatives do not seem to understand the importance of all of this. Heck, a Conservative minister even referred to parents recently as "a burden".

Canadians deserve better. Newcomer families deserve better. They will get that from New Democrats, who will always fight to make sure that family reunification is an essential priority in Canada's immigration system.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the privileges we get as members of Parliament is to stand in this House and pay tribute to amazing Canadians. Today I honour Senator Donald Oliver, representing the great province of Nova Scotia, who is retiring from the Canadian Senate. He served our country with singular distinction, and I am proud to consider him a friend.

Senator Oliver, a barrister, professor, entrepreneur, statesman, and advocate, has served the people of Canada with honour for more than 40 years. Since his elevation to the upper chamber in 1990, Don Oliver has chaired several key committees in the Senate and has served as Speaker *pro tempore*.

Senator Oliver is an accomplished businessperson and an expert on corporate governance. Yet for all of these achievements, we are most proud of Senator Oliver for his work in advancing equal opportunities for black Canadians and other visible minorities in our country. Early in his career, he was instrumental in bringing about provincial legislation to end racial discrimination in Nova Scotia. What an outstanding legacy.

Statements by Members

Today we thank him for what he has done for all Canadians. We also thank his partner, Linda. We know Don could not serve in his role without her equal commitment. We thank Don Oliver for what he means to Canada. His wise counsel will be greatly missed.

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HUMAN RIGHTS IN EGYPT

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been following with concern the case of 21 female protesters, including seven minor girls, in Alexandria, Egypt, who were sentenced to lengthy jail terms earlier this week. The 14 women were sentenced to 11 years in jail, while the seven young girls were similarly sentenced to 11 years in juvenile detention.

We have raised our concerns with the government of Egypt. At this time in Egypt's ongoing transition to democracy, we believe that it is critical that Egyptian authorities protect the rights of all citizens, including women and girls, to voice their opinions and protest peacefully. Respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law is the foundation of democracy, and we encourage the Egyptian government to adhere to these principles and to continue to pursue the transition road map as the best way to give all Egyptians a stake in the future stability and prosperity of their country.

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[Translation]

CORPORAL ALEXANDRE BEAUDIN-D'ANJOU

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to pay tribute to the courage and determination of Corporal Alexandre Beaudin-D'Anjou from Pont-Rouge, which is in my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Corporal Beaudin-D'Anjou proudly served in Afghanistan, where he was seriously injured by an improvised explosive device on December 6, 2009.

That tragic experience left him suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, but now he is overcoming his difficulties and taking on a major challenge.

Currently en route to the South Pole, Corporal Beaudin-D'Anjou is one of two Canadians on Team Soldier On who are taking part in the UK's South Pole Allied Challenge. He and his team, made up of other injured veterans, will cross-country ski 335 km over a period of more than two weeks, braving temperatures as low as -50°C.

His bravery merits our respect. He is a role model for each and every one of us.

Good luck on your journey, Corporal Beaudin-D'Anjou, and thank you for your exemplary service.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to supporting Canada's economy and job growth, our Conservative government is on the right track.

Indeed, since the depth of the global economic recession, Canada's economy has created over one million net new jobs. What is more, Statistics Canada announced just last week that the Canadian economy grew by 2.7% in the third quarter of 2013. That represents the ninth consecutive quarter of economic growth for Canada.

Despite this encouraging news, the global economy remains fragile and now is not the time to engage in risky high-tax schemes. Unfortunately, just last week when asked point blank, the leader of the NDP again committed to raising taxes on Canadian job creators. While the NDP is interested in increasing taxes and killing Canadian jobs, our Conservative government continues to do the opposite. We continue to create jobs and growth, and support Canada's economy.

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● (1415)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on day 12 of the 14 days of action to address violence against women. We count 14 days to commemorate the lives of the 14 young women who were massacred on December 6, 1989. They were killed because they were women. Every year we call for action because explicit misogyny, insidious discrimination and gender-based violence continue to provoke fear in the lives of women in Canada and the lives of our sisters across the globe.

As a young woman standing to address the House of Commons today, I am reminded that it is not always laws that hold women back, but fear too. A man walked into the École Polytechnique who hoped to scare women away from their dreams. Therefore, for the girls who want to be engineers, scientists, artists, lawyers, doctors and leaders, we call for action today. For women who want to be treated equally, who want to be respected and not racialized, impoverished, marginalized, and for all women who want to actualize all their choices, whatever they may be, in peace and security without fear of violence or degradation, we call for action today.

Today and every day women must have what they need to live without fear, without violence and with choice.

*Statements by Members***NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday our government introduced Bill C-15, the Northwest Territories devolution act, to show our government's commitment to ensuring that northerners have greater control over their resources and decision-making. That is why we are moving ahead with devolution and the transfer of lands and resource management to the Government of the Northwest Territories. This is an accomplishment that many governments have tried to achieve in the past, but have failed.

Promoting jobs, growth and prosperity in our north continues to be a priority of our government, which is why we want to give northerners greater control over their economic and political destinies. I urge all members of the House to support a prosperous and successful future for our north and to work together with the people of the great Northwest Territories in ensuring the bill gets across the finish line by April 14, 2014.

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OFFICER OF THE ORDER OF CANADA

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I acknowledge a good friend, and a good friend of all Canadians, on becoming an officer of the Order of Canada. The Hon. Brian Tobin has demonstrated remarkable service to the Parliament of Canada and as Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. His extensive achievements, both political and in business life, have been recognized in many corners of the world. Known to many of us as Captain Canada, last Friday he became an officer of the Order of Canada.

Brian Tobin is highly regarded for his strong and principled leadership. As a federal cabinet minister he saw the implementation of the Oceans Act, the extension of Canadian jurisdiction beyond 200 miles, and he took a strong stance against offshore overfishing by foreign fishers, known as the turbot war.

His term as Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador was marked by important economic reforms to our industries, the constitutional amendment that ended denominational-based education and the development of the offshore oil and gas industry.

My colleagues in the Liberal caucus today are proud of his accomplishments and we say, "Congratulations, Brian".

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is in Kiev to participate in the OSCE's ministerial council meeting today. This occurs while the Ukrainian government cracks down on mass protests against its unpopular decision to suspend the EU association negotiations, which many of Ukraine's neighbours leveraged for prosperous economies and full membership to the EU. Ukraine should be one of Europe's most successful countries and not a struggling post-Soviet nation drifting toward authoritarian rule.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs will take this opportunity to state our government's grave concern about the violence that has been inflicted on peaceful demonstrators by the authorities, as I as chair of the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary friendship group stated to the

speaker of the Ukrainian parliament and his delegation last week. He will also meet with opposition leaders and civil society representatives to express Canada's support.

Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are fundamental tenets of any truly democratic country. Our government stands with the people of Ukraine to build a society based on freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and balanced justice.

Slava Ukraina, Slava Canada.

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● (1420)

ETHICS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, remember when the Prime Minister told us no one in his office, other than Nigel Wright, knew about the deal with Mike Duffy? That certainly must have been news to the dozens of people in his office who were involved in the cover-up.

Remember the many times he claimed there was no legal agreement with Mike Duffy? Then the RCMP released the terms of the legal agreement.

Remember the times he claimed his lawyer Ben Perrin was not involved in any legal agreement? Then we found out he handled the whole thing.

Remember when the Prime Minister declared the Senate was independent? Then the police discovered emails from senators to the PMO saying, "Hi Nigel, just a quick note to say that I'm always ready to do exactly what is asked".

Remember when he claimed his office had nothing to do with emails being deleted?

The Prime Minister's talking points are clearly not good to go.

* * *

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent campaign by the United Church and others targets Israeli products sold in Canada that include West Bank labourers.

Yesterday, activists harassed and insulted a Jewish person in front of a retail store in Toronto. The individual was accused of being a religious fanatic for disagreeing with the boycott.

This initiative, which purports to target goods produced in whole or in part in contested areas, is both misguided and misinformed.

This past September I visited an industrial area near Ariel, which employs about 7,000 people. Roughly half are Palestinians who pay taxes to the Palestinian Authority and earn the same wages and benefits as their Israeli counterparts, as prescribed by Israeli law. That is two or three times the wage prospects elsewhere in the disputed territories.

Do these anti-Israel activists care that if their misguided efforts were successful they would ultimately hurt the very people they claim to be supporting; or as the incident in Toronto suggests, is the real root simply old-fashioned anti-Semitism?

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, was Benjamin Perrin fired or did he resign?

[*English*]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Perrin left my office of his own accord some nine months ago.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Office claims that it is "operating protocol" for emails to be routinely deleted when staff leave. But the same guidelines Conservatives are citing actually say that, under the law, emails cannot be deleted if they contain information needed to "account for activities of government".

Why was the law broken?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is, of course, the responsibility of all employees to follow the applicable rules.

Retained records are retained by the bureaucracy. When the bureaucracy realized that it had this information, it made this information available to the RCMP, and the official responsible answered thorough questions for that yesterday at committee.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the operative word there was "account" as in accountability.

A week ago we learned that Jim Love, the chair of the Royal Canadian Mint and a close personal friend of the Minister of Finance, ran a tax avoidance scheme for a wealthy Conservative family. This is the same Conservative insider that the finance minister hired to advise the government on tax policy.

Why is Jim Love still on the public payroll? Why has he not been fired?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member refers to a private dispute between two parties that has been before the courts. Obviously we are not going to comment on that. The individual in question is chairman of the mint and this government's record in closing tax loopholes is without precedent.

Oral Questions

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the last week, four Canadian soldiers have taken their lives. I know the thoughts and prayers of all members of the House go out to their families, but this is unprecedented. Could the Prime Minister tell us what he and his government are doing to address this tragic situation?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, let me just say, I think that this applies to all members of the House of Commons, all of our thoughts and prayers are with all of the friends and families of those who have been touched by these recent suicides.

I think it is the responsibility of all of us to encourage those who need support, those who need help, to get that help. We should reach out to them and encourage them to do that. Those supports are available and we will make sure, of course, that they continue to be available to those people.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for his answer. These suicides are troubling. They are horrible. We are talking about soldiers who courageously served not only their country, but each and every one of us.

Can the Prime Minister tell us if he is prepared to reverse his decision to close nine regional offices that provided services to veterans?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those services are available at Service Canada offices across the country. This government has invested far more in services for our veterans.

As I just said, our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends who have been touched by these events. It is the responsibility of all of us to encourage those who need support to get that support. We understand the difficulties that our military personnel have faced, and services are available to them.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night Canadians heard more sad news. We are now up to four Canadian soldiers who have died in the past week.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what is being done to communicate with Canadian Forces members, specifically those who are suffering from post-traumatic stress, to ensure that they get all the help they need?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a number of programs and services are available for our soldiers and veterans. They include the Canadian Armed Forces military assistance program, military family resource centres, the operational stress injury social support program, and the road to mental readiness program.

Oral Questions

There are more, but the most important thing is that we understand that what our soldiers go through is not easy. The work they do is very hard, very dangerous and full of very difficult experiences. I think it is important for all of us to encourage soldiers who need help to get that help.

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[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone understands that it is wrong to offer money to a police officer, to a judge, or to a legislator, yet in direct violation of the Parliament of Canada Act, the Prime Minister's head of fundraising offered Conservative donor money to a sitting legislator.

Why does Senator Irving Gerstein still enjoy the complete confidence of the Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course the senator denies that. The fact of the matter is the following: Senator Duffy accepted payment from Mr. Wright that was not properly reported and, in fact, was misrepresented widely to myself and to the Canadian public. That is the reason action has been taken in this case against these two individuals and why they are under investigation and, of course, why we continue to assist with that investigation.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to contend that Senator Gerstein is not a part of the RCMP investigation. Meanwhile, government senators are blocking his testimony, saying it would interfere with an ongoing investigation. The government cannot have it both ways, but the issue remains. Why does Senator Irving Gerstein still enjoy the full confidence of the Prime Minister?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the RCMP itself has made very clear who is under investigation, and the Prime Minister's Office and the government continue to fully assist with that investigation. We shall continue to do so.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative Senator Noel Kinsella and Liberal Senator Pierrette Ringuette pulled the exact same trick as Mike Duffy, the trick that on October 24 the Prime Minister said was the reason for getting rid of Mike Duffy.

Why are Noel Kinsella and Pierrette Ringuette still in the Senate?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, there is currently an audit under way by the Auditor General of Canada into all of the expenses of the Senate. That is something that we on this side of the House have been encouraging for some time.

We have made it very clear, of course, that the status quo in the Senate is not something that we would support. That is why we fought so hard to have these three senators suspended without pay from the Senate and that is why the minister of democratic reform has brought forward a number of proposals that are being considered at the Supreme Court.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Of course, it is the time of the year, Mr. Speaker, when we give our children and grandchildren advent Calandras, but we have real questions that are only for the Prime Minister.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I will ask the Leader of the Opposition to refrain from using proper names. It sounded like it may not have been accidental, but I do not think it adds to the flow of question period today.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, who did the Prime Minister originally ask to give Perrin's emails to the RCMP? Only the Prime Minister knows the answer.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to be clear on the previous matter, Mr. Duffy was living at a long-time residence and claiming travel expenses. The two senators in question are long-time residents of the province of New Brunswick.

Of course, it is the bureaucracy that holds the records for departed employees. It had indicated it did not have such records. When officials discovered that was not correct, they immediately acted to make sure that information was made available to the RCMP, and that is the appropriate course of action.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he reappears as magically as Perrin's emails.

It was the head of legal operations in the Privy Council Office, which is the Prime Minister's own ministry, who wrote to the RCMP to tell them that Ben Perrin's emails had miraculously been found, but if Mr. Perrin's emails were frozen due to "unrelated litigation", as the Prime Minister claimed last Sunday, would the head of legal operations not have had those emails all along?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the official in question did indicate that there were no such records. It was later discovered that such was not the case. The official has been very forthcoming on this and has answered all questions at the parliamentary committee.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, did Ben Perrin's departure from the Prime Minister's Office have anything to do with the Mike Duffy affair?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no. Mr. Perrin left the Prime Minister's Office in March and I learned of this affair in May.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office cc'd the law firm Bennett Jones on its letter to the RCMP saying it had found Ben Perrin's emails.

Oral Questions

Coincidentally, Bennett Jones is the law firm representing and defending the Prime Minister's own staff whose emails are being investigated.

Why is the Prime Minister's own ministry warning potential suspects that their emails are being investigated by the RCMP?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are officials in the bureaucracy who are responsible for the retention of these records and, obviously, responsible for communicating this information to the RCMP. The official responsible has fully answered questions before the parliamentary committee and is, obviously, always willing to do so.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are officials who are responsible, but the Prime Minister never is. It is the Prime Minister's Office, it is the Prime Minister's party, it is the Prime Minister's ministry, but he is never responsible.

On May 28, the Prime Minister said there was no legal agreement between Duffy and Wright.

Does the Prime Minister want to change that story before he is contradicted again by the next round of RCMP documents?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me just once again correct the preamble to that question.

The records in question that the leader of the NDP refers to were not held in the Prime Minister's Office. All the information held in our office has been made available to the RCMP for some time. The RCMP itself has made that clear. They are certainly not held by the Conservative Party. They are retained by officials of the bureaucracy. When they were made available by a former employee, as the bureaucracy has said, it misinformed the Prime Minister's Office on those facts. When it discovered that error, it admitted to that error and properly conveyed that information to the RCMP, as we would expect it to do.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister really not know that he is the minister in charge of that bureaucracy?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, as the bureaucracy itself has said, the Prime Minister's Office asked specifically for that information from the bureaucracy and was told that it was not available. The bureaucracy says that error was inadvertent.

Obviously, we would have preferred to turn all information over to the RCMP at the same time.

Officials having discovered that they made the error, I congratulate them for admitting it and for sending that information immediately to the RCMP.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can Canadians be sure that the documents handed over to the RCMP were not altered? How can this evidence still be valid when the Conservative government hid it for months?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no information was hidden in this case. The RCMP has said so itself.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, did the Prime Minister know that as part of the Duffy deal, his office promised that the Prime Minister would make a statement saying that Mike Duffy met all the requirements to sit as a senator from P.E.I., yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, I have made known my position on this for some time. Obviously members of Parliament and senators have more than one residence. That is a situation we understand.

What we felt was inappropriate, in the circumstance, was that a senator was living at a long-time residence when, in fact, claiming a travel expense that was obviously not appropriate, which is why I indicated to Mr. Duffy that I thought he should repay those monies.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leadership in the Senate is resisting efforts to hear testimony from Michael Runia and Senator Irving Gerstein. It claims the Senate cannot investigate the integrity of an audit it commissioned because the RCMP is investigating the matter, yet in this House, the government always claims that it is only Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy who are being investigated.

Why does the Prime Minister claim there is no RCMP investigation of Gerstein and Runia when his leader in the Senate says there is?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on a number of occasions, the three auditors from Deloitte appeared before a Senate committee.

They confirmed that the audit was done with the utmost confidentiality, and that the Senate could have confidence in the report that they had put forward. In fact, in the very same documents that the member refers to, the RCMP outlined the fact that it is Senator Duffy and Nigel Wright who are being investigated.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here we go again. They cannot have it both ways.

Either the RCMP are actively investigating Gerstein and Runia or they are not. If they are not, then Gerstein and Runia should be called to testify under oath immediately. Parliament needs to investigate this serious breach of the integrity of this audit.

Will the Prime Minister support hearing sworn testimony from Senator Gerstein, Michael Runia, and his own current and former PMO staff, yes or no?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the three auditors were brought before a Senate committee to confirm that the audit had been done with the utmost confidentiality and that the senators could have confidence in the report that was issued by Deloitte.

Oral Questions

It was the basis of that report that led us and the senators to the conclusion that these three senators needed to be suspended without pay from the Senate. We know that the Liberals fought against that. They of course defended these three senators as victims and were defending the status quo. That is unfortunate. We stood up for Canadian taxpayers, as we always do.

• (1440)

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the case of the Ben Perrin emails is a complete farce.

The RCMP had been asking for these emails repeatedly since September, and only when it was ready to raid the PMO did they magically appear. No one believes the excuses of this Prime Minister and his office. His office is trying to hide, deny, and deflect.

Why is the PMO obstructing an RCMP investigation? When will they publicly release Perrin's emails, which they now confess they have had for ages?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP did identify, on page 21 of the report, the fact that the Prime Minister actually ordered his office to assist in every way possible.

Hundreds of emails—thousands, in fact—were turned over. Of course, the Privy Council Office, in a letter released to the RCMP, outlined the reasons these emails were not found initially and did take full responsibility.

I will use the words of the member for Wascana himself, who said that beyond apologies to the PMO and the RCMP, the Privy Council Office owes its biggest apology to all Canadians.

I will accept what the member for Wascana said on that.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite what the government claims, members of the Canadian Armed Forces are not getting the support they need.

We have witnessed the heartbreaking tragedy of four apparent suicides in the past 10 days. Men and women who have served Canada, who stood up for us, deserve to have us stand up for them. Veterans and members of our armed forces need better mental health supports and serious policy changes, and they need them now.

Is the minister now, finally, willing to listen and take action today?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister indicated, our thoughts and prayers go out to the families, colleagues, and friends of these individuals.

Suicide is a tragedy, and we have a role to play in reaching out to those who are hurting and encouraging them to get help. I know that the Canadian Armed Forces has a confidential 24/7 toll-free telephone advisory and referral service. I would urge all of those who are going through a crisis to reach out.

There is help. We all have a responsibility to make sure that they know that.

[Translation]

Ms. Éloise Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government asks Canadians to fight for their country, but when they return they have to fight for adequate health care.

The closure of Veterans Affairs offices, the lack of mental health resources and the decrease in support for military families clearly show that the Conservatives have missed the mark.

Can the Minister of National Defence promise to increase the number of mental health professionals and set up clinics to diagnose post-traumatic stress syndrome?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all have a role to play in making sure that the services are there for our men and women in uniform and indeed for our veterans.

The member indicated that she would like to see more money spent on health care, more investment, and there certainly has been under this government. We have almost doubled the number of health care professionals.

We all do what we have to do to make sure that these individuals are approached and in making sure that they know help is there. I urge them to contact the armed forces to have the services that are in place made available to them.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians who serve our country expect their government to be there for them in their time of need. Instead, the Conservatives are closing Veterans Affairs offices and failing our service men and women. Almost two dozen of our brave heroes took their own lives in 2011, and there were four more apparent suicides this past week.

Instead of hollow words, will the minister acknowledge that more must be done and tell us what action he will take to ensure our armed forces have the support they need?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was under this government that we created a joint personnel support unit to allow our ill and injured members to work with medical personnel, social workers, occupational therapists and others to help them transition back into civilian life. However, again, one of the things the member could do is start supporting the efforts we have made over the years to increase help to our veterans. That would be a first step, and I certainly would welcome that.

• (1445)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke of the “urgency of now”; and the urgency of now is right now.

One of the biggest problems men and women of the military have is that, when they come forward and admit they have a problem, if they get diagnosed, the clocks ticks toward their exit out of the military. In other words, they get booted out of the military.

Oral Questions

One of the problems is the program called universality of service. Will the minister now, today, rethink the universality of service program to allow the men and women, who do come forward, to stay in the military until they receive all the psychological rehabilitation and educational opportunities they need to then transfer over to another career?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what they do. The Chief of the Defence Staff and the Chief of Military Personnel have assured me that members of the Canadian Armed Forces are not released until they are prepared for that transition. I remind the member opposite that every possible accommodation is made to ensure that soldiers are kept in the forces and provided with the best possible support before being considered for release. This is the least we can do for them.

* * *

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, supporting and protecting Canadian families is always a priority for our government, and that is why we have taken measures to protect Canadians online, by introducing Canada's anti-spam legislation.

My constituents of Calgary Centre, and indeed all Canadians, deserve to know that they are being protected from things like spyware, Trojan horses, viruses and unwanted spam.

Can the Minister of Industry please tell this House what our government is doing so Canadians can feel as safe in the electronic marketplace as they do at the mall?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government passed legislation to protect Canadians from unwanted email and spam. This is actually quite a serious problem for Canadians. It hurts productivity. It hurts people's wireless rates when they get unsolicited email that causes their prices to go up every month. We passed legislation to protect consumers, and today we put forward the regulations to ensure that this legislation comes into force.

We said in our throne speech that we would stand up for consumers. We acted when we passed our anti-spam legislation. Today, we are putting in place regulations to ensure Canadians are protected from those emails and those messages that they do not wish to receive that cause their monthly bills to go up and threaten their cyber security.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's tanker safety report identified major gaps in safety planning, leaving Canadians profoundly concerned. The panel found response time standards will not be enough to contain spills. Even in ideal conditions, at most, 15% of oil spilled into our water and along our coast can be recovered.

Yet Conservatives are ignoring the liabilities faced by taxpayers and stubbornly pushing for more tanker traffic, which increases the risk to our coastlines and to our communities.

Will the minister put aside the spin, start being responsible and at the very least enact these recommendations?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting the safety of Canadians and the environment. Our government's goal in creating the expert panel was to review Canada's current tanker safety system with an eye to improvement. We welcome the panel's findings, which will serve as an important part of achieving a world-class tanker safety system.

However, do not take my word for it. Here is what B.C.'s environment minister said: "I have a high degree of confidence that they are serious about achieving the goals that we have in front of us, and serious about the safety of our coast and the transportation of tankers up and down our coastline".

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is not one Canadian who really trusts the Conservatives to protect our coastal areas in the event of an oil spill. Even though a group of experts demanded better resources for the Canadian Coast Guard and Environment Canada, guess what happened? The Conservatives decided to cut the budgets of both these bodies.

What flawed logic has the minister used to justify cutting budgets for protection and prevention while promoting increased tanker traffic?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member would like to join us in taking action on these, perhaps the opposition should stop filibustering Bill C-3 and the stiffer penalties that are involved in that.

We have taken important actions, like increasing the number of inspections of all foreign tankers; increasing funding for the national aerial surveillance program to ensure that we keep a watchful eye on tankers that are moving through Canadian waters; researching non-conventional petroleum products; ensuring that systems of navigational aids are there, in place and well maintained; and building on that with the panel's report.

This is the next step in looking at how we make improvements to that to make it truly world class. Opposition members should join us in that.

* * *

● (1450)

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Transportation Safety Board of Canada files indicate that the number of rail safety rule infractions is going up.

In the past 13 years there have been 1,353 infractions. Crews are tired and distracted. They do not follow the rules that are there to prevent collisions.

Oral Questions

Why is the number of infractions increasing? What is the government doing to ensure that the rules are followed to the letter?

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that regulations are in place precisely to ensure the safety and security of Canadians, and it is the responsibility of companies to follow those regulations.

If they do not, they will face fines of up to \$1 million and they are liable for enforcement up to and including prosecution. If they have broken those regulations, we will take every action necessary to ensure that they follow the rules.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of the government to keep Canadians safe and to take action and not to make excuses.

The Transportation Safety Board recommended an automatic braking system called positive train control. The U.S. has mandated all rail companies to implement a similar safety system by 2015.

This braking system detects speeding runaway trains and automatically slows them down. It is a simple measure that simply saves lives.

Will the minister agree to the safety board's recommendation and introduce the mandatory braking system?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite the member to actually read the Transportation Safety Board's recommendations. It did not say that positive train control is part of that.

However, Transport Canada is working with industry to look at what the board did recommend, which is possible fail-safe train controls.

We are monitoring the implementation of PTC in the United States, but in the meantime, we are working with industry on possible fail-safe train control.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reports are circulating that the program to supply close combat vehicles to the armed forces is being cancelled at the *n*th hour, after years of work.

This is another example of taxpayer dollars wasted in a botched defence project that delivers nothing, except a big hit to the government's credibility.

Would the minister tell the House today? Has the decision to cancel this purchase of the armoured vehicles been taken, yes or no?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, National Defence continues to work with Public Works on all these issues, but we are absolutely committed to making sure that the men and women of our armed forces have the best possible equipment, and we can count on that.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Shell Oil told the Government of Canada, "...signal to the world that Canada is stepping up to do its part" on oil and gas emissions and regulations.

The provinces and territories are there. The NGOs are there. The industry is signalling that it wants somebody there.

When will the minister and the government show up to "do its part" to bring order to this chaos?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is a world leader when it comes to addressing climate change. We continue to work with the provinces on reducing emissions from the oil and gas sector.

I can tell the House that, thanks to our actions, we have seen significant reductions in greenhouse gases, unlike the Liberal Party who increased greenhouse gas emissions by 130 megatonnes when it was in office. We are doing this without the \$20 billion carbon tax that the NDP wants to bring in.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport admitted a few months ago that "There are a lot of unhappy citizens out there with the service that is being presented to them."

Nevertheless, airlines still see no consequences for overbooking or for never-ending delays on the tarmac. As we approach the holiday season, many Canadians will be boarding planes to celebrate with their family or to travel.

Why do the Conservatives refuse to pass an air passenger bill of rights, as proposed by the NDP?

● (1455)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken measures with respect to improving the clarity of all-in pricing with respect to consumers. We support a strong and competitive airline industry.

Perhaps the NDP would like to clarify whether its \$20 billion carbon tax would help consumers with the cost of their travel this Christmas.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, airline travellers still do not have the basic protection of an airline passenger bill of rights.

While Canadians travel for the holidays, they will continue to be bumped from flights and continue to get stuck on grounded planes, ruining trips and costing Canadians their hard-earned money. Even the Minister of Industry went on TV and agreed it is unfair.

These consumers just are not a priority for the Conservatives. Why will the government not listen to Canadian travellers and finally work with the NDP to stop airlines from taking advantage of Canadians?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for Canadian consumers by not implementing a \$20 billion carbon tax, which would drive up the cost of their airline tickets.

We will continue to ensure that our system of transportation in air travel is safe, secure and cost-effective.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today in Canada more than 4,500 people are waiting for organ transplants. However, the needs of many of these patients will never be met because only a fraction of Canadians are registered donors.

As members of the House will know, during the difficult days following the death of my wife, Betty, I drew strength from my faith and from the fact that five people received the gift of life through her gift of donated organs.

Life is the most precious gift one can give. With Christmas approaching, can the Minister of Health inform this House on the steps being taken to encourage Canadians to give the gift of life through organ donations?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga for sharing the wonderful story of his wife, Betty, with all of us in the House today.

Today I had a chance to meet with the hon. member and with H el ene Campbell as well, a transplant recipient and inspiring young woman who reminds us of how precious life is, which is why I am so pleased today to launch a new social media campaign and website, along with Mrs. Laureen Harper, to help promote organ and tissue donations. I ask all MPs in the House to please go to www.healthycanadians.gc.ca. Anywhere people live in the country, they can register to become a donor at #giftoflife. I would ask members to make sure they do this. When they are at home this Christmas or Hanukkah, over the holidays, I ask them to please have a conversation with their families and tell them that they want to be organ donors. It is the most important thing they can do.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 25, VIA Rail decided to sell the Parent and La Tuque stations and signed an agreement in principle with the City of La Tuque. This agreement transferred client service jobs to the City.

Can the minister explain how a municipality can be given responsibilities that legally and morally belong to a national railway?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that VIA is an independent crown corporation. As such, it is arm's-length from the government and is responsible for its own operational decisions.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over a month ago, I asked the Minister of Transport to quickly review the security screening services required for flights out of the Sherbrooke airport.

The minister responded that the city had to go through an eligibility process, which it had already done. All of Sherbrooke's stakeholders are waiting for the minister to take action. It is time that she seriously considered this issue. We are still waiting for her answer.

What message does she want to send to the people of Sherbrooke today? Will she finally take action or not?

• (1500)

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are over 200 airports in Canada and by law the screening of passengers and baggage is carried out in 89 designated airports. That list does not change regardless if regular services are available or not.

Having said that, the member will know the minister has tasked officials to review options for non-designated airports that are currently in development.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last March our government announced a comprehensive plan to develop a world-class tanker safety system in Canada. Among other measures, our government announced the creation of a tanker safety expert panel to review Canada's current tanker safety system and to propose further measures to strengthen it.

Yesterday, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Natural Resources announced the release of the tanker safety expert panel's report. This report is an important step in our government's commitment to develop a world-class tanker safety system in Canada.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport update the House on the panel's findings?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her incredible work on this file.

Private Members' Business

Our government is committed to protecting the safety of Canadians and the environment. Our goal in creating the expert panel was to review Canada's current tanker system and identify areas of improvement. The minister has welcomed, and we welcome the panel's findings. It will serve as an important part of achieving a world-class tanker safety system. We will continue to take action to ensure Canada has the most stringent tanker safety system in the world.

This is what B.C.'s environment minister said:

I have a high degree of confidence that they are serious about achieving the goals that we have in front of us and serious about the safety of our coast and the transportation of tankers up and down our coastline.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Éloise Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport is trying to justify her inaction by claiming that the City signed a memorandum of understanding with the Neuville airport developer. However, there are two major problems with her logic. First, the minister cannot escape her obligation to hold public consultations and produce an environmental assessment. Second, the airport proposal violates municipal and provincial regulations.

The Conservatives set a precedent with the Parkland County airport in Alberta. Why not do the same thing with the airport in Neuville?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that Transport Canada does not give permits for building aerodromes. Transport Canada's role is to ensure that all safety regulations are respected and followed.

On that note, the minister has tasked officials to look into this matter on an expedited basis.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the federal government claims, the Canada-European Union free trade agreement will not have just winners.

In Quebec, cheese producers will suffer losses of \$300 million in retail sales, while dairy producers are facing losses of \$150 million. At the opening of the UPA convention, president Marcel Groleau asked the government to sit down with the industry and pointed out: "If you are serious, there has to be compensation. It must be assessed. It must be calculated. We must now sit down and determine what it will be."

The government moved quickly to compensate Newfoundland fishers. Will it act immediately to respond to Quebec farmers as well?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is the member against the Canada-European trade agreement that will bring \$12 billion into Canada and will help the pork farmers of Quebec?

[Translation]

Our government has always defended Canada's supply management system and has maintained its position in this agreement. The three main pillars of our domestic supply management system remain intact. We will monitor the impact of the Canada-European Union free trade agreement on the income of dairy producers, and if production levels suffer, we will provide financial assistance to producers.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Kazakhstan, led by His Excellency Askhat Daulbayev, Prosecutor General.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Turkey.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of a delegation from the Northwest Territories, led by the Hon. Robert McLeod and including the following ministers: the Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger and the Hon. David Ramsey.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

● (1505)

POINTS OF ORDER

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I used some very unparliamentary language in the chamber and for that I unreservedly apologize.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for that.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from December 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-489, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (restrictions on offenders), be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:05 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, November 26, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-489.

• (1510)

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

(Division No. 35)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Andrews	Angus
Armstrong	Ashfield
Ashton	Aspin
Aubin	Ayala
Bateman	Bélangier
Bellavance	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Bougen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisu	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cleary
Clement	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crockatt	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeschen
Dubé	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gallant
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Groguhé	Harper
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Jacob	James

Jean	Jones
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Lauzon	Laverdière
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Payne	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Poilevre
Preston	Quach
Rafferty	Rajotte
Rankin	Rathgeber
Raynault	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Scott	Seeback
Sellah	Sgro
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sullivan
Sweet	Thibeault
Tilson	Toet
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier
Trudeau	Truppe
Turmel	Uppal
Valcourt	Valerioté
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 276

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

May- — 1

Nil

PAIRED

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1515)
[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a report entitled “The State of Canada's Forests - Annual Report 2013” and that pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), the report should be referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the following four meetings:

First, the National Governors Association winter meeting that was held in Washington, D.C., February 22-25, 2013; second, the Pacific Northwest Economic Region's 23rd annual summit that was held in Anchorage, Alaska, July 14-19, 2013; third, the 66th annual meeting of the Council of State Governments-West that was held in Las Vegas, Nevada, July 30 to August 2, 2013; and fourth, the 79th annual meeting of the Southern Governors' Association that was held in Louisville, Kentucky, September 6-9, 2013.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B) 2013-14: Votes 1b, 5b, 35b and 50b under JUSTICE”.

HUMAN RESOURCES SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B) 2013-2014”.

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (B), 2013-14.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to the supplementary estimates (B) 2013-2014.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (B), 2013-14.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting to the House of Commons two petitions signed by my constituents in York South—Weston. The first one calls on the Government of Canada to immediately take steps to fund urgent infrastructure projects in order to upgrade sewer systems and avoid future property damage such as was caused by the massive flooding in Toronto last July 8.

SENATE

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the government to abolish the unelected and unaccountable Senate.

ABORTION

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to present two petitions from my riding. They both call on the House of Commons and Parliament to speedily enact legislation to restrict abortion to the greatest extent possible.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding climate change, our most pressing environmental issue. Climate change is expensive. By 2050, the annual adaptation costs could be \$21 billion to \$43 billion annually. In 2011, the U.S. experienced 14 extreme weather events that each cost \$1 billion.

The petitioners call on the government to model climate impacts to inform decisions about adaptation and to allocate resources to help Canadians adapt.

• (1520)

[Translation]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to present a petition signed by over 400 people in my riding.

The petitioners are calling for the creation of a legal ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining. This ombudsman would have the power to receive and analyze complaints, recommend remedial actions and impose sanctions, among other things.

[English]

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to present six separate petitions from constituents in Sarnia—Lambton. All of the petitions are calling for the creation of a legislated ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining.

[Translation]

LABOUR-SPONSORED FUNDS

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a thousand people have signed a petition reminding the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and all members, particularly in the Conservative Party, that labour-sponsored funds, which are often used as a primary tool for saving for retirement, are savings vehicles for the middle class. These investments often go to small and medium-sized businesses.

The petitioners are calling on the Conservatives, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister to take all necessary steps to reverse the government's decision to eliminate the 15% federal tax credit granted to people who invest in labour-sponsored funds, as announced in the budget on March 21, 2013.

[English]

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. Petitioners say that the practice of shark finning results in an estimated 73 million sharks a year being killed for their fins alone and that over one-third of all shark species are threatened with extinction as a result of shark finning. They say that measures must be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks. They call on the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins into Canada.

INCOME TAX DEDUCTIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is a petition in response to a bill introduced by my colleague, the member for Hamilton Mountain. Her bill would amend the Income Tax Act so that travel and accommodation for tradespersons would be allowed which would therefore enable many of those tradespersons to find work. As members know, unemployment is a serious problem in our region.

Routine Proceedings

NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from a group of London constituents who call on the government to enact Bill C-498, which is my bill, that would protect the Thames River, the North Thames, and the Middle Thames, by placing them back under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. This is a heritage river, and we need to protect it.

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise on behalf of a constituent by the name of Alda De Rosa. I met with Alda, and she presented a petition asking for the creation of a legislative ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on behalf of numerous Canadians who are asking for the federal government to commit to stable and predictable long-term core funding for Canada's public broadcasting, including CBC Radio and Radio Canada.

As the source for local and national news, it is a medium for the broadcast of Canadian culture and viewpoints and is an avenue for expression for Canadian independent artists. It is public radio that is a vital component of our national identity and experience. In Thunder Bay—Superior North, in northwestern Ontario, it is a powerful community voice that unites us in northwestern Ontario.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions from Toronto residents opposed to the reversal of Line 9 to ship raw bitumen through our city by a 40-year-old pipeline that was originally built for light crude oil.

Instead of trying to address the significant environmental and health concerns raised by the signatories and the NDP, the Conservative government has shut out the public from the consultation process, demolished environmental assessments, and wiped out protections for our lakes and rivers.

The government is determined to ram Line 9 through Toronto no matter what the cost to our city, environment and the future health of our communities, and we completely reject this approach.

Routine Proceedings

• (1525)

[Translation]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of presenting three petitions signed by many people in my riding and the surrounding areas in support of the creation of a legal ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining.

[English]

INCOME TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR TRADES PEOPLE

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions. One is in support of my colleague for Hamilton Mountain who introduced Bill C-201. This petition, from people from my riding in Azilda, Chelmsford, Val Therese, Sudbury, and Hanmer, asks that the government help these tradespersons with expenses when they have to move to find employment.

NATIONAL DEMENTIA STRATEGY

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in support of my Bill C-356, An Act respecting a National Strategy for Dementia.

As the Minister of Health is headed to London for the G8 meetings, where they will be discussing the effects of dementia, hopefully she will come back to Canada with a plan to install this strategy.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions. The first petition is from residents of the Kipawa Lakes area, Timiskaming, and other places nearby, who are very concerned about a proposal for a rare earth mining project. The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to recognize the unique ecological, cultural, and historical aspects of their area and to deny approval for the mining project.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from residents throughout British Columbia, from Vancouver as well as Denman Island and Cumberland. The petitioners are calling on the House to work to ensure that the northern gateway project proposed by Enbridge is thoroughly assessed and ceases to be the subject of boosterism from the current administration.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 61 and 62.

[Text]

Question No. 61—**Ms. Yvonne Jones:**

With regard to National Defence, what are the details, by description and fiscal year, of the approximately \$407 million in investments at 5 Wing Goose Bay since 2006, which were referred to by the Associate Minister of National Defence during debate in the House of Commons on June 4, 2013?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the \$407 million in planned investments at 5 Wing

Goose Bay referred to by the former associate minister of national defence during debate in the House of Commons on June 4, 2013, consist of the projects that follow.

The first area is environmental remediation. Under the Goose Bay remediation project, up to \$300 million in funding, including contingency funding but excluding taxes, will be invested until 2020 to reduce the liability associated with contamination and to reduce any risk to human health and the environment. This project includes the assessment and remediation of historical contamination and the removal of petroleum hydrocarbons.

Between 2006 and 2013, the Department of National Defence invested \$42,737,730 through this program. The details by fiscal year are as follows: fiscal year 2006-07, \$5,651,124; fiscal year 2007-08, \$3,381,290; fiscal year 2008-09, \$4,620,357; fiscal year 2009-10, \$5,581,744; fiscal year 2010-11, \$7,107,742; fiscal year 2011-12, \$6,316,732; and fiscal year 2012-13, \$10,078,741.

The second area is infrastructure projects. Approximately \$107 million has been allocated for planned investments in infrastructure.

In addition to the \$407 million detailed above, \$20.3 million was invested in the resurfacing of Runway 8/26, which took place between fiscal year 2006-07 and fiscal year 2009-10.

Question No. 62—**Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to the automotive and manufacturing industry in Canada, has the government worked with any global automotive or manufacturing company to increase existing investments or to bring in new automotive investments in the form of new factories, products, or jobs, to Canada since 2006?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is one of the most welcoming and profitable places in the world for international business and foreign direct investment. Canada's economy, widely recognized as one of the world's most innovative and stable, offers investors a series of competitive advantages, such as low business costs and corporate tax rates, ready access to markets, strong public support for R and D, and robust financial institutions. Industry Canada routinely meets with global stakeholders to promote Canada as an ideal location for investment in the automotive and manufacturing sector.

The Government of Canada understands the importance of the automotive and manufacturing sectors to the Canadian economy and has established a fiscal and economic environment that supports investment in these sectors. Government policies that support investment in Canada's automotive and manufacturing sectors include streamlining regulations and reducing red tape; enhancing trade and market access; and investing in innovation and research and development.

Canada is alone among the Group of Seven, or G7, countries to receive the highest possible credit ratings from all the major credit rating agencies, which contributes to our strong global reputation. The Government of Canada has earned the trust of global investors for our responsible fiscal, economic, and financial sector management, which makes Canada an increasingly attractive destination for investment.

In Canada's economic action plan 2013, the government announced \$1.4 billion in tax relief for Canadian manufacturers by extending by two years the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new investments in machinery and processing and by creating a business tax environment that is conducive to foreign investment. Some 25,000 businesses in Canada used the accelerated capital cost allowance to write off the purchase of new investments and machinery since the federal government first introduced the measure in 2007.

By completing the Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement, CETA, we are opening up the largest market in the world for Canadian exporters. With CETA, Canada will be the only G8 country and one of the few developed countries in the world to have preferential access to the world's two largest markets, the EU and the United States. This will make Canada the envy of trading nations and an even more attractive destination for investors and manufacturers looking to benefit from this access.

With regard to the automotive sector, the government has made investments in automotive research and development, such as Automotive Partnership Canada and Auto 21. The government has also made strategic investments in Canada's automotive sector through the Automotive Innovation Fund, AIF, as the Government of Canada's main lever to secure major automotive manufacturing investments. Introduced in 2008 and renewed in January 2013, the AIF has been highly successful, generating \$2.3 billion in private sector investments by Ford, Linamar, Toyota, and Magna for advanced strategic projects to bring innovative and more fuel-efficient vehicles to market. These investments have generated significant economic benefits throughout the industry and for local communities. With a funding envelope of \$250 million over the next five years, the AIF will continue to support major strategic automotive investments that contribute to the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of Canada's assembly facilities.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 46, 47, 49, 52, 57, 63 and 64 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 46—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to the Canada Summer Career Placement Program/Summer Jobs Program: (a) what was the total amount of funding allocated to the program on an

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annual basis from 2005 to 2013 (i) overall in Canada, (ii) by province and territory, (iii) by riding; (b) what was the total amount of funding spent through the program on an annual basis from 2005 to 2013 (i) overall in Canada, (ii) by province and territory, (iii) by riding; (c) if there was a difference between funding allocated and funding spent through the program, what accounts for the difference each year, broken down by year; (d) what was the total number of student summer jobs created on an annual basis from 2005 to 2013 (i) overall in Canada, (ii) by province and territory, (iii) by riding; (e) what are the names of the employers awarded funding through the program on an annual basis from 2005 to 2013 (i) overall in Canada, (ii) by province and territory, (iii) by riding; (f) what was the average wage paid on an annual basis from 2005 to 2013 (i) overall in Canada, (ii) by province and territory, (iii) by riding; and (g) what was the total number of hours of work funded on an annual basis from 2005 to 2013 (i) overall in Canada, (ii) by province and territory, (iii) by riding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 47—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to citizenship applicants from 2011-present, broken down by year: (a) what is the percentage breakdown of all applicants by country of birth for any countries of birth where the number of applicants represented 1% or more of the total; (b) how many applications were received from each country in (a); (c) of those in (a), broken down by country and listed as a percent, how many applicants received a residence questionnaire; (d) what is the policy for determining whether applicants receive a residence questionnaire or not; (e) has this policy been changed since 2011; and (f) if it has changed, what was the previous policy?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 49—**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans: (a) what is the complete and detailed breakdown of all money spent to date as part of the Atlantic Lobster Sustainability Measures program; (b) what is the complete and detailed breakdown of all money spent as part of the Community Adjustment Fund on measures related to Canada's lobster industry; (c) what is the total amount of lobster landed in each lobster fishing area (LFA) in each year since 2000; (d) what is the total number of lobster fishing licenses issued in each LFA since 2000; (e) what is the total amount of lobster exported by Canada in each year since 2000, broken down by export country in both quantity and dollar value; (f) what is the total amount of lobster imported by Canada each year since 2000, broken down by country, in both quantity and dollar value; and (g) what measures will the government take to address the significantly low prices being paid to lobster fishers in 2013?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 52—**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to Enbridge's Line 9 reversal project (Line 9 Phase I Reversal Project and Line 9B Reversal and Capacity Expansion Project): (a) what are the results of all government reports, details of briefing notes, or meeting summaries that were produced between January 1, 2011, to June 1, 2013; (b) what studies, analyses or assessments did the government undertake to determine the safety of the project, (i) what are the dates of all studies, analyses, and assessments, (ii) what are the results of each; (c) what are the details of the studies, reports, briefing notes, or meeting summaries that the government has produced regarding the economic and environmental impacts and, what are (i) the results associated with each, (ii) the costs associated with each; (d) what studies, reports, briefing notes, or meeting summaries has the government undertaken regarding greenhouse gas emissions if the Line 9 pipeline was reversed and filled with diluted bitumen, (i) what were the results of these studies, (ii) how are emissions expected to impact Canada's ability to achieve its climate commitments; (e) what are the dates of any correspondence between the government or the Minister of Natural Resources or the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Portland Montreal Pipeline Company, and what are the key points for each correspondence; (f) what are the dates of any correspondence between the Minister of Natural Resources and the National Energy Board regarding the hearing process and applications for participation and intervener status; (g) did the Minister of Natural Resources have a role to play in the National Energy Board changing its approach to public participation in hearings, particularly those concerning the proposal to reverse and expand Line 9 and, if so, what was that role; and (h) what effect have the changes adopted in the government's 2012 budget bills had on the Line 9 review process to date?

Routine Proceedings

(Return tabled)

Question No. 57—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to copyrighted material held by the government: (a) what copyrighted material does the government own, broken down by (i) department, (ii) creation date, (iii) publication date, (iv) author, (v) fee charged for use, (vi) total fees collected to date in the lifetime of the material, (vii) format or media type, (viii) cost of production, (ix) future plans, (x) for any material not available to the public, what are the reasons for the secrecy and the name and title of the person responsible for the decision to keep the material from the public; and (b) what enforcement action has the government taken to protect its copyright on any material since January, 2006, broken down by (i) department, (ii) creation date, (iii) publication date, (iv) author, (v) fee charged for use, (vi) total fees collected to date in the lifetime of the material, (vii) alleged infringement, (viii) damages sought, (ix) case status, (x) case outcome or settlement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 63—Mr. Brian Masse:

With regard to the government's imposition of a vote on Public Service Alliance of Canada members employed at Canada Border Services Agency and the court proceedings that followed, what is the total cost incurred by the government, broken down by costs of (i) research, (ii) preparation, (iii) court fees, (iv) employee time?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 64—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With regard to the letter dated June 12, 2013, I received from former Minister of Public Safety Vic Toews in response to my letter dated May 8, 2013, regarding homicides and attempted homicides among Somali-Canadian males in Canada since 2006: (a) what conferences supported by Public Safety (PS) with the Somali-Canadian community have taken place since 2006, and for each conference what were the (i) locations, (ii) dates, (iii) funds provided by PS, including but not limited to, funds allocated to advertising, set-up, speakers, reports, and others; (b) what events has PS supported with the Somali-Canadian community since 2006, and for each, what were the (i) locations, (ii) dates, (iii) funds provided by PS, including, but not limited to, funds allocated to advertising, set-up, speakers, reports, and others; (c) what "outreach sessions" has the PS hosted with the Somali-Canadian community since 2006, and for each outreach session what were the (i) locations, (ii) dates, (iii) funds provided by the PS, including, but not limited to, funds allocated to advertising, set-up, speakers, reports, and others; (d) what meetings has PS hosted or attended since 2010 with "community representatives", to "discuss issues including the number of Somali-Canadian men killed in gang-related violence", and for each meeting, what were the (i) locations, (ii) dates, (iii) why was there a delay of four years in hearing about the homicides; (e) what meetings with "Imams" to "discuss issues including the number of Somali-Canadian men killed in gang-related violence" have taken place since 2010, and for each meeting, what were the (i) locations, (ii) dates, (iii) why was there a delay of four years in hearing about the homicides; (f) what meetings with "mothers" to "discuss issues including the number of Somali-Canadian men killed in gang-related violence" have taken place since 2010, and for each meeting, what were the (i) locations, (ii) dates, (iii) why was there a delay of four years in hearing about the homicides; (g) how many times have "officials" met with mothers who have lost their sons, broken down by location and date, (i) why did the Minister choose not meet with these grieving mothers, (ii) how does his personal absence from such meetings reflect an appropriate level of "concern" that would give the Canadian public the "assurance" that PS is taking this issue "very seriously"; (h) what stakeholder groups amongst the Somali-Canadian community did the Minister meet with in June 2012 in Toronto, (i) what was the location and date of the meeting, (ii) were the homicides discussed and, if so, why was this not mentioned in the June 18, 2013 letter and, if not, why not, (iii) what concerns were identified, (iv) what "possible ways forward" were identified for the homicides; (i) what specific stakeholders had input into the "joint work plan", (i) what "various meetings over the past year", their dates, and locations were the basis for developing the work plan, (ii) what stakeholders had input into the prioritization of issues, (iii) what issues were prioritized and in what order, (iv) were homicides included in the priorities and, if so, at what rank, (v) with what stakeholders was the "joint work plan" finalized; (j) how were "Somali-Canadian leaders, youth, mothers and Imams from Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton, and Calgary" contacted to be part of the "October workshop", (i) what was the date and location of the workshop, (ii) what stakeholders were present, (iii) how many grieving mothers attended, (iv) what issues were on the agenda, (v) what Members of Parliament were invited, (vi) what was the total number of participants; (k) what is the function of a PS "community's

primary point of contact" and how does this function relate to other avenues of contact, (i) how common is it for PS to have a "community's primary point of contact", (ii) does PS have a community primary point of contact for other communities than the Somali-Canadian community, (iii) if so, what is the name of each community for which PS has such a contact; (l) is the funding relationship between a "community's primary point of contact" and other departments of the government considered in the acceptance of such point of contact by PS and, if so, how, including the possibility of conflicts of interest, bias, or incomplete information; (m) is the location between a "community's primary point of contact" and other departments of the government considered in the acceptance of such point of contact by PS and, if so, how, including the possibility of conflicts of interest, bias or incomplete information; (n) how was the organization of Canadian Friends of Somalia in Ottawa chosen to be PS's "community's primary point of contact", (i) was a memorandum of understanding signed and, if so, on what date, (ii) was any funding provided and, if so, by whom and on what date, (iii) what other organizations were being considered for this role by the community, (iv) is it common for PS's "community's primary point of contact" to be funded by other departments of the government; (o) what are all the "community steering committees" established across Canada and, for each, what are (i) their goals and milestones, (ii) the timelines for achieving the established goals; (p) what are the dates, locations, and number of people who attended each "outreach session" with the RCMP and the Somali-Canadian community, and how were these events advertised and at what cost; (q) why was Ottawa chosen for the February 20, 2013 youth employment session hosted by PS when Toronto has a Somali-Canadian population of 140,000, Ottawa has a population of 20,000, and Edmonton has a population of 17,000; (r) when does PS plan to "extend these sessions to other cities", (i) what are the planned locations and dates, (ii) at how many of these sessions will the RCMP be present to discuss job opportunities, (iii) why was this information not given in response to my Order Paper question which was answered June 18, 2013; and (s) what input did the Somali-Canadian community have into Bill C-51, the Safer Witness Act, (i) what stakeholder groups were invited to comment, (ii) what stakeholder groups did comment, (iii) did the Canadian Friends of Somalia in Ottawa comment, (iv) did the "community steering committees" comment, (v) did the grieving mothers comment, (vi) what specific comments as to whether the Bill would or would not encourage Somali-Canadians to come forward after a homicide or attempted homicide were made and by what stakeholders were each specific comment made and on what date?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES DEVOLUTION ACT

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC) moved that Bill C-15, An Act to replace the Northwest Territories Act to implement certain provisions of the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement and to repeal or make amendments to the Territorial Lands Act, the Northwest Territories Waters Act, the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, other Acts and certain orders and regulations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to open debate today on Bill C-15, the Northwest Territories devolution act.

[Translation]

It is my privilege to open debate today on Bill C-15, the Northwest Territories Devolution Act.

The introduction of the Northwest Territories Devolution Act marks the culmination of decades of hard work towards the devolution of decision-making powers over lands and resources to the people of the Northwest Territories.

This is a critical juncture not only in the political and economic evolution of the Northwest Territories, but also in the constitutional development of our great country.

We know that the north has always held a distinctive place in the life of our great country. A frontier, a homeland, rich with vibrant people, potential and culture, the north defines Canada and what it means to be Canadian.

• (1530)

[English]

The Conservative government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to the north. Indeed, I am proud to say that no previous federal government in Canadian history has done more for the north than this Conservative government.

One of the first things we did after coming to power in 2006 was to put in place a comprehensive northern strategy, which was built on four pillars. The first is exercising Canada's sovereignty. The second is promoting social and economic development. The third is protecting our environmental heritage. The fourth and final pillar is improving and devolving northern governance.

While the introduction of the Northwest Territories devolution act is another important step in the implementation of this northern strategy, I would say it is a milestone. We recognize that a key feature of Canadian history has been the evolution of our nation's vast northern region into self-governing territories with resource development as the mainstay of their economies.

Our records stand in marked contrast to those of my friends, the Liberals, who for decades treated the north as an afterthought and northern resources as a federal treasure chest.

Soon after my appointment as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, I was privileged to be in Yellowknife with

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the Prime Minister and the Premier of the Northwest Territories, along with five of our aboriginal partners in the Northwest Territories: the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated, the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Tlicho Government. We marked the conclusion of negotiations on the Northwest Territories lands and resources devolution agreement in March of this year.

The Prime Minister said it best at the AIP signing in March, when he said:

Our Government recognizes that Northerners are best placed to make the important decisions about how to run their economies and how to maximize use of their resources.... Once finalized, this historic agreement will provide the Northwest Territories...with greater decision-making powers over a range of new responsibilities which will lead to jobs, growth and long-term prosperity across the Territory.

Our government believes that the opportunities and challenges in the Northwest Territories are better handled by the people who understand them best, and that is the people of the Northwest Territories.

[Translation]

This act will do exactly that. It will allow the people of the Northwest Territories to seize control of the lands and resources and benefit from those tremendous resources in their own backyard.

For those who may be skeptical about what this bill can achieve, look no further than the Yukon to see the benefits that devolution and a modern regulatory system can have on an economy. It is not merely coincidence that this year is the 10th anniversary of devolution in the Yukon and the territory is in its 10th straight year of positive GDP growth.

Investment is up, unemployment is down and the Yukon has not looked back. To complete the decades-long devolution of decision-making responsibilities, this bill is required to bring the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement into effect.

Bill C-15 would amend the Northwest Territories Act and bring this agreement into effect. It would modernize this legislation by updating its language, by clarifying key provisions and removing archaic ones, and by updating territorial authorities that draw their power from the act. Finally, amendments to the Northwest Territories Act would enshrine current practices in the territory that support responsible government.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has seen significant political evolution since 1967—the year Yellowknife was established as the capital of the Northwest Territories and the seat of government was moved from Ottawa. Since that time, the federal government has transferred to the territorial government power over health care, housing, forestry, education and social services.

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Devolution of province-like functions has been a long-standing and shared priority of the federal and territorial governments. Over the last four decades, most of the province-like functions have been devolved to the territorial governments. The devolution of province-like powers over their lands, waters and resources is the last of the major province-like functions in the Northwest Territories which remain with the federal government.

To put it simply, this bill achieves devolution for the Northwest Territories. It gives the territory the tools to chart its own destiny, a destiny we know will end in success.

• (1535)

[English]

To reach this goal, we have worked tirelessly with all our partners in the north. In the Northwest Territories, we worked with the territorial government under the impressive leadership of Premier McLeod. If it were not for the rules, I would signal the presence of the premier, but I know I cannot. We also worked closely with various aboriginal stakeholders and governments including the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Gwich'in Tribal Council, the Sahtu Secretariat, the Tlicho Government and the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, all in order to reach a comprehensive devolution agreement for the territory.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the work of my predecessors. I had the privilege today of introducing this bill and opening the debate on it, but I want to acknowledge the work of the current chief government whip, the member of Parliament for Vancouver Island North, as well as the Hon. Jim Prentice and the Hon. Chuck Strahl, who have all worked hard to make this day happen. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the steady hand of the Prime Minister.

This past June, I was in the Northwest Territories again, this time in Inuvik, to sign the final devolution agreement on behalf of the Government of Canada, along with the Government of the Northwest Territories and five aboriginal groups. We continue to work toward a target effective date of April 1, 2014, as requested by the premier of the Government of the Northwest Territories and agreed to by the Prime Minister and all parties to the devolution agreement. It is also our shared objective with the Government of the Northwest Territories to devolve a modern, efficient and effective land and water regulatory system with the Government of the Northwest Territories in accordance with our 2010 action plan to improve northern regulatory regimes.

Unlike my friend, the member for Western Arctic across the aisle who believes that resource development has not reduced poverty, our government knows that resource development creates jobs and economic opportunity for northerners and all Canadians. We also know the Northwest Territories is full of opportunity, in particular, with its mineral-rich land and vast oil and gas reserves. However, much of this opportunity has gone untapped and the territories have undergone a contraction in its economy over recent years. These are the facts. Bringing forward a modern regulatory regime is an important tool to attract investment and promote growth in the territories.

That is why this bill would also put in place an improved regulatory framework in the Northwest Territories that would ensure

that resource development would continue in a manner that would respect the environment, while ensuring the long-term prosperity of the Northwest Territories for generations to come.

To this end, the Northwest Territories devolution act includes amendments to the Territorial Lands Act, the Northwest Territories Waters Act and the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, which would increase predictability and timeliness in the environmental assessment process, reduce regulatory burden, improve environmental protection and ensure meaningful aboriginal consultation. More important, however, this would give the people of the Northwest Territories greater control over decisions setting the nature and pace of development and the regulatory processes and environmental assessments of resource development projects on their lands and waters.

Specifically, Bill C-15 would amend the Territorial Lands Act so it would no longer apply to lands under the administration and control of the commissioner of the Northwest Territories. The act would only apply to federal lands and federally-managed sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. For its part, the legislative assembly of Northwest Territories would pass its own legislation to manage land under the administration and control of the commissioner of the territories.

• (1540)

The bill would also repeal the Territorial Waters Act, as the legislative assembly of the Northwest Territories would also enact a new territorial law to manage waters in the territory.

The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board would continue to issue licences on territorial and private lands in the Mackenzie Valley, but the new territorial water legislation and its regulations would set out the requirements for issuing licences of these lands.

For water in the Inuvialuit settlement region, licences for water use and waste disposal would be the responsibility of the Inuvialuit Water Board, which would be established under the new territorial act.

Finally, the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act would remain a federal statute similar to federal environmental assessment legislation in every other jurisdiction in Canada, should the bill be passed.

As a result, Bill C-15 would cause substantial portions of the Northwest Territories Waters Act to be incorporated into the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act in order for Canada to continue to regulate on federal lands, of which most public land will have been transferred to the territory as of April 1, 2014.

These changes to the regulatory processes for land and water would continue to generate many benefits for the people of the Northwest Territories. The bill would also promote greater environmental stewardship of all lands and waters in the territories.

Government Orders

● (1545)

[Translation]

The action plan was launched to make improvements to the existing regulatory regimes across the north and to ensure that they are strong, effective, efficient and predictable by making reviews of projects more predictable and timely; reducing duplication for project reviews; strengthening environmental protection; and respecting consultation obligations with aboriginal groups.

[English]

Clearly the development of this legislation that hon. members see before them today is the result of years of important, collaborative work. Adoption of the Northwest Territories devolution act by Parliament would mark the legislative conclusion of the vital work in the Northwest Territories we set out in the action plan to improve northern regulatory regimes. Passage of Bill C-15 will allow us to work with northerners under a regulatory regime that works for all and that will contribute to improved economic outcomes.

I am convinced that all of us in the House would agree that the source of our country's power and legitimacy in the north is derived from the people who live, work and raise families there and from vibrant, self-sufficient northern communities. These are the people and communities that this act seeks to support.

Canadians of the north must be empowered with the legal authority to create northern ways to meet northern needs. The Northwest Territories devolution act would give the Northwest Territories the tools and political freedom to do this.

I urge my colleagues to do their part in building the true north. I urge my colleagues to pass Bill C-15 swiftly into law.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his presentation on Bill C-15. I listened to what he had to say with a great deal of interest.

The bill is really two bills that have been brought together. I have asked the minister in the past if he could put them forward as separate bills so the people of the north could truly debate them in a fashion that would work for them, but that is not the case.

One of the aspects of the agreement that was made between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government was for a review of the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act after five years. This agreement is not carried forward in any of the legislation. It is not in a devolution implementation bill. It is not within the amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act.

How can the people of the north be sure that with future governments we will get a proper review of the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, which, in the form it is presented in the bill, would give the minister complete control over the terms and conditions of resource development in the Northwest Territories going forward? How can we be sure that this review will take place?

Could the minister give us some assurances that, although it is not in the legislation but it was in the agreement, this review will be wholeheartedly taken on by the government?

● (1550)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the hon. member is answering his own question. He asked how we would know if the five year review would take place since it was in the agreement. Very simply, the answer is that, indeed, it is in the agreement. It is an undertaking and it will be done because it was the agreement.

Some of the comments that have been made by the hon. member is as if this is particular to the Northwest Territories. Federal environmental assessment legislation exists in all jurisdictions in Canada. Retaining the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act as federal legislation is consistent with the approach taken in other jurisdictions, such as Yukon.

In order for regulatory improvement initiatives to be fully implemented, all parties to the devolution agreement agreed that it was desirable to have this legislation remain federal at this time and to utilize delegation as a model to implement devolution with a full review of this model after five years, and that is what we will do.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, as members know, the Liberal Party has been very supportive of devolution agreements in Canada and has certainly worked with Nunavut, Yukon and the Northwest Territories in the past around these issues.

With the devolution of any agreement of this size and magnitude, there comes a financial responsibility to ensure the agreement is followed through and implemented appropriately.

I ask the minister today if there has been agreement with regard to the financial contributions that would be contributed as part of this and if it is satisfactory to the Government of the Northwest Territories to do the job it needs to do.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is an important one.

Yes, indeed, the government will transfer \$26.5 million at one time and \$67.3 million in ongoing funding annually to the Government of the Northwest Territories and \$4 million at one time and \$4.6 million in ongoing funds annually to the aboriginal parties. The ongoing funding to the Government of the Northwest Territories will enable it to cover costs associated with the management of land and resource responsibilities.

If the member recalls, I was before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development on the supplementary estimates (B) for 2013-14 and there were \$20 million earmarked this year to ensure that this payment be made to the Northwest Territories in the current year.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate today. I know that cutting red tape is an important part of what our government wants to do. The chair of the aboriginal affairs committee was on the Red Tape Reduction Commission, which took a look at government operations to see where we could reduce red tape. I have certainly been hearing that the red tape in the regulatory regime in the Northwest Territories may be hampering economic opportunity.

I would ask the hon. minister if he could contrast the situation in the Northwest Territories with that in other parts of Canada's north that perhaps have a different regulatory regime.

• (1555)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, right now the member will know that the government embarked upon a regulatory reform pursuant to an action plan that was adopted in 2010. The House and colleagues will remember that in the last session—late spring of last year—we passed the NUPPAA, which was the first part of the regulatory reform taking place that affected the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

With this bill, we really bring to the Northwest Territories a regulatory regime that will keep the territory competitive in terms of the regime it operates under, vis-à-vis the Yukon or Nunavut.

If we look at the facts right now, the disadvantage of duplication, uncertainty of applications and inefficiencies has not worked well for the Government of the Northwest Territories and its people. It is important that we pass this bill so that they can benefit from the new regulatory regime.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will try to squeeze in two questions to the minister in response to Bill C-15.

The first question is that I am confused by the fact that in Bill C-4, which was an omnibus budget bill, we incorporated a change that would have more properly been done here—the Mackenzie gas project impacts fund act, which allows the minister to have complete discretion as to how the funds are used, as opposed to the previous way they were used.

This relates to my next question, which is this. Admittedly the Northwest Territories has a complex jurisdictional framework. Anyone who participated in the Mackenzie gas pipeline hearings is aware of the multiple levels of jurisdiction. However, the regional boards that were established, and which are being conflated through this act, were set up in relation to land claims agreements and were to stay in place until all land claims agreements were resolved. With land claims agreements still outstanding in the area, was it appropriate to devolve and reduce the number of boards? It is fine to say it makes the Northwest Territories more competitive, but what does it say about the consistency with agreements with the federal Crown and various complex regional organizations?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a question that she knows is particularly sensitive to the aboriginal parties in the region in question.

Currently, there are four land and water boards for the Mackenzie Valley. Three of the existing land and water boards, Gwich'in, Sahtu

and Wek'èezhii, function in each of their respective areas as regional panels of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, which is responsible for projects that cover more than one region and for the unsettled areas.

The restructured board was envisaged and agreed to when the land claims agreements were concluded. Every aboriginal group with whom these comprehensive land claims agreements were concluded knew that at one point a board could cover the whole of the Northwest Territories. That is exactly what we are achieving in Bill C-15, which is quite respectful of our treaty obligations.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a lifelong northerner, I am pleased to have the opportunity to address Bill C-15, the devolution implementation bill.

I would first like to congratulate the Premier of the Northwest Territories, Bob McLeod, his cabinet ministers and the staff for the hard work they have put in on this file. That extends back through the time of the Northwest Territories to many other people who have dedicated their service in building a territory with political rights that are equivalent to those in other parts of Canada.

Bill C-15 has two very significant and different parts. One makes changes to the Northwest Territories Act, an act that is virtually the constitution of the Northwest Territories. All actions there fall under the Northwest Territories Act. Other laws are being changed to implement the devolution agreement between Canada and the Northwest Territories.

The second part brings in changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, primarily doing away with the regional land and water boards created through land claims agreements with the first nations, replacing them with a single super board.

There are other changes in the act, and I will speak to those as I go along. They are very significant changes that, apart from what the minister has said, will leave even stronger powers for the minister over resource development in the Northwest Territories. It is quite clearly the case.

We in the New Democratic Party support devolution. We see this as a step forward for the Northwest Territories in some respects, and we will look to the bill going to committee. We will look to the opportunity to put forward amendments that may better serve the people of the Northwest Territories.

The devolution part of the bill partially realizes the dream northerners have had for over 50 years: taking more authority over their lives from bureaucrats in Ottawa. I have lived that life and I know what that life is.

The Carruthers Commission in 1966 moved the capital of the Northwest Territories to Yellowknife and brought a number of bureaucrats there, but that was what we could call “second-stage colonialism”. We brought the federal government into the Northwest Territories and to the greatest extent it ruled the north from the north, rather than from Ottawa.

The federally appointed Commissioner of the Northwest Territories was the speaker, premier and lieutenant governor, all rolled into one, up until 1975. In 1975, we had our first elected territorial council of 15 members. This includes the territory known as Nunavut now, under one roof.

Before that a mixture of people elected and appointed by the federal government provided governance. Executive powers still lay with the commissioner, assisted by a deputy and an assistant commissioner.

With the appointment of John Parker in 1979, the move began away from an executive commissioner toward a more ceremonial role as lieutenant governor. I will get back to that point, because it is a point I want to bring up in this speech.

In the late eighties, health services, administration of justice and the management of forestry were devolved to the Government of the Northwest Territories, which has handled all of those as well as can be and deserves great praise for providing services to people across a vast territory with limited resources.

We have taken on education, social services, highways, airport administration and a number of the roles that would be classified as provincial. That was never satisfactory to the north, as after the nineties when we had constitutional development conferences in the north, where we talked about our future and what direction we would take, I think we all felt that we wanted to be a unique place in Canada.

We wanted full respect for aboriginal governments. We wanted partnerships between aboriginal governments and public governments so that we would have a territory that would truly represent the people, the history and the real claim that first nations have to the land and resources of the north. That is a dream that is still held by most northerners.

• (1600)

There were devolution efforts in the early part of 2000, with the Liberals. The deal was virtually the same as this. Perhaps they were offering a little better money, at the time, and I think a little more control over development. That deal was actually rejected by the parties, in the end, because there was not a common agreement.

I think one of the great accomplishments of Premier McLeod, with the devolution file, has been to bring many of the first nations on board. Premier McLeod himself is of aboriginal descent and has a great deal of respect among first nation peoples—among all of us in the north—for his strength and his fairness. I think that is something that has helped the devolution file tremendously.

The MVRMA part of the bill, however, would implement the Conservative desire to move forward with more rapid resource development in the Northwest Territories. That is what we see here. That is the purpose of this. This is the great trade-off that has been made with this bill—the trade-off that we all have been put under.

When I got a comprehensive audit of people's attitudes toward changes in the MVRMA done by outside consultants a year and a half ago, it was pretty clear that most people in the Northwest Territories were not thinking that the regulatory system needed more than some very straightforward tweaking.

Government Orders

One thing we all did agree with was that the land use plans, which are part of the MVRMA, needed to be completed, including McCrank. Everybody agreed with that. The current government has not moved very fast to make that happen, which was one of the biggest problems we had in the regulatory system.

For more than 20 years, the aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories have hung their hat on having some say and control over the resource development process on lands and waters. They have tied this to the MVRMA with their duly developed land claims agreements with the Gwich'in, the Sahtu and the Tlicho governments.

These people have agreed to regional boards. They have supported regional boards. Yes, there are provisions that perhaps one single board could be made, but what we have found in the Northwest Territories is that regional boards actually provide a useful and necessary function within the Northwest Territories to, clearly, provide that vision that we talked about earlier, the vision of a territory that had balance between aboriginal and non-aboriginal governments.

What we would see with this bill is that particular structure would be changed to a single board. It might be possible to change it back later. That is very much a question that is up in the air now.

However, certainly, an NDP government would go back to take a look at this. We would go back to see whether this was appropriate for the development of the Northwest Territories according to how the people see their development taking place.

The MVRMA remains a federal legislation, but it is an essential part of how the balance of the Northwest Territories is developing.

Let us talk about the changes to the NWT Act for devolution. The question here is whether we are moving to more province-like powers. Yes, in the administration of environment and the administration of land, we are. In the enforcement of those provisions, yes, we are. Those are things that are valuable. I thank all of those involved in pushing those forward for the people of the Northwest Territories.

However, there are other things that trouble us in the bill, where we look for amendments, perhaps.

When it comes to directions to the commissioner, I mentioned the commissioner was moving more to the state of a lieutenant-governor ceremonial position. This bill would draw him back into the fold of the federal government. Bill C-15, clause 4, states:

The Commissioner must act in accordance with any written instructions given to him or her by the Governor in Council or the Minister.

Government Orders

This is stronger language than in the current NWT Act. The Yukon Act contains no comparable sections, and in Nunavut these instructions are made public through tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

•(1605)

What do we see here, in this particular section of the devolution act? We actually see more control being applied through the commissioner's office. Strengthening the federal control of the NWT, when combined with the provision of section 29 that adds the power of the minister to order the commissioner to withhold assent to bills that are passed in the Legislative Assembly, the commissioner, under the instruction of the minister, can withhold assent to those bills, and has up to a year to do it.

What we see there is fairly strong control over any changes that could be made in the Northwest Territories in the years to come with different governments there that may have agendas different those of the present government or any other government.

Regarding borrowing, this bill would continue the process whereby Ottawa sets the amount of debt the NWT can acquire. NWT debt is not a burden on Canada. This is an outdated and colonial practice that inhibits our development by not allowing us to invest in things like hydroelectric generation capacity. We have to go to the federal government, cap in hand, and ask it to please give us a little more borrowing power and to possibly let us do something that we know is good for our people.

I put a bill forward in the last Parliament. This issue has been very well discussed and is very well understood. The opposition at the time voted unanimously, and we passed that bill through second reading. Only the Conservatives wanted to limit the borrowing capacity of our government.

What is it in like in the provinces? The federal government may not give direction to a provincial lieutenant governor. All natural resources are completely under the control of the provinces, with no Ottawa interference. There is no control over borrowing. The lieutenant governors cannot be directed to not assent to bills.

These are things that are in the devolution agreement. We see that the devolution agreement would give us more in certain areas but would put reins on us in other areas. That would limit our capacity, unlike other Canadians. These things can be changed by amendments, and I encourage the government to support some amendments that would give us more flexibility under this act.

Let us move on to the changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. This measure would eliminate regional boards created through the land use process. It would replace them with one superboard with only 11 members. This bill also would also give the minister the right, in any part of this bill and for any of the boards that will exist in the Northwest Territories, to provide binding policy decisions to those boards. In other words, the minister could tell the board the way it will judge actions.

There is no consultation with the Government of the Northwest Territories included in that provision. That would make sense. It would make sense that the people who are taking care of the environment and the land would have some influence over the policy decisions that are going forward to the boards that make decisions

about development. What would be wrong with providing that consultation to the Government of the Northwest Territories? Again, with a simple amendment we could put that in place. If the Conservatives want to listen, that is fine.

There have been environmental audits done in the Northwest Territories. The main problem with our regulatory system, according to these independent environmental audits that were done in 2010, was that foot-dragging by Ottawa on appointments and on approvals of developments was the biggest impediment to resource development in the Northwest Territories. Now we would have a system whereby one government would control some things and the other government can have a say over everything when it comes to resource development. This is a difficult situation. This is going to lead to conflicts.

•(1610)

We need one government in charge of making decisions, and that should be the Government of the Northwest Territories in consultation with and working together with the first nations, who have a right to land and resources in the Northwest Territories and who we want to have as complete partners in the development of the Northwest Territories.

This is a goal that we all have. It is a goal that northerners have in the Northwest Territories. We are not interested in matching up to Alberta. We do not want Alberta in the Northwest Territories. That is not what we are here for. We want our own government, under our own rules, with our own relationships, with the groups that make up the north and have lived there for hundreds and thousands of years and have done very well with that.

There is strong opposition among the first nations to the changes to the MVRMA. The Gwich'in Tribal Council made a unanimous decision to reject the changes at a meeting held in Inuvik by community leadership representing all the Gwich'in communities.

These are the words of Gwich'in Tribal Council president Robert Alexie. He said: "My people have spoken, and what Canada is proposing is clearly unacceptable".

The Tlicho Government is opposed. Grand Chief Eddie Erasmus has said:

There's no need to change the Wek'ëezhli Land and Water Board. There's nothing wrong with it. Absolutely nothing wrong with it. It's working very well. Why fix something that is not broken?

Government Orders

With regard to appointments, why is the minister holding on tightly to all the appointments to all these boards? Why is he saying that a nomination from the Government of the Northwest Territories to any of these boards must meet his approval? Why do aboriginal governments that make nominations to these boards need the minister's approval? How is that devolution? How is that taking charge of our own affairs, when nominations can be rejected outright? When it comes to the chairs of the new superboard, the minister only has to consult on appointing a chair. The minister's man will be in Yellowknife as head of the superboard. He will be getting instructions, binding policy direction, from the minister about how things develop in the Northwest Territories. How does that represent true devolution?

I do not know if anyone across the way understands, but if they go talk to their provincial counterparts, they may understand what provincial-like powers actually are. The minister said the Yukon is doing extremely well with environmental assessments. Yukon actually makes decisions for itself. The Yukon first nations make appointments to their boards. The Yukon is doing it by itself. Bill C-15 does not permit us to do the same things that the Yukon is doing.

I have been through two phases of colonialism in my life. The first was when the federal government in Ottawa simply sent representatives up to govern us. I was a student in school, and different kids would come from Ottawa because their parents would be sent up there for a couple years to do northern duty. I was great friends with people from Ottawa and with their children, but they were not northerners. That was phase one.

Phase two was when the government came to the north. We have made remarkable progress in that time. We have done a lot with our territory. It is a great territory, one that I am absolutely proud to represent here in the House of Commons every day. I love the place. I want it to grow. I want to be a Canadian just like everyone else, but what we have here is only the third stage in colonialism. It is the stage when we take care of most things on the ground, but the decisions are in Ottawa. That is where we are at.

We will work with the government as much as we can, but in the end, we know that our job as New Democrats will be to give the people of the north a real say, a say that is equivalent to that of other Canadians in how they manage their affairs.

• (1615)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly appreciate the passion of the member for Western Arctic, this being his home territory.

I think there would probably be strong disagreement, however, from the Government of the Northwest Territories that what it is signing on for is third-stage colonialism. That is not what it is signing on for. It knows, as it has agreed to this historic bill, that authorities will actually be transferred to the territories that it has asked for, as other governments have tried to do but failed to deliver on. Conservatives support devolution, the Government of the Northwest Territories certainly does, and I think it would reject that characterization.

The member mentioned resource development, which is interesting, given his recent comments that resource development hasn't reduced poverty in the Northwest Territories. We know that jobs in the resource sector create long-term prosperity and wealth in communities. I want to ask the hon. member how he can say that resource development in the Northwest Territories, which involves key industries such as mining, is actually not having a positive effect on the economy. Why does he not want to work with the Government of the Northwest Territories to improve the regulatory regime so that more economic development, more certainty, and more resource development will come to the territories to improve the economic outcomes for the people who live there?

• (1620)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, my colleague actually gave me a chance to respond to what the minister said about me.

We did a study recently in which we looked at income tax returns over the last 10 years across the north as one part of the study. In that study, we noticed that in communities like Lutselk'e, which has been virtually surrounded by new diamond mines in the last 10 years, when we picked a \$30,000 cap for family income, the rate of poverty among families went from 30% to 40%. This is during a time when our GDP per capita, averaged over 10 years, had the highest growth rate of any jurisdiction in the country.

We saw that even in close proximity, communities that have economic benefit agreements with the diamond mines still had a high degree of poverty. In fact, it was increasing. Economic development is very good for those who are working for mining companies and have jobs in those fields, but it raises the cost of living enormously and leaves many people behind. That is why we need a very broad approach to resource development, one that comes from the people of the Northwest Territories who have seen the results over the last 10 years and want to improve on them.

With this type of legislation, with these changes to the MVRMA, the minister in Ottawa will be determining the terms and conditions of development, and we will not have the chance to try to make a difference so that resource developments actually work for us.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to my colleague from the Northwest Territories as he spoke to this bill. Being a northerner myself, I know there are often issues around resource development and balancing the levels of governance within aboriginal communities, the territories, and the provinces that sometimes pose challenges. However, I have seen a lot of major issues resolved simply because of the players, the strength of both the aboriginal entities and the governments that are in power to be able to do this.

Government Orders

I know this bill has been presented in two particular parts, but we also know that on June 25, 2013, the agreement was signed by the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories, as well as the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in, the Tlicho, and the Sahtu. They had agreed to sign on at that particular time to ensure that there was greater management and control within the NWT.

I would ask the hon. member today for his opinion. Does he feel that they have now withdrawn their support because of the changes that are happening within the management of the water board, or is it that the concerns being raised by these groups should just be addressed by the government?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I want to answer the question quite honestly, because I think that is important in the House.

In September, I wrote to the minister and asked him to bring these two bills forward as separate bills, because there is a great disagreement in the Northwest Territories between the two bills.

With the devolution implementation bill, I think there is a great deal of support. I commended the premier on getting that support from first nations. That is how we work together. That is excellent. However, with the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, that is something that causes a great deal of concern for aboriginal groups across the north.

What we have ended up with is an omnibus bill. I am conflicted about the support I am giving to the bill because it does not represent what I feel is adequate on the Mackenzie Valley resource management side. I can live with the changes encompassed in the devolution implementation bill, because generally, they add a little to what is going on in the north.

That is the conflict that we have. We want progress. We will take the progress we can get in the north. First nations, in many cases, do not view this as progress, with respect to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act.

•(1625)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and especially for being the eyes and ears of the vast northern region for us in Parliament. I also want to congratulate him on his convictions and his commitment to doing what is best for the people in the north.

He raised a very interesting point in his answer to a question. How can this government still be introducing bills that, on one hand, include positive aspects and, on the other hand, raise concerns?

I would like him to speak to this problem and how, by extension, it stifles any ongoing progress we might make, especially when it comes to ensuring that the people in the north can move ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I look on the debate in the House of Commons as extremely important for the people of the Northwest Territories, because as with my private member's bill on the borrowing limit, I did influence other people and other parties to support the north.

There may be another government here in a couple of years. What I would really love for people to understand is that we are not finished with devolution or evolution in the Northwest Territories towards political status comparable to other Canadians.

We have not finished with that yet. There is more work to be done. Although the bill comes now, we hope that in the years to come other sensitive and thoughtful people in Canada will recognize that we have a right to full political status, and that they will support everything that is needed to make the Northwest Territories a unique, strong, democratic place.

We do not want to lose sight of that. We do not want to lose sight for our first nations, who we have worked together with for many years to build this territory, this place where all first nations can feel at home, in charge, empowered and strengthened in their communities, in their regions. That is so vital to what we do in the Northwest Territories. This is unlike many places in Canada. I do not want to see that change.

We can debate this for some time, see some amendments come forward and see some understanding about how the north should move ahead. This would all be valuable to us. I appeal to all members to take a look at what is going on here. This is an important issue. As a Canadian, stand up for northerners. Even if you do not want to see too much progress right now, understand what the issues are and why, in the end, we in the north should have equal status to all of you around this room.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair.

•(1630)

[*Translation*]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, International Cooperation; the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Sealing Industry.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Labrador.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to this important bill, Bill C-15, an act to replace the Northwest Territories Act to implement certain provisions of the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement and to repeal or make amendments to the Territorial Lands Act, the Northwest Territories Waters Act, the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, other Acts and certain orders and regulations. I am proud to rise as a northerner of Inuit descent and as my party's critic for northern development, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and the Arctic Council to address the bill on this occasion of importance to the people of the Northwest Territories.

Government Orders

The devolution of responsibilities in the Northwest Territories is a cause for celebration, not just for the people of NWT but for all of us as Canadians. Any time that we can give greater control and a greater say in the future of the people who live in certain lands and manage certain resources, we can ensure that we will have good and solid management.

The work that is happening with regard to the devolution agreement is obviously work that was started decades ago to give the people of the Northwest Territories the governance that they deserve. We can all think back to the work of Liberal Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and his government, which established the Advisory Commission on the Development of Government in the Northwest Territories, otherwise known as the Carrothers commission.

The commission at that time consulted with people across the north and concluded in its report that they of course deserved to have the seat of their government established not in Ottawa, as it had been until then, but in the north, where people could play a much more vital role in their government and its ability to represent the people of the Northwest Territories. This established Yellowknife as the capital and moved the territorial seat of government there.

Decades later, Yellowknife has continued to blossom as the seat of government in the Northwest Territories. It is thanks in part to this important step that we can be proud today that business in the Northwest Territories is booming as well.

On the important subject of devolution, I want to point out and acknowledge before Parliament that it was the governments of Prime Ministers Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin that worked tirelessly for the devolution of the Yukon and Nunavut, and started the process of devolution for the Northwest Territories. It is a legacy that we are proud of. I am eager to continue working hard to ensure that people across northern Canada have the type of government that they want and deserve, in order to make important decisions that will affect their future.

There is a new generation of young Canadians who live in the north and who are ready to be the leaders of today. We must do everything that we can to ensure that our territories have the tools and governance that they need to empower our young Canadians and our citizens to continue to be a part of the economic driver of this country, which the north has become.

In my role as the critic for northern development, and of course as the MP for Labrador, sometimes I have to say that when I speak to the bill, I am almost a little bit envious. In my previous role as a provincial member and minister in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I had the opportunity to travel to the northern regions of our country and visit people across the territories. I know that they are great people, who work hard in a very challenging climate. I can tell the House that despite all these odds and challenges, they are thriving.

The culture and entrepreneurship are such an inspiration to see first-hand. I want to encourage my hon. colleagues in the House to visit the north and see for themselves how this is such an awe-inspiring part of our country. The devolution agreement and the continued transfer of responsibility will allow the people of the

Northwest Territories to take the driver's seat on the huge amounts of economic development that we are seeing.

• (1635)

In my own district of Labrador, we have seen the rich cultural heritage and contributions of our aboriginal people, like the Innu, NunatuKavut and Nunatsiavut. It is vital that all aboriginal peoples in Canada have a strong voice to represent them. I hope that those in the north will play a larger role in determining the future of their people as part of the bill and of the work of both the federal and territorial governments.

We all want to see aboriginal communities in the north succeed economically, socially and culturally. This agreement would hopefully empower these communities to come closer to achieving greater success in all of these areas.

As someone who was born and raised in the north, and who represents a northern district, I can certainly understand the need for autonomy in the north and the right to establish strong local government that can engage in government to government dialogue that would produce meaningful results. I know the frustration and reality of trying to govern without having real power and the ability to make full decisions and have full accountability. We need decision-makers to understand these realities of living in the north and that they are best served by granting the responsibilities necessary to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

We want to make it easier to conduct business in our northern regions to encourage business investment, create jobs and generate greater revenues. I want devolution to give more of these things to the Government of the Northwest Territories as well as the participating aboriginal governments. With this, they could work together to improve their social programs and social safety net. They could make decisions to invest in their local culture to attract tourism or trade and to draw new people into the area.

I am very optimistic about the future of the Northwest Territories and its devolution agreement. I am optimistic about all northern regions of Canada.

I believe that northern regions thrive when they have the guidance of good leadership. Today we have with us the Premier of the Northwest Territories, Mr. Bob McLeod, along with officials and other leaders within his government. I understand that we also have support and have been joined by some aboriginal governments from NWT.

We have to recognize that these individuals have spent years working to gain a very concrete devolution agreement to ensure that it meets the needs of the people they represent, the people they advocate and care for. I want to congratulate them on the work they have done.

I hope that despite the interference that one often sees from government that they will accomplish what they set out to do; that is, to give greater autonomy, greater powers of decision-making to the people of the Northwest Territories. I think that is what we all want to see accomplished through this particular agreement.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the member's speech. As she said, as a northerner, I appreciated her enthusiasm for the north. I certainly look forward to working with her on the aboriginal affairs committee as we study the bill.

The member mentioned the previous agreements with the Yukon and Nunavut, and I want to concentrate a bit on the Yukon.

The previous speaker, the member for Western Arctic, complained that the commissioner would have to act on the written orders of the Governor in Council for a period of 10 years in this new Northwest Territories devolution act. He complained that was not what happened in the Yukon. However, that actually is what happened in the Yukon. For 10 years, it was written into the agreement that the commissioner of the Yukon would report through the cabinet.

Does the member see a problem with a transition plan such as was undertaken by members of her government, a 10-year transition plan? Does she see it as a positive thing if there is a long-term transition plan, or like the member for Western Arctic, does she somehow think that is unacceptable?

• (1640)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, most of us expected to see the issues around Mackenzie Valley resource management done in a separate bill, and it has not evolved that way. It is not uncommon for that to happen with the government opposite. We see that with a lot of bills that come to the House of Commons.

When the Northwest Territories and the aboriginal people signed on, they were signing on to an agreement that was agreed upon.

As the bill goes through committee, I would like to examine the consultation on part two of the bill to ensure that there was proper consultation and that there was proper inclusion.

Whether this agreement is acceptable or not really comes down to the decisions to be made by the people of the Northwest Territories. Our job is to ensure that the bill is strengthened and fair and meets their desired intentions.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member for Labrador. I know how much her territory in her province resembles the Northwest Territories with isolated communities and communities that are, in many cases, put under decisions that are not really coming from the people around them but from St. John's or some other area.

Could the hon. member comment on how she thinks the people of Labrador, who already have to deal with an extension to St. John's, would feel about having all the decisions regarding resource development finally approved by a minister in Ottawa?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, that is dangerous ground for me to be treading right now, because if I were to make a speech on governance in Labrador, I would probably have a lot of media coverage for a few days.

It is very frustrating when people cannot govern themselves. That is the situation we have in Labrador, because we are at the mercy of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Govern-

ment of Canada, and we work in co-operation with our aboriginal governments: the Nunatsiavut, Nunatukavut, and the Innu Nation. That is a discussion we can have another time. That is why I say I am almost envious as I stand to speak to this devolution agreement today and what is transpiring in northern regions across the country.

We cannot ignore the fact that governments have achieved consensus with the territorial government and the aboriginal population under devolution.

There is a section of the bill, about which concerns are being raised, with regard to the water management board and how that would operate. I look forward to seeing the amendments that I am sure the hon. member will bring forward. I understand that there may even be some amendments on the government side, but we will wait and see how that evolves as we go through committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have learned that the member for Labrador is a very strong advocate not only for Labrador but also for our northern regions. I very much appreciate her contributions to the Liberal Party.

She made reference to the idea of consensus and how important it is that we work with the different stakeholders. There are a number of stakeholders that need to be taken into consideration. Whether it is North American Indian, the Inuit, or the Métis, there is a good, strong, multicultural flavour in the northwest. We have to work with the people of the community to go forward.

Given her comments on the bill, to what degree does she believe it is important that once it goes to committee the government will be open to having amendments brought forward to make it a stronger piece of legislation?

• (1645)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I think the desire of the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories, the aboriginal government, all the members of the House, and the Liberal caucus is to ensure that we have the strongest legislation possible and that we meet the expectations of devolution for the people of the Northwest Territories. We want to ensure that we put in their hands the real control and power they need to control resource development, to deal with the social issues they face, and to ensure that their territory continues to grow and prosper in the north.

If we all come to the table with that philosophy, we will indeed achieve that goal, and we will do it by consensus.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, responding again to the member for Western Arctic, he does not seem to want to talk about the fact that Bill C-15 will provide the NWT with legislative authority to exercise new responsibilities over public lands, inland waters, and non-renewable resources. It will repeal or render inapplicable various federal laws that relate to the administration of lands, waters, and natural resources in the Northwest Territories.

I assume from the member's speech that the Liberal Party of Canada will be supporting this. It was unclear from the member for Western Arctic what position his party would be taking.

Government Orders

Does the member not agree that this is a significant nation-building exercise and one that we should celebrate along with the Government of the Northwest Territories? Does he realize that what we are proposing is exactly the same as what has been proposed in the Yukon, for instance, which is celebrating 10 years of successful devolution?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I have had an opportunity to travel in the Yukon and also in the Nunavut territory. It is no secret that we have a lot of challenges in the north when it comes to social issues and to the cost of living. These are very important factors, but we also cannot ignore, as Canadians, that some of our greatest wealth is coming from the north.

When we look at resource development and at the contributions they are making to Canada as a whole, the very least we could do in giving back to these northern regions is give them the opportunity to govern themselves, make decisions for themselves, and ensure that there is good strong growth and prosperity for generations to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am clearly pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-15 today. This bill gives the Government of the Northwest Territories more powers and makes other changes, which I will speak to later.

I am also pleased to bring a different viewpoint to the debate, one that we rarely have in the House, and that is the viewpoint of an aboriginal person who has negotiated agreements with the federal and provincial governments on behalf of his people.

When I read the bill, I could not help but look at it in the context of the work I did for the Cree of Eeyou Istchee and the people of northern Quebec.

• (1650)

[*English*]

The people of the Northwest Territories have been working for years toward gaining more province-like powers to have greater control over their own communities, their own resources, and their own destinies. This is very similar to what we did in northern Quebec, going back to the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975 and the Paix de Braves, and to the new regional governance agreement we signed not too long ago, which has created a new regional government that will be fully operational next month.

In these agreements, we worked with our neighbours and various levels of government to find common ground to protect our rights and interests and to create a common path forward. This is very difficult work that is full of complexities, but when done right, it creates a stable, prosperous environment that benefits everyone.

[*Translation*]

In the NDP, we talk a lot about restoring the relationship of equality between the Government of Canada and our country's aboriginal people from coast to coast. The approach we took in northern Quebec has proven to be a success story for all involved. Everyone feels respected in that kind of environment.

That is what I had in mind when I read the government's bill. However, I have to say that although it proposes some worthwhile measures and is a step in the right direction, we do not feel that it goes far enough, unfortunately. An NDP government would have done more and would have given more power to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

[*English*]

The bill, as proposed, would make some changes that are of concern to the people of the region. In drafting this bill, the Conservatives seem to have completely ignored the strong concerns first nations have about the changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, which is also very disturbing. This will be the focus of my comments today.

This bill includes amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act that would replace the current structure of regional land and water boards, created through the land claims final agreement with Northwest Territory aboriginal governments, with a single board. The Government of the Northwest Territories has also expressed concern about these changes.

In May 2011, Michael Miltenberger, NWT environment minister, said, “this process is driven by the federal government. They've, for the most part, treated the [Government of the Northwest Territories] as just another stakeholder”.

I would have thought that a territorial government, just like a provincial government or an aboriginal government, would be a partner, not just a stakeholder. We have seen before how the current Conservative government treats its partners in Confederation. When it starts from the point of not seeing or treating its partners as true partners, bad things flow, and a lasting agreement cannot be reached. Believe me, I speak from experience.

The Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Tlicho government, both signatories to the devolution agreement, have voiced opposition to these changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. Other individual first nations have also expressed their opposition.

As someone who has spent most of his professional career negotiating on behalf of my people, it is very concerning for me to see the government unilaterally merge these regional land and water boards.

These boards were created through land claims final agreements with the Northwest Territories and aboriginal governments after years of negotiations done in good faith. These boards have served the regions and peoples well. It is deeply troubling for me to see the government unilaterally undo what years of partnership and goodwill has built to the detriment of the region. If the Government of Canada tried to unilaterally undo part of the James Bay and Northern Quebec agreement, I would be strongly oppose and fight against it. Therefore, I will not expect other aboriginal nations to accept such an intrusion on their agreements and rights by the federal government.

Government Orders

Recently, Robert Alexie Jr., president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council, commented on its opposition to these changes. He was quoted saying, "We have a land use plan. We have the land and water board. We have a claim. People know the process, and it works very well up here".

In October 2011, Gabrielle Mackenzie-Scott of the Tlicho government was quoted saying, "Our key message to AANDC is that there is nothing wrong with the system, and it needs time to grow and improve".

I am sure the minister has many reasons why he believes these two leaders are wrong. However, from where I sit, it feels like the government has again not properly consulted those directly affected by these changes and are thumbing its nose at agreements the Crown has signed in good faith.

If the government insists on continuing with its failed approach in this case, I feel safe in saying that it will just invite another lawsuit against itself and add to the hundreds of millions it has spent in courts defending its indefensible approach. This is a waste of money that could be avoided by simply working with all partners, territorial and aboriginal governments alike, and negotiating.

To make matters worse, these amendments would also give the federal minister power over the approval of all land and water usage in the Northwest Territories, essentially circumventing the powers transferred to the Government of the Northwest Territories through the devolution process. Not only is the government ignoring land claims agreements and their provisions, the Conservatives are grabbing more power for themselves. The whole point of devolution is to give power to other levels of government, not take more back in return. Given its track record on protecting water rights and the interests of aboriginal peoples, I am very concerned to see those powers placed in the hands of a minister of the government.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

My NDP colleagues and I are concerned about the lack of consultation during the drafting of this bill. That lack of consultation caused justifiable outrage with regard to some of the main parts of this bill. First nation and Métis governments were outraged, as were those who support the transfer of powers. Given that those of us on this side of the House are open to any and all suggestions that could deliver tangible results for the people, we will be supporting this bill so that it is referred to committee, where it can be improved. That is our intention on this side of the House.

When the bill is studied in committee, the NDP will do what the government has yet to do: we will listen to the first nation governments from the north and we will propose amendments based on their testimony and observations.

We are very grateful to the first nations governments of the Northwest Territories for taking a stand, and we will work as equals with our first nations partners to improve the bill. We hope that the Conservatives will do the same.

There is an important aspect of this whole discussion that relates to our notion of consultation in this country. When Canada's aboriginal peoples speak of consultation and accommodation with

respect to their rights, they are not indulging in political whims. The Government of Canada and the Crown have a constitutional duty to consult with aboriginal peoples and seriously consider the concerns expressed during that consultation. That is our constitutional obligation towards Canada's aboriginal peoples.

I want to stress this because we too often come up against the failure of this country's governments to meet this obligation. We must take seriously the constitutional obligations of the various levels of government in Canada. I am including the provincial governments in this comment.

We certainly know that in some cases the Supreme Court has ruled on these notions of aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples. I would mention, for example, *Haida Nation v. British Columbia*, in which the Supreme Court addressed this idea of consultation with aboriginal peoples. It stipulated that in some cases, and concerning very serious issues, this consultation may mean "consent". This is important.

When we talk about the rule of law or the code of law in this country, it is important to remember what the Supreme Court had to say on that matter. The government must always act in accordance with the Constitution. That is the rule of law in Canada. This is what the Supreme Court said in *Canada (Prime Minister) v. Khadr*. The Supreme Court said that the government must act in compliance with the Constitution.

I am telling my colleagues nothing new by saying that section 35 of the Constitution addresses aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples in Canada. It is important to be always mindful of our obligations towards aboriginal peoples.

I know people often say that aboriginal issues in this country are too complex or too complicated. However, these issues do not need to be complicated or complex. What we need—and what this government is all too often lacking—is the political will of governments to deal with these issues. With political will comes political imagination.

I will just give you an example. I do not know whether my colleagues have ever had the opportunity to read the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, Canada's first modern treaty. It was signed in 1975 by the Canadian and Quebec governments and mainly the Cree and the Inuit.

Canada's first modern treaty, which is almost 500 pages long, is a very complex legal document. However, it was negotiated in just one year. This goes to show that when there is political will, when there is no choice but to resolve these issues, we are able to use political imagination.

Another important part of this debate is our relationship with aboriginal people.

Government Orders

●(1700)

I want to emphasize that too. As an aboriginal person and a lawyer, I have always insisted that the relationship between peoples and nations has to be top priority. Our relationship with aboriginal peoples here in Canada is broken. We must immediately address this matter, which is becoming increasingly urgent.

It shocks me that a government whose economic plan relies so heavily on the development of Canada's natural resources has not grasped the importance of treating aboriginal peoples as equal partners in this endeavour.

The issues of natural resources, the environment and climate change affect aboriginal people, no matter how we address them. Even in our international relations, the free trade agreements that we sign also affect aboriginal people, since such agreements often address natural resource development.

Our relations with aboriginal peoples are vital. They are the cornerstone of this country. However, the Conservatives are turning those relations into a stumbling block with their attitude, because they do not listen during consultations. It is important to point out that we need to improve our relations with aboriginal peoples because, right now, we are in a position where there is a very high risk of legal and political conflict.

It is troubling for a parliamentarian to consider that almost \$300 million is spent every year to block the rights of this country's aboriginal peoples. That is troubling. It is urgent that we take into consideration the aboriginal peoples of this country. This issue is absolutely fundamental in all discussions on almost every subject concerning the development of this country, one of the richest countries on the planet. It is important that we remember this.

Mr. Speaker, you probably know the law as well as I do, and it will be no surprise to you that, according to section 4.1 of the Department of Justice Act, every law passed by Parliament must be consistent with the charter.

However, we have reached a point where the Government of Canada must also adopt provisions to ensure that every law passed by this Parliament respects the aboriginal and treaty rights of Canada's aboriginal peoples. It is important that we start thinking about that.

In closing, we expect the government to be open to the amendments that my very skilled colleagues will propose. As I mentioned, this bill is a step in the right direction and that is a good thing.

However, there are some things missing in this bill, and we hope to fill in the blanks for the government. I hope that the people on the other side of this chamber will be open to the NDP's proposals.

●(1705)

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's speech. I do not agree with the premise of it, however, because at every major step during negotiations the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories undertook section 35 consultations with all

aboriginal groups that were affected in the Northwest Territories. Bill C-15 was developed in consultation with those groups, northerners, the territorial government and industry. Certainly, that is reflected here today.

The member talked about complexity. What is not complex is that Gwich'in, Sahtu and Tlicho land claim agreements each provide for a single land and water board in an area larger than the respective settlement areas. The restructured board division in Bill C-15 is in compliance with the settled land claim agreements and will continue with the co-management approach laid out in these agreements. Amendments to the Gwich'in, Sahtu and Tlicho land claims are not necessary. Since 2010, the chief federal negotiator has held over 50 consultation meetings with aboriginal groups and organizations, co-management boards and industry on this very issue.

Perhaps the member, given this new information, would agree with me that in fact the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories has certainly met the constitutional requirement to consult with first nations, our section 35 obligations, and that these land claim agreements specifically allow for the restructured board that is proposed in Bill C-15.

●(1710)

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, one aspect that the parliamentary secretary seems to forget in talking about consultation is the second part, which is equally important constitutionally. The obligation of the government is to consult and accommodate. They go together. That is what we seem to forget all the time when we talk about consultation, the accommodation aspect, which is equally important in this constitutional obligation. Once we have consulted, we have to take into consideration the concerns that were expressed in that consultation and fix them. That is what accommodation means. The parliamentary secretary seems to forget that aspect.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also would have to disagree with the parliamentary secretary because I have seen the consultation that the government does, not only here but in committee. There are often members, experts, academics and other stakeholders who come to committee and offer very valuable information that can enhance the legislation before us. Time after time, the Conservatives totally reject any sort of testimony from any of the individuals, whether it is from the opposition, the experts or the other stakeholders, the very people who will be affected by legislation. We have not seen even clerical or grammar mistakes being accepted from the opposition. This is the government's record and I hope my colleague will further elaborate on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The situation in parliament is quite sad. This government has had a majority for over two years, and it still very rarely accepts the amendments proposed by the opposition parties. That is sad.

Government Orders

In the past, other majority governments quite often accepted the amendments that came out of studies in committee and consultations with interest groups. That is not how it works now, and that is the problem.

Even though I think Bill C-15 is a step in the right direction, I am afraid that, unfortunately, this government will not accept the good amendments we suggest.

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I want to acknowledge all he has done by dedicating his professional life to building bridges between communities. I thank him for that.

My colleague said that results are not all that matters. How we achieve them is equally important. I would like to draw on his experience and have him tell us how we can build a better country by having communities work together.

• (1715)

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question. People often wrongly assume that aboriginal issues are of interest only to aboriginal people. That is not the case.

Getting along with aboriginal people is good for the environment. Getting along with aboriginal people is good for the country's economy. That is what the government needs to understand. As my colleague pointed out, I have spent almost my entire career building bridges between aboriginal peoples and other peoples in this country, so that we can all work together.

It is more than just a political slogan for me, as a member of the NDP. My purpose in life has been to build bridges between the peoples of this country. That is the only way this country will be able to move forward. That is something that the late Jack Layton understood.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague because I believe he has important insights that all parliamentarians would do well to appreciate, listen to and respond to.

I have the good fortune of joining my colleague on another committee. It is the committee looking into the deaths and disappearances of 600 aboriginal women. One of the things that has become very clear in that committee work is the frustration and anger we hear from first nations women about the lack of response to their situation. It seems to me that in ignoring the first nations of the Northwest Territories, we are exasperating that frustration and concern.

Would the member care to comment on the fact that we have not done a very good job of listening to the needs of the community that we owe so much to in their treatment and understanding of the land and how we can move forward as a nation?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate her mentioning the special committee for missing and murdered aboriginal women. It is one important aspect. In the entire universe, the only people who still refuse a national inquiry into the missing and murdered aboriginal women is the party on the other side. Everyone else agrees to have that national public inquiry. It is important to mention that.

The other aspect is this. I spent 25 years on aboriginal issues, here and abroad. I was part of the negotiations for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for 23 years. One thing that is always important to remember is that the stakeholders, the people who are directly concerned with these issues, should always be consulted. They should always be partners in whatever legislative actions we intend to take in the House.

• (1720)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to Bill C-15 on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North.

Bill C-15 basically has two parts. There is the part on devolution, giving more powers to the Northwest Territories. The second part is the changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. I want to speak to both parts, as well as to some of the concerns and the jubilant responses we have heard so far.

The NDP has been advocating for devolution for many years. It is very unfortunate that the Liberals, for many years when they were in government, failed to give more real power to local authorities so they could manage their own resources and their own affairs at the local level. The Liberals and the Conservatives have failed for many years to do that.

We can talk about treaties. The Conservatives, except for a few, have basically failed to negotiate any sort of treaty with the first nations. Businesses like to have certainty. We know that where there is disputed land, where aboriginal rights are not being looked after, the development of the land and making useful use of that land is hindered, as is economic development. The Conservative government has not taken any steps to resolve those treaty issues with the first nations.

Devolution is a good thing that we will support. This will allow local government to make good decisions at the provincial and territorial levels. I will talk about the second component in a second.

If we want to see a prosperous northern Canada, it is important for us to work with not only the Northwest Territories government and other governments, including the Yukon government, but we need to involve other stakeholders, to ensure that all of their concerns are taken into account.

Looking at the Conservative government's record, it is pretty clear that it usually fails to consult all of the relevant parties and stakeholders that would bring valuable information into the making of legislation and would have a positive impact for those stakeholders.

I spoke about this earlier, but the Conservative government, on the consultation part, should actually listen to people and act on some of those things that make sense. At the committee stage, which is where, after there are initial speeches in House, we go to hear some expert testimony. We hear from academics and stakeholders who will be directly impacted by the legislation being considered.

What happens at the committees? We hear from the experts, who offer very valuable information, so we can make some amendments. However, time after time, the opposition offers amendments, consults with stakeholders and the Conservatives, and I will use the words of the independent member for Edmonton—St. Albert, act like trained seals. The Conservative members are told by the PMO what to do, who is going to vote and how they are going to be voting. Even grammatical changes that are pointed out by opposition members are not considered. That is the record of the Conservative government in regard to consultation.

• (1725)

I have a letter here that I would like to get entered into the record. This letter was written by the K'at'l'odeeche First Nation, based in the Hay River Dene reserve in the Northwest Territories. It was written to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

The KFN continues to have three main concerns about the proposed changes to the MVRMA. Basically, the three concerns that they have are about the dismantling of the regional land and water boards, and about the establishment of fixed time limits for environmental assessment and regulatory approvals, and they also have some concerns about increased ministerial authority.

We have seen a trend here, whether it is with immigration, public safety or the Minister of Justice. It is no different in this bill. What the government has tried to do over the years, including the two and a half years that I have been here, is constantly to provide ministerial powers, taking them away from boards and people who are out on the ground, who actually consult and who live at the local level. The Conservatives have a habit of bringing in legislation that brings more and power to Ottawa.

I have talked about this. I have talked about more and more power for Conservative ministers, individuals, to make choices. We need to make sure that power is with the people. People at the local level make the right decisions.

We also saw this with the bill on InSite. The government wants to bring that power to Ottawa so that ministers can make the decisions, when we should be making them in the community. Let the communities decide, where the experts and health care professionals reside. The police and the RCMP live there and deal with these things on a daily basis. However that is for another time.

I know that some of the members are not happy about this, but it is the truth. The Conservative government has been trying to centralize powers to individual ministers. We have seen the mistakes that could be made with those kinds of powers.

There are many other concerns and there are some good comments with regard to devolution. There are a number of stakeholders, people from the Northwest Territories, who have welcomed changes for more powers to the Northwest Territories. They have been waiting for 50 years.

I know that my friends in the corner over there talk about one thing when they are not in government: they will talk about the things we talk about. However, when it comes to being in government, they totally ignore those things. That is the Liberal record.

Private Members' Business

We know how the Conservatives have dragged their feet on a number of aboriginal issues, whether it is education, housing for first nations or getting treaties with first nations so we can bring certainty to, live in harmony with and provide education for young people living on reserves. Unfortunately, the Conservative record is very poor. Actually it is not poor; I do not even have a word for it. I think if I did, it would not be parliamentary, so I would not say it. The Conservatives have a very poor record and they have failed to deliver for our first nations.

Canadians expect us to work together with first nations so that they can have education and clean water. Unfortunately, the record of the Conservative government is not there.

I know I do not have much time here. The devolution of powers to the Northwest Territories is a good thing. I hope that the Conservatives will listen to some of the concerns coming in from the Northwest Territories and that we can make some amendments at the committee stage.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Surrey North will have 10 minutes plus 10 minutes in questions and comments when the debate on this bill resumes.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

OBESITY

The House resumed from October 17 consideration of the motion.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion speaks to obesity, which has become a national problem in Canada. It talks about the long-term health risks, which we all know, and it talks about supporting, promoting and funding organizations and individuals who are involved in the physical well-being of Canadians.

This is something that is motherhood, and we obviously support it.

However, I want to say that if we are going to talk about funding people and organizations involved in physical activity—because we know there are two things that can deal with obesity: one is obviously eating properly and eating well and the second is daily physical exercise—we need to have very clear standards for those organizations and very clear certification for the people who would be doing training or actually directing the physical activity programs, because this is not a case where someone can say, “I am fit and, therefore, I am capable of helping other people be fit”.

Private Members' Business

The whole concept of kinesiology, which is the art of exercise and how exercise works, is something that needs to be certificated. It is very important because an individual could be hurt by people if they give the wrong exercises to do, if we were to let just anybody hang out a shingle.

In principle, this is a very good idea. However, I think there need to be some very clear accountability structures, certification structures and training structures attached to something like this.

There is no one answer. We know that diet is one good way, how we eat, et cetera, and we know that physical activity is a second. Just dealing with physical activity and not dealing with the whole issue of how we eat and what we eat that tends to increase the amount of obesity, is something I wanted to talk about.

It would have been an interesting if the motion had in it the whole concept of food, how we eat and what we eat.

We know that many people in Canada today eat a lot of processed foods. With both adults in the family working, they are unable to come home and put a meal on the table as they used to in the old days. They bring home processed foods that they can quickly cook, foods that can be cooked in the microwave in five minutes, et cetera, and one of the reasons processed foods are a vehicle for eating poorly is that they contain high amounts of sodium and trans fats.

Now, the government has the ability to ensure—and has been advised since 2007 to do so by advisory panels—that we have the minimum levels of trans fats and sodium shown on the labels, because Canadians eat twice the normal sodium levels and there is a fair amount of foods that contain trans fats. It would be simple thing to mandate the industry. It is a great piece of health promotion and disease prevention. I understand the Minister of Health made a speech to the Canadian Medical Association in the summer, talking about the interest of the current government in health promotion and disease prevention.

This is like falling off a log. The health department wants to do this, the advisory committees to the minister have wanted to do it since 2007 and it still has not been done.

I would have liked to see both prongs dealt with.

There is a saying that for every problem there is a simple and neat solution. That is wrong. Simple and neat does not always answer the problems of complexity. Especially in disease and health, we know that complex factors create illness and complex factors create health.

However, we really have to be concerned. That is why we are supporting the principle of this particular motion. Children ages 2 to 17 in this country have an obesity rate of 26%, which is up from 15% in 1979; youth ages 12 to 17 have an even higher rate of 29%; and first nations' children have an obesity rate of 41%. We have all these children who will be growing up to be an adult generation with type 2 diabetes, heart disease and risk of stroke. We know that these children are not going to live as long as their parents. The whole idea of progress in health is to ensure that we have people in future generations who are going to live longer than we did.

This is a really sad indictment on what is happening in Canada. High cholesterol is a huge problem because of eating a lot of trans fats. These are some of the things we have to talk about.

• (1735)

What is most concerning, though, about the increasing rate of obesity in Canada, is that not just the rates are increasing but actually the type of obesity. We are finding more people with morbidly rated obesity, people who are so large that they are at imminent risk of getting disease. It is one thing to be 10 to 15 pounds overweight; it is one thing to say "I could lose up to 10% of my weight". However, we are seeing morbidly obese people now, morbidly obese children. I know it is a combination of poor eating and lack of activity. Of course, we well know that progress has led us to this point where kids sit around and play computer games and watch TV and do everything except go outside and play.

We know that we have worked with the provinces to talk about one hour of quality physical activity in the schools every day. In 1980, I was chair of the council on health promotion and disease prevention of the British Columbia Medical Association. In 1980, we were asking for the Province of British Columbia to bring in one hour of quality daily physical activity to the schools. It only happened about five years ago, which is a long time, and that is a whole generation of people and kids who did not get the benefit of having that opportunity not to be obese.

We notice, for reasons we do not understand, that in the Atlantic provinces the obesity rates are higher than anywhere else in Canada. Obviously, in the north the obesity rates are higher than everywhere else in Canada because of the high populations of Inuit aboriginal people where we see 41% obesity in children.

We studied obesity in the parliamentary health committee about eight years ago. We came up with beautiful recommendations and nothing has happened. So there has to be political will. A very good friend of mine who is a public health physician asked me one day if I knew what is the biggest determinant of health. I asked what. He said the biggest determinant of health is political will. When there is not the political will to do the things that must be done to make Canadians healthy or to improve their health, it is not going to happen.

As I said, this is a good motion. One cannot not support the motion. It is a very supportable motion. However, it only deals with one problem. It deals with the physical activity problem and it does not deal with the problem that is in the government's grasp. There is no need for legislation. The Governor in Council can just say it is going to do this, that this is a policy and then mandate the levels of salt and trans fats in our foods. Let us educate. The Canada food guide goes out to parents. Parents often do not know how to interpret it. They have to go and read labels in the stores, and most of them do not understand what the labels are really saying because the labels say "x calories per", and they do not know how many grams are in it and they have to do the math. People want simple labelling, so they can reach onto shelves and get the food they need for their children without looking at whether those children are going to be obese or be put at risk for high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Private Members' Business

The problem here as well is a very real one in terms of the delivery of medicare. We know that obesity results in economic costs of approximately \$7.1 billion a year. If we could halve that and take \$3 billion to put into promotion and disease prevention at the front end of the health care system, just imagine what a difference that would make.

This is a motion that is supportable. I would have liked to see some teeth in it. I would have liked to see it come up with certification and ensuring that people who are going to be delivering kinesiology and exercise programs are qualified and know what they are doing. However, I find that I cannot not support this. I support the motion.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to my friend and colleague from Burlington's motion, which brings an important public health issue to the forefront of debate. The motion speaks to the important public health issue of obesity and the physical well-being of all Canadians. It is both timely and relevant.

Obesity levels among Canadians continue to be extremely high. The World Health Organization declared in 2011 that obesity is a global epidemic and it is facing us now. In Canada, the social and economic impacts of obesity are considerable.

Statistics show us that obesity accounts for losses totalling billions of dollars, but this does not tell the entire story. Obesity often leads to major chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, so when we factor in the costs to our health and productivity, we see that the cost to our economy is far greater. We cannot ignore the significant human costs, such as reduced quality of life and social stigma, just to name two. If left unchecked, the economic and social impact of obesity will continue to grow with irreversible consequences for all Canadians.

As such, our government is acting. We brought in the children's fitness tax credit to encourage families to keep their kids active. Keeping with the theme in budget 2013, we eliminated tariffs on sports and athletic equipment. We are working with our partners to promote healthy weights for all Canadians. We fully support the motion and invite colleagues from all sides of the House to join us.

Our government is committed to continuing to do our part and working with our partners to curb obesity rates. I would like to expand on the partnership approach we are taking and the role we are playing.

There is no doubt that societal challenges like obesity rely on many to take action. Complex public health issues such as this one simply defy single solution approaches. No one government or institution alone can make the changes needed to curb obesity rates at a societal level. Solutions cannot be developed in isolation from the needs of communities and families.

There is also no doubt that federal leadership is an essential element of mobilizing all sectors of society around a common objective. Mobilizing all segments of society—communities, academia, the charitable and not-for-profit sector and the private sector—needs to happen too. The good news is that all governments and a growing number of other stakeholders in the private and public

sectors agree that complementary and coordinated action is necessary.

The government's approach to supporting new ideas delivered in new ways with direct results for Canadians is rooted in the values we share as Canadians, working together for better health outcomes for all Canadians. Our approach allows partners to leverage knowledge, expertise, reach and resources. With this in mind, I would like to expand on several of the important aspects of our approach.

First, we are working in partnership with the private sector to leverage new resources and ideas, and to expand the reach of our programs. For example, the government has recently partnered with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and Sun Life Financial through a matched-dollar funding arrangement. This collaboration is expanding "Get BUSY!", a program to increase physical activity and healthy eating opportunities for children and youth in community Boys and Girls Clubs.

The government has also partnered with LoyaltyOne to jointly support the Air Miles-YMCA physical activity program, an innovative, incentive-based program that is exploring new ways of getting Canadians active and keeping them active over the long term. In less than a year, we have leveraged over \$2 million in private sector investment. This is a positive story from a taxpayer perspective.

Second, innovation is at the centre of our approach. Supporting and promoting new programs and models that are proven to be effective is the goal. We are not reinventing the wheel. We are challenging ourselves and others to innovate and adapt so that the models that have the greatest impact are available to Canadians.

To encourage our partners to work together, we also need to be a good partnership facilitator. Through the Public Health Agency of Canada, a redesigned approach to funding programs was recently launched. The agency is inviting eligible organizations to submit their ideas on effective ways to address obesity, promote healthy living and prevent chronic disease. These ideas are the foundation for partnership discussions, both with the agency and with others who may have submitted similar or complementary ideas. The continuous intake of partnership ideas allows us to be more responsive and support innovative interventions that are at a stage of readiness to make a difference. In other words, we are better able to strike while the iron is hot.

● (1740)

By joining the best ideas with the resources that are needed, we are confident that we will get at the root causes of obesity. Ultimately everyone's goal is to help Canadians overcome barriers to healthy living and prevent chronic disease. These aspects of our work showcase our leadership role and role as a catalyst for innovation. Indeed, since 2006, our government has invested nearly \$200 million for obesity-related research.

Private Members' Business

Another important aspect of our approach relates to the ongoing commitment to accountability for the use of public funds. To achieve greater accountability for results, projects will only be considered where funding can be tied to the completion of measurable results. Performance expectations for each partnership are predetermined and milestones are established in advance.

Recognizing that investments in public health take time to achieve results, this ensures we support only those partnerships that aim to achieve long-term, lasting and, most important, effective results. It is also important to note that a key aspect of our approach involves supporting partnerships that use an integrated style to address common risk factors for obesity and other chronic diseases.

Every year in Canada 67% of all deaths are caused by four major chronic diseases: cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases. What is more, these diseases share common risk factors that, if addressed in an integrated way, can be mitigated.

Chronic diseases can be prevented and their onset delayed. In 2011, at a United Nations high-level meeting, Canada signed the "Political declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases" in which four common risk factors were identified for chronic disease.

These common risk factors include: physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, tobacco use and harmful use of alcohol. This integrated approach to supporting innovative multi-sectoral partnerships allows us to bring a greater number of partners into the fold, partners whose expertise and knowledge can help us address a range of risk factors in an integrated way. The result is that our partnerships can do a better job at creating the conditions in communities to help make the healthier choice an easier choice. This builds on the work that our government has done to ensure that Canadians have access to the information they need to make healthy food choices for their families.

Our approach to creating innovative multi-sectoral partnerships is the right way to go. More importantly, it is showing great promise in rallying a broad range of partners whose responsibility or interest is to tackle obesity as a critical public health issue. As a result, this government is well placed in continuing to support, promote and fund organizations and individuals who are taking innovative approaches to promote the physical well-being of all Canadians. What is more, these partnerships are fostering social innovation and helping to keep the reduction of obesity on the public agenda as a health priority.

In conclusion, as we continue to move forward, we will continue our efforts to generate and leverage new resources, apply innovative approaches, remain focused on accountability and improve our success by addressing common risk factors for obesity. This is why my hon. friend from Burlington's motion, which is before us today, is so important and so timely. It reminds us that consistent innovation is required as we continue to fight obesity and improve health outcomes for all Canadians.

I would like to thank and congratulate my colleague, the member for Burlington, for bringing the motion forward.

Finally, I invite all members of the House to support this very important motion. I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today about the important issue of reducing obesity among Canadians.

• (1745)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the motion. I would like to thank the member for Burlington for bringing it forward. I do not think he will get much argument on the value or the intent of the motion.

I have listened to both of my colleagues speak to the issue and I would like to add my voice to this.

First, I would like to put my own thought process out there.

In my previous life as an actor, in building a character, one of the things that was very important in that process was justification for the things that were done. If I was moving from point A to point B, why would I do that? I bring this up because I think we need to look at why we are doing this. It is one thing to put a motion forward to say that we need to be aware of obesity, but it is another thing to say that we need to be aware of obesity and take certain steps to combat it.

I have been hearing much talk about activity, and yes, activity is hugely important in all health issues. For obesity, heart and stroke, whatever, activity is extremely important. However, there is one thing that was missed, which I will put on the table now and come back to. We have also talked about trans fats and salt, but nobody has mentioned the sugar content in food.

We have a situation where the prevalence of obesity has dramatically increased, especially in our young people. It has almost doubled in some cases and quadrupled in other cases. We have one in 10 children who are affected by obesity in one respect or another. Therefore, 10% of children will go on to be obese, not simply because of the fact that they are obese as children but because of the habits they adopt as children, which will follow them throughout their lives.

One child in 14 is getting one hour of physical activity a day. Once upon a time, we used to get up and go out to play, but now we get up and play on the Xbox and whatnot.

However, I will go back to the sugar factor. The risk factors for obesity include inadequate housing, social exclusion and various social influences. They create a situation where people, young and old, have to resort to fast food, microwavable foods, processed and prepared foods, as a means of putting food on the table.

I am type 2 diabetic. I was diagnosed in 1997. I have treated it on and off over the years. In the last few months I had some issues and I have effectively lost vision in my right eye due to diabetic retinopathy.

Sugar is in processed foods to the nth degree. Some people say it is addictive because one just cannot get enough. However, if there is one cause directly linked to diabetes, type 1 or type 2, it is the intake of sugar and the body's ability to process it. This is particularly a problem within certain socio-economic groups because of their reliance on prepared and processed foods.

Private Members' Business

● (1750)

In combatting obesity, activity is one of the things we need to encourage, but we also need to look at food intake. Government is not here to legislate what people should or should not eat, but what it can do is take a leadership role in ensuring that people are well informed as to what they are putting into their bodies. Yes, there are little squares on the sides of packets and so forth that inform us about caloric value, or what is in a bottle of juice or the food that we eat, but people do not always understand how to read those things. One thing we can do is create an environment where people can become informed about the value of the food being eaten.

It is said that four grams of sugar represents one sugar cube, which means a bottle of juice, which is said to be healthy, can have 42 grams of sugar in it. That is basically drinking 10 sugar cubes. People do not know this. They look at the calories, they look to see that there is no fat in it, they look to see that there might be a bit of protein in it, but they do not look for the sugar content. This is something that contributes to type 2 diabetes, in particular. This is something that hits the people living in the lower socio-economic world most directly, because in their world, where they have one or two jobs, both parents are working, kids are trying to get to school, parents want to get them in and out and they have to be fed, it is easier to give them \$10 or \$15 to go to McDonald's or keep a load of frozen dinners in the fridge.

First, we need to take a leadership role in informing people about the food they are eating. Second, we need to take a leadership role in mandating that companies that make processed food clearly identify what is in their food in such a way that it can help parents make the proper choices for their kids. Activity and food intake is important and understanding what we are putting into our bodies is important. Those are the first few steps in combatting obesity: better awareness of what we are doing; better awareness of the properties in food; and better awareness of what is available to people.

● (1755)

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure to stand today to speak in support of the motion before us, which was introduced by my wonderful colleague, the hon. member for Burlington.

The motion encourages our government to recognize the health risks and the cost of obesity; to support, promote, and fund organizations and individuals who are involved in the physical well-being of Canadians; and to make the reduction of obesity among Canadians a public health priority. I could not concur more.

Just as the hon. member on the other side of the House has spoken very eloquently on how he is battling diabetes, I think it is fairly well known that my family has been troubled by diabetes. My father passed away almost 20 years ago to this day from complications from diabetes. His legs were amputated three times. He had profound gangrene. He had a pacemaker. The fact that he simply did not take his diabetes seriously is really what we believe terminated his life in the end.

We know that addressing obesity is critical to supporting the health of Canadians. Rates of obesity have increased significantly in the past 25 years. Our Conservative government has acted in the face of this distinct challenge. For instance, we introduced the fitness

credit for children, making it easier and more affordable for kids to go out and play and stay active. We built on this success further in budget 2013 through our elimination of tariffs on sports and athletic equipment.

Despite all of this good work, the motion before us recognizes that there is no quick fix. To achieve change, all sectors in our society must work together.

Obesity puts Canadians at greater risk of having chronic diseases, including hypertension, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer. Three out of five Canadians live with a chronic disease.

We also know that in addition to the significant personal burden of living with obesity, it is an important driver of health care expenses and lost productivity. Supporting health promotion and disease prevention efforts, as this motion does, would contribute to the health and well-being of Canadians and to the sustainability of the health care system.

This motion before us provides an opportunity to reaffirm our government's commitment to advance tangible actions aimed at encouraging healthy weight.

It is well known to my colleagues that obesity is complex. As such, it requires thoughtful solutions. Moreover, there are multiple factors that contribute to obesity. Today I would like to draw attention to the components of the motion that address healthy eating and improving the well-being of Canadians.

A key aspect of promoting healthy weight is helping Canadians make healthy food choices and improving access to healthy foods.

As a proud mom to a wonderful little eight-year-old boy named Jeffrey, I can say that it is quite a challenge to stay informed about healthy food choices and also to lovingly encourage my child to make those healthy food choices.

Communities need support to increase access to healthy foods for Canadian families. Healthy eating is fundamental to good health and healthy weights. It is necessary across one's lifespan, from prenatal and early childhood years to later life stages.

Healthy eating is equally important in reducing the risk of developing many chronic diseases. A poor diet is a known factor in increasing some cancers, as I mentioned, in heart disease and in type 2 diabetes. It influences body weight and can put Canadians at risk for obesity. That is why our government is working to make healthy eating an easier choice for Canadians. It is an important element of this government's broader chronic disease prevention and health promotion initiatives.

We know that this can be achieved through collective action with partners, including our provincial and territorial colleagues. In 2010, federal, provincial, and territorial governments endorsed the Declaration on Prevention and Promotion, declaring disease prevention a priority and health promotion a hallmark of our health system in Canada. Governments have also committed to advance, as a tangible first step, "Curbing Childhood Obesity: A Federal, Provincial and Territorial Framework for Action to Promote Healthy Weights".

Private Members' Business

•(1800)

These are important initiatives that in partnership with other sectors will create the conditions for good health and support individuals in adopting healthy lifestyles. Under these initiatives, specific actions are highlighted to support healthy eating, such as providing high-quality nutrition information and tools to Canadians, supporting families and their communities by making healthy foods more accessible, and investing in research to discover and implement new and effective ways to improve health. Together these actions, as supported through this motion, are helping to create a comprehensive approach to healthy eating, obesity reduction, and the prevention of chronic disease.

Our government is also pleased to be supporting the healthy eating awareness and education initiative. This initiative helps improve consumers' understanding of nutritional information to support them in making healthier food choices. As an example of working together, through this initiative we collaborate with provincial and territorial organizations, the food industry, and not-for-profit organizations to help Canadians understand and use the nutritional facts panel on the back of packaged foods.

We are doing even more. In March 2013, we extended the reach of this campaign by launching the Eat Well Campaign. In many grocery stores across Canada, people will see healthy eating messages. This is a partnership with the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, Food and Consumer Products of Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Dieticians of Canada, and other organizations. It helps parents and children to be better informed about healthier eating habits.

Our government also develops and promotes "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" and its complementary, culturally tailored partner "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide—First Nations, Inuit and Métis". It is a very popular guide for Canadians that provides evidence-based information about how much food Canadians need and what types of foods are better, and it emphasizes the importance of physical activity.

We are also committed to supporting families and investing in communities. That starts with moms and dads. We are providing funding to organizations and individuals to develop and implement community-driven approaches to support healthy eating and healthy living.

One of the key areas of focus in our community-based programs is healthy living efforts in northern and aboriginal communities, including work to improve the accessibility of nutritious foods. Through Nutrition North Canada, we increase the supply and reduce the cost of nutritious food in remote communities across Canada's north. Subsidies are provided to retailers to bring in nutritious perishable foods such as fruits, vegetables, bread, meat, milk, and eggs at a lower cost. Traditional foods are also featured prominently in the Nutrition North Canada program. This is important as foods like Arctic char, muskox, and caribou are important sources of nutrients and play a key role in northerners' diets and culture.

Education is also a key component of Nutrition North Canada. Activities like cooking classes, in-store taste tests, and meal planning can increase cooking skills and the consumption of healthy food.

Anything that we do to make things easier is obviously going to achieve greater results.

We are proud of our community-led planning for growing, harvesting, and preparing healthy foods. That is part of this health promotion initiative. In addition, Aboriginal Head Start is an important program that helps children have the healthiest possible start in life. This program provides meals, snacks and nutrition advice while helping to address the developmental needs of first nations children.

Our government is also committed to helping other vulnerable families. Our investment in the Canada prenatal nutrition program provides support to improve the health and well-being of pregnant women, new moms, and babies facing challenging life circumstances.

•(1805)

As well, the Public Health Agency of Canada's innovation strategy is funding a focus on addressing the underlying social and economic conditions that affect healthy weights.

I think members will agree that our Conservative government is very focused on providing healthy eating options for our families and on fighting obesity.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the motion on preventing obesity. I also wish to commend the hon. member for Burlington, who moved the motion.

I will take a moment to read the motion, so that my constituents can understand the context. It reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should continue to: (a) recognize the long-term health risks and costs of obesity in Canada; (b) support, promote and fund organizations and individuals who are involved in the physical well-being of Canadians; and (c) make the reduction of obesity of Canadians a public health priority.

I am very happy to read that, and I will definitely be supporting this motion. However, once again, the Conservatives are bringing forward a motion without any real teeth.

I would like to talk about the meaningful action the NDP has taken on this. The NDP has been working on this for the past 10 years or so. I would like to share some alarming figures I came across in my research on this.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, between 25% and 35% of Canadians are obese. Among children under the age of 17, about 10% are obese. The annual health-related cost is between \$4.6 billion and \$7.1 billion. I find those figures and this situation very troubling.

Private Members' Business

I will explain what the NDP has been doing. It all started in 2004, when the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre moved a private member's motion to regulate trans fats in food. The House unanimously adopted the motion. Since then, the government has done nothing tangible with it. It has not proposed any measures.

In 2011, the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre introduced Bill C-303, to amend the Food and Drugs Act in order to limit trans fats in food to a maximum of 2 g per 100 g.

The hon. member for Vancouver East introduced Bill C-460, An Act respecting the implementation of the Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada.

Roughly three weeks ago, the minister appeared before the Standing Committee on Health. I asked him the same questions. I asked him why Canada still did not have any measures to deal with trans fats. Canada does not have a national sodium reduction strategy.

I have been listening very carefully to all the speeches in the House today. The Conservatives keep talking more about physical activity than about food, which I think is too bad. Physical activity is very important, but what we eat accounts for 80% of our physical health, while exercise accounts for 20%.

This brings me to my story. The reason I wanted to speak to this bill is that I am obese. In fact, I recently found out that I am morbidly obese. The alarming thing is that roughly 75% of all obese children will remain obese for the rest of their lives. They will be obese in adulthood.

By the way, my colleague is not listening to me even though he is here in the House and this is his bill.

According to my calculations, in this House there are 40 or so obese people out of a total of 300 MPs. Despite that, the member who introduced the bill did not even take the time to consult us. I think that is a shame.

The Conservative member for Ottawa—Orléans moved Motion No. 319 to combat childhood obesity, but nothing tangible has been done. For the past hour or so, the Conservatives have been saying that their greatest achievement is the children's fitness tax credit. Parents who spend \$500 to register their children for physical activity can receive a \$75 tax credit per child.

I want to talk about myself some more. As my colleagues know, I have a weight problem. When I was young, I did not play any team sports. When you are big, you feel bad about yourself. It is not pleasant. Many people are bullied because of their size. When I was young, I was always picked last during gym class. I was not even able to run two kilometres when the teacher asked us to.

• (1810)

The Conservatives say that they are helping youth by encouraging them to get involved in sports. However, there is more to the issue than that.

The parliamentary secretary told us about his father, yet I do not think that the Conservatives really understand the situation.

Nothing in the motion I have here talks about the psychological effects of being obese. There is nothing in the motion about going to speak to youth, motivating them and helping them overcome this problem. There is nothing about giving parents the tools to help their children.

Nutrition is extremely important. It is all well and good to talk about labelling, but nothing is being done to reduce sodium or trans fats. Not everyone at the grocery store reads the little labels to see what is in their food. When I asked the minister about that, she said that we could not coddle people. This is a serious issue right now, and if we do not give those people real help, we will not solve the problem. In Canada today, there are 40% more obese people than there were 30 years ago, and that number is on the rise.

Obviously, I am going to support my colleague's motion, but I would really prefer that the member not introduce it by saying that 25% of people in his riding are obese, so the government is going to do a little something and talk about it without really implementing any practical measures. I would like this motion to go farther.

Unfortunately, all too often, the Conservatives focus on a cure rather than prevention. That is what we have seen from the beginning. Since I have been here, the government has always talked about cures. The Conservatives think that they can talk about obesity and people will miraculously lose 100 pounds. That is the feeling I get from this motion.

I wanted to talk about bullying. I have been an MP for two and a half years and not a week goes by that I do not receive an email from a constituent telling me that I am too fat to be an MP. A few months ago, someone wrote to me and told me that MPs are supposed to be models. That person added that I was about 300 pounds too heavy and that I should resign.

When someone says that to me, I certainly do not say to myself that he is right and that this morning I am going to look at the nutrition labels to keep him happy.

This motion is important. We need to take it extremely seriously. I really hope that, as a result of this motion, the Conservatives will actually implement measures to reduce obesity in our society. This is a problem I have struggled with my whole life. I struggled with it when I was young and I am still struggling with it. There is a reporter here every week talking about what the MPs are wearing. That is another thing. It is a lot more expensive to buy clothing when you are overweight. People do not realize the extent of the problem.

Since I see him every day, I would have been pleased if the member had come to ask me what I thought about his motion, whether it was good, whether it was missing anything, what could be done, and so on. We could have worked together for once.

I will stop there and end by saying that I hope that the Conservatives will not think only about sports, which are important, but also about nutrition, because I do not see them making much progress in that regard. I hope that they will also think about the impact that this has on people's lives. If we do not act now and if the Conservatives fail to make progress in this area, this problem will result in huge health costs and will have a serious impact on the motivation and self-esteem of people struggling with it.

Private Members' Business

•(1815)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I have to acknowledge the excellent speech by my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. I sincerely thank her. She showed that obesity is a tragedy that affects people every day.

Obesity influences not just people's physical health but also their mental health. I am proud of my colleague. She has held her head high in this chamber to talk to us openly about her own experience.

I represent the riding of LaSalle—Émard, which is next to the riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. Montreal's public health branch recently conducted a study that revealed that there are so-called food deserts on the Island of Montreal, particularly on the West Island of Montreal.

These deserts exist across Canada and are places where there is not a grocery store every 500 metres. People who live there cannot access a grocery store without the use of a car or public transit. Therefore, people do not have access to healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables.

There are food deserts in my riding. In these areas, access to fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables is limited. Access to public transit is often inadequate and these are generally poor areas. Therefore, people who do not have cars often have to shop at corner stores, which only sell foods that cause obesity.

Fortunately, we have community organizations such as the Maison d'entraide St-Paul et Émard and the Table de développement social de LaSalle. During the summer, these organizations run a small public market where people can buy affordable fruits and vegetables, as well as arranging community kitchens and outreach activities. I am taking this opportunity in the House to recognize their work.

There are also Nutri-Centre and Pro-Vert, which organize a community garden. People can grow fruit and vegetables and then regularly take part in a community kitchen and a meal. I commend these organizations that fight against obesity in their own way.

I would also like to recognize the member for Burlington's hard work on Motion No. 425. We support this motion because the health of Canadians has always been a priority for the NDP.

Our members have worked tirelessly for over 10 years to present initiatives with a view to taking meaningful action to tackle obesity in our communities. We have proposed tangible strategies to restrict certain factors that lead to rising rates of obesity. We have discussed various initiatives, particularly with regard to food.

•(1820)

We must not give up. Obesity is increasing in Canada and, moreover, it is also linked to the economy.

Some people either cannot afford to buy a grocery basket of healthy foods or simply do not have access to places where these foods are sold. We must not ignore the economic aspect of this rising rate of obesity. We must fight this scourge by continuing to combat poverty and providing access to healthy foods.

We must also encourage community organizations such as the Maison d'entraide St-Paul et Émard, the Table de développement

social de LaSalle, Nutri-Centre, Pro-Vert Sud-Ouest and other community organizations that work so hard to ensure that people in all areas have access to healthy foods.

•(1825)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Burlington will have five minutes for reply.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to my motion, Motion No. 425, in the last couple of minutes. Hopefully, I will not take all my five minutes.

I would like to thank each and every one of my fellow parliamentarians who spoke on the issue. I heard some comments about how the motion did not go far enough and how it did not have enough teeth in terms of what the solutions were. To be frank, I do not have the solutions.

I appreciate the presentation this evening by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, who also made the point that there could have been more in this motion. However, the fact is, in a very personal presentation on the issue of what this motion would deal with in obesity, I really appreciate the efforts the member made in being here and speaking to the issue.

I brought forward this issue in because of a personal matter. Coming to Ottawa, I gained 30 or maybe 40 pounds. I was not eating healthily. I was participating in all the receptions that go on around here. I was diagnosed with diabetes, as I said in my first speech.

At the time of my first hour, I had two grandmothers who were 96. One passed away between this speech and the last, but we have long life in my family. I thought I was invincible, but none of us are.

The purpose of the motion was to get into a conversation and continue it on all sides of the House about what we needed to do about the issue of obesity and health. For me, physical activity is only one component. I agree with everyone's comments that physical activity is only one component of solving this issue. It is an area where I happen to be able to run marathons and take up running. I have been able to accomplish and challenge myself and to overcome some of my difficulties with obesity and being overweight using physical fitness and better eating habits.

I am encouraging the government to continue to work on this, make it a priority for public health and continue to work with organizations and other government levels to make it happen at all levels. We cannot provide every program federally. We need support from community groups, from other political levels and from other governments to make things happen.

I would appreciate everyone supporting the motion. I hope we continue this conversation after the motion is hopefully passed. The issue of obesity in our children and our health is not just important for individuals; it is also important for their families and for our health care system. I would appreciate everyone's support.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

Adjournment Motion

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT MOTION

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

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this debate is a follow-up to the question I asked in the House on October 23, when we learned that the CEO of Rio Tinto Alcan was advising the government about the merger of what was formerly CIDA with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

I want to begin my brief speech by being very clear. I have nothing against trade; however, it is just one aspect of international relations. Peace, security, our partnerships with various countries, good governance, development and human rights are also important aspects of our country's global interests. Unfortunately, the Conservatives' ridiculously narrow approach to international relations will hurt Canada in the short and medium terms. Our reputation is already suffering. Our traditional and potential partners are looking at us with increasing doubt and skepticism.

Last week, we saw this narrow approach in the announcement that all of Canada's diplomatic resources would now be devoted to trade. It is as though expanding trade did not also require peace, stability and development, to name just a few factors. It is as though we did not already have excellent trade officers. During my career, I have had the pleasure of working with many trade officers. They are extraordinary people. They do fantastic work. It is their mandate and they are paid for that.

We have seen this narrow approach, which sometimes turns into magical thinking, in a new direction for our development programs. This is a direction that has been in effect for some time now and it is troubling, to say the least. For example, when I hear the former minister of international development say that the purpose of Canada's international co-operation is to open up markets for Canada, I wonder. I wonder whether he knows Canadian law, because the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act is very clear. It says that Canada's approach to official development assistance is to focus on poverty reduction, take into account the perspectives of the poor and be consistent with international human rights standards.

The government is turning the entire process on its head. Rather than assessing development needs and determining how we might use private enterprises, corporations, civil society organizations or others to meet those needs, the government is focusing on the needs

of industry and thinking that this will automatically affect the poor. The law is very clear: we must take into account the perspectives of the poor. However, the government is providing more assistance to countries where we have commercial interests and it is no longer providing assistance to countries like Niger.

After allowing the gun lobby to dictate our policy on the arms trade, are the Conservatives going to allow the mining industry to determine our foreign aid policy?

● (1830)

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to respond to the question from the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Private sector companies have a vital role to play in advancing Canada's global development objectives. In fact, the question that the member opposite should be asking is not whether we should be engaging with the private sector, but instead how—how can Canada's partnership with the private sector yield the best possible results for the world's poor?

Kyle Matthews is senior deputy director of the Will to Intervene project at the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University. He had this to say, reported on November 2 by the *Ottawa Citizen*:

...we cannot exclude the private sector. The Canadian aid “shake up” is an opportunity to innovate and modernize....

...Canada can open up a space that will allow a whole new generation of international development practitioners and organizations to emerge and strengthen our aid program.

The simple fact of the matter is this: few other sectors are as well equipped to create the sustainable economic growth required to help people go from dependency to self-sufficiency.

Meaningful jobs, better education and training and improved health and nutrition for mothers and children can all lead to an increased likelihood of overcoming poverty. These are all increasingly attainable when the private sector is better connected to global development efforts.

These are not new conclusions. Just last summer, the President of Guinea wrote in an open letter that the future will, for his country, among other things, “...be built on healthy partnerships between government and the private sector...”.

The ever-popular humanitarian and musician Bono agrees: “Aid is just a stopgap. Commerce [and] entrepreneurial capitalism take more people out of poverty than aid”.

The same idea applies in other developing countries, many of them where Canada has a strong development presence and where investments from Canadian private industry can make an incredible difference. We must capitalize on that.

With weak domestic private sectors and insufficient tools and policies in place to encourage private sector-led economic growth, many developing countries are losing out on the opportunities that a robust private sector can create. It does not have to be this way.

Adjournment Motion

However, to counter these missed opportunities, to get the best results for the world's poor and vulnerable, we must approach development from a new angle. This means engaging all possible actors to capitalize on the expertise each brings to the table.

Our government's partnership with the private sector has already had positive results for many around the world. For example, our government works along with Teck and the Micronutrient Initiative to support the Zinc Alliance for Child Health. This partnership supports the development of zinc treatment programs to improve nutrition and help save children's lives.

Our government also works with World Vision Canada and Barrick Gold via the Building Collaboration for Sustainable Economic Growth in Peru project, to increase income and standards of living of families working within mining operations.

This will ultimately help to strengthen the new Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. Most important, it will help to better define the role that Canada's private sector can and must play to advance Canadian development objectives abroad.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague says that we cannot ignore the private sector. Clearly, that is true. She asked rhetorically how we can use the private sector better. The answer is to start from the needs and the perspectives of those most disadvantaged, and besides, that is what the law says.

However, that is not what this government is doing. This government said publicly that the goal was not to meet the needs of the least fortunate and raise them out of poverty, but rather to open new markets for Canadian businesses. I would remind the House that that is the role of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

There is also the wishful thinking whereby economic growth will automatically help the least fortunate. First of all, I have to wonder why the government is not working on economic growth in countries like Niger, as in the example I gave.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that if countries do not have good governance and an effective tax system, that will not necessarily help the least fortunate.

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have covered much of the ground my colleague states. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight our government's swift and effective response to the recent disaster in the Philippines brought on by the horrific typhoon.

Canada is the fourth largest contributor to this effort and has been congratulated by the member opposite, who had this to say:

[*Translation*]

Listen, we are pleased with the government's response, the rather quick response of the department, and today's additional announcement.

[*English*]

The member's colleague from Davenport was also impressed with our response. He said that he thinks this is the right move on the part

of the government, that these are the right ways to go, and that they encourage Canadians to take advantage of the matching commitment of the federal government and to donate to charities that are working very hard to get aid on the ground in the Philippines.

Before I finish, I would be remiss if I did not highlight that yesterday I was in Washington at the Global Fund replenishment conference, where Canada announced \$650 million to the Global Fund replenishment. We know that the fund is doing very good work. It is working with many of our partners internationally. We congratulate them on that.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

SEALING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the seal products ban imposed by the European Union.

The World Trade Organization found that the ban was justified on ethical and moral grounds, despite the fact that it violates the basic rules of international trade. Basing the ban of a sustainable, abundant and well-managed natural resource on moral or ethical grounds may now lead to all kinds of abuse in trading practices.

Although the Bloc Québécois welcomes the government's upcoming legal challenge of the WTO ruling, the fact is that the problem goes far beyond the legal issues.

Indeed, the blatant misinformation about the seal hunt plays a key role in this economic conflict. The real problem, which the government must tackle now, without waiting for a legal process, is how European countries perceive the seal hunt.

In 2009, a Bloc Québécois motion in support of the sealing industry was adopted unanimously. At that time, we called on the government to actively promote seal products, which was vital for the future.

Today, it is clear that that did not happen and that it was not enough. Since the motion was adopted, the perception of the seal hunt remains the main obstacle for the affected communities.

The seal hunt is just as regulated as any other slaughter activity, and it is practised responsibly and sustainably by the people in our communities.

This modest sector of the economy, which is still significant for many communities, is fully legal and is necessary for the long-term vitality of small communities and coastal economies.

Adjournment Motion

In light of that, the government must launch legal proceedings and a large-scale diplomatic offensive to show the European Union the true nature of the seal hunt.

A number of European animal rights groups are still using the image of a baby seal to engage the public and the parties involved. I am sure my colleagues would agree that this is a disingenuous tactic, given that it has been illegal to hunt baby seals for more than 20 years.

It is time for the government to set the record straight and stop allowing other countries to sensationalize the issue.

According to Jean-Claude Brêthes, a professor at the Institut des sciences de la mer de Rimouski, the seal hunt is necessary to maintain an ecological balance. Environmental groups, such as Nature Québec, have also carefully examined the situation and concluded that the seal hunt plays a critical role in maintaining a balanced ecosystem.

The government must take decisive action to enhance the reputation of the seal hunt around the world, and more specifically within the European Union, so that the communities that rely on this type of hunting can get their fair share.

Will the government therefore commit to working with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the industry to organize an awareness tour, during which a delegation of stakeholders, including seal hunters, environmental groups and scientists, would talk about why the seal hunt is a good thing?

If we get industry stakeholders involved, the European Parliament would understand the reality of the seal hunt and be able to see what a significant impact the hunt has on communities and animal rights, and also how important it is to our environment and economy.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share our government's perspective on the decision of the World Trade Organization dispute settlement panel on the matter of Canada's and Norway's challenge of the European Union's unjust seal products ban. I use the word "unjust" to describe this ban because it is not based on knowledge and science, but on the misrepresentations of animal rights groups that use provocative and deceptive images to inflame the emotions of good-hearted people. I think we largely agree on this issue.

The European Union's decision was based on a misread of the facts. This ban is without just cause, in our opinion, and we continue to believe that it is contrary to international trade laws. The Prime Minister has been clear that the Government of Canada will continue to defend sealers' access to markets vigorously and will take whatever trade action is necessary.

This ban has struck a blow to sealers in the north, in Quebec and on the east coast, their families, and to Canada as a whole. Our government has taken decisive action in defence of Canadian sealers in light of the European Union's very discouraging ban on seal products. Our government has made repeated and unrelenting efforts to impress upon the EU and its member states the value of the seal hunt to Canadians.

We have voiced our commitment to a responsible management of the hunt that prioritizes sustainability and animal welfare. We are committed to taking this measure to the World Trade Organization because we believe that this measure is contrary to WTO rules, and we were proven right. The members of the panel said that the measure is discriminatory, but, and this is a big "but", the panel also said that although it was a violation of the EU's trade obligations, the measure was not more trade restrictive than necessary and that the EU has the right to ban seal products on moral grounds.

What does "moral grounds" mean? It means that the WTO has accepted the EU's position unreservedly, without subjecting its assertions to any kind of critical analysis, and has completely ignored several of Canada's key arguments. I can assure the hon. member that our government will be appealing this most unfortunate decision. It is an unfortunate decision, because it opens the way for any country to institute any kind of trade-restrictive measure based on so-called public morality. We will be working closely with our co-complainant, Norway, in advance of the January 24 filing deadline.

We have employed a whole-of-government approach to defend Canadian interests. The Minister of International Trade has very ably taken the reins on the trade side of the issue, and DFO has led the way in defending the hunt against misinformed accusations and attacks from animal rights groups. Our information has been confirmed by independent experts, yet the European Union instead favoured the animal rights groups' misinformation. The inflammatory publicity campaigns organized by these groups have been relentless, and are supported with seemingly unlimited funds. Their short-sighted position will result in serious consequences, notably for other similar hunting activities in the EU and elsewhere.

I have attempted to paint a picture of commitment and of a steadfast determination to defend this country's sealing industry. We have made every effort possible to counteract destructive publicity and this senseless ban. Our government recognizes the negative impact this ban has on sealing communities in Atlantic Canada and in the north. We are standing up in defence of Canadian sealers' right to earn a living, and we will continue to do so.

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for his speech.

Adjournment Motion

I am very pleased to see that, in addition to the legal action that must be taken in such circumstances, the government is doing diplomatic work and work to raise awareness in order to change perceptions.

Although this ban is not legitimate and we know it, the government still has a responsibility to coastal communities. As a result, it must do more than take legal action. It must launch an effective diplomatic offensive in order to set the record straight.

A great deal of information was released to the parliamentarians in the European community and the people who had to analyze the Canadian seal hunt. However, some of that information was incorrect. Some of it was outdated, and the images used did not at all reflect what happens during the hunt.

I urge the government to do more than just talk, to go beyond its legal strategy and to immediately introduce a real and tangible diplomatic strategy to change perceptions.

● (1850)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. We are certainly going well beyond rhetoric in many different ways. The first way is that our government will be appealing the ruling of the World Trade Organization on Canada's challenge of the European Union seal products ban.

Defending the sealing industry has been a priority since the notion of a ban on seal products by the European Union first arose. The Canadian seal harvest is demonstrably sustainable and humane, as all truly independent observers agree.

Together with industry, we have worked to strengthen the regulation and monitoring of the harvest and professionalized harvesters through a training program. In fact, processors now refuse to buy from sealers who have not been trained.

Make no mistake, despite the claims of animal rights groups, there is a demand for seal products, at least when access to markets is not blocked by discriminatory trade bans.

We are going to continue working on this and defending our sealing industry.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)

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