



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, March 4, 2014**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 4, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2013 annual report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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[*English*]

### VETERANS HIRING ACT

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of Veterans Affairs)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-27, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces).

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

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### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

LIAISON

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 107(3), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Liaison Committee, entitled “Committee Activities and Expenditures—April 1 to December 31, 2013”. The report highlights the work and the accomplishments of each committee, as well as detailing the budget's funded activities approved by committee members. It is the liaison committee's intention to present such reports to the House three times a year.

### VIA RAIL CANADA ACT

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-577, An Act respecting VIA Rail Canada and making consequential amendments to another Act.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present the VIA Rail protection bill. The bill presents a vision for the future of VIA Rail. It lays out a clear mandate and government structure. It gives it a larger say in determining its funding needs and frees the railway board from patronage appointments. By strengthening VIA Rail's position vis-à-vis CN and CP, delays for passenger trains would also be reduced.

Currently VIA Rail has no clearly delineated rights, powers, obligations, or mandated targets. Without legislative protection, it has suffered years of neglect and devastating service cuts. It is time to secure VIA Rail's role and responsibility through a federal law.

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

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### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)** moved:

That the First Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, presented on Friday, November 8, 2013, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the first report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development deals with the subject matter of Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. These are the Jewish refugees who were driven from their homes, often at risk to their lives and almost always with complete loss of all property, and the destruction of communities that had existed, in some cases for two millennia, since biblical times. This great series of tragedies occurred in many countries and took place primarily between 1948 and the early 1970s.

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development dealt with this subject matter and drew it to the attention of the House. I believe that we should concur in this report and in its two recommendations today.

I thought I might take the House through the background to this, as a starting point.

I will quote from the first page of the report of the committee to give members an idea of what that subject matter is. It states:

*Routine Proceedings*

In the course of its hearings, the Committee learned of the discrimination and hardship faced by Jewish people living in the Middle East and North Africa in the twentieth century. Much of this discrimination, which was practiced by governments in the region against their Jewish populations, surged over the years in tandem with the crisis moments of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular the 1948–49 and 1967 wars. As a result, almost all of the Jews in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen eventually left their homes and communities, which had existed in the Middle East and North Africa for centuries.

The committee was anxious to ensure that this great human tragedy should be placed in its proper context. It was not unique among refugee movements connected with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Two paragraphs later, on the first page of the report, the committee stated:

The Committee would also underline its belief that recognition of the experiences of Jewish refugees does not diminish or compete with the situation of Palestinian refugees.

I believe that the drawing of parallels is a key component to any proper understanding of this particular series of human tragedies.

The committee went on to make two recommendations. It is a lengthy and thoughtful report, but I want to quote from the two recommendations because I believe this is also important when giving a proper context.

Recommendation No. 1 states:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada officially recognize the experience of Jewish refugees who were displaced from states in the Middle East and North Africa after 1948.

I would say that this language suggests that the committee meant “including 1948” and the subsequent years. That is perhaps a quibble, but I would make that point.

Recommendation No. 2 states:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada encourage the direct negotiating parties to take into account all refugee populations as part of any just and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts.

Those are the recommendations that were made by the committee. There was a supplementary report put out by the New Democrats. I will also quote from that in order to provide some context. It states:

New Democrats are in support of Recommendation 1, which calls on the Government of Canada to officially recognize the experience of Jewish refugees who were displaced from states in the Middle East and North Africa after 1948.

I have to assume that means that the New Democrats are not in accord, and dissent from, recommendation number two, which, again, states that the Government of Canada ought to encourage the direct negotiating parties, meaning the Israelis and the people representing the Palestinians and their Arab states, to take into account all refugee populations as part of any just and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts.

• (1010)

I assume that the New Democrats are arguing that the situation of Jewish refugees ought not to be taken into account, unless they are also suggesting that Palestinian refugees should also be ignored. They are making a divide between Palestinian refugees and Jewish refugees, the former group being worthy of recognition, the second group worthy of being ignored. That is a position with which I must say that I strongly disagree.

Today I am moving concurrence with the report and its recommendations in its entirety, not one recommendation and not the other, which would be the New Democratic position. I will turn to the rationalization later.

When I first saw it, I was frankly taken aback. However, I think there is a mistaken, but well-meaning, belief behind the New Democrat position, to which I will return. If I am wrong about my supposition as to what they are thinking, then they will have a much harder time defending their point of view as being worthy of a group that, at least on paper, is in favour of the equality of all human beings, and the normal recognition of the human rights of all humans as being equal.

Let us go to the extent of the issue that we are discussing here today. In the period that we are discussing, starting in 1948 and progressing to the present, but primarily consisting of the period between 1940 and the early 1970s, 580,000 Jewish refugees fled countries in North Africa and the Middle East and went to Israel. There were 260,000 who fled their homes and went to countries other than Israel.

For the numbers I will be using today, I rely on two sources, which I take as being quite reliable: one is Sir Martin Gilbert's atlas of the Arab-Israeli conflict; and the other is Sir Martin Gilbert's, *The Jews of Arab Lands: Their History in Maps*. Sir Martin Gilbert is Sir Winston Churchill's official biographer. Among his other accomplishments, he has been in the process, over the course of half a century, of building the definitive biography of Sir Winston Churchill. He has gone from being a very young man, serving as Sir Winston's secretary, to being an elderly man doing this work. He has also done extensive work on providing objective background information relating to the conflict in the Middle East.

He says that in 1945 there were 870,000 Jews living in the Arab world, in communities that go back as far as biblical times. He noted that 580,000 Jewish refugees went to Israel and 260,000 found refuge in Europe and the Americas, meaning that there was almost a complete depopulation of the Jewish populations in these countries.

To give a sense of how complete this depopulation was, I will return to the stories of three countries, Tunisia, Yemen, and Aden, which are now one country, and finally, Libya. He gives these numbers. In 1948, there were 110,000 Jews in Tunisia; by 1974, there were 2,000. In Yemen, in 1948, there were 55,000 Jews. That is a community that dates back to well before the time of Christ, before the time of the Romans. By 1974, there were 500 Jews. In Aden, which is South Yemen, in 1948 there were 8,000; in 1974, there were zero, not one left. In Libya, there was a population of 38,000 in 1948; by 1974, there were 20 Jews left in Libya.

The conditions were not the same in all countries. I chose those countries because they demonstrate both the best and the worst of reactions in the North African and Middle Eastern world to their Jewish minorities.

*Routine Proceedings*

There is a parallel. According to the United Nations, there were 725,000 Palestinian refugees who left what became Israel, that is, Israel within its 1948 boundaries, pre-1967 boundaries, as a result of that conflict. The UN estimates it was 725,000. The Israelis estimate that between 550,000 and 600,000 Arabs fled from there. I assume that we would probably take the United Nations estimate as being the more reliable of the two.

• (1015)

It is worth noting that 160,000 of these individuals, of the original or indigenous Palestinian Arab population of Israel within its 48 boundaries, either remained in Israel during the conflict or returned to their homes during 1949, the very next year. That gives us a bit of a sense of the extent.

Of the people who fled, most fled to countries in the immediate surrounding areas, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Others went to what is now the West Bank. Some went to the Gaza Strip.

Others went further afield and left the Middle East entirely. A fairly small number went to places like Canada, the United States, and Europe, where they have integrated very well and have become a productive part of our populations. That is just like the Jews, who left and went to Europe, Canada, and the United States to become a well integrated and successful part of the local population.

However, the key *ex post facto* difference between the Jewish refugees and diaspora in these countries and the Palestinian diaspora from Israel is the way in which they were received in their Middle East host countries. The Jews who fled from Yemen, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Iraq, and elsewhere were very successfully integrated into Israeli society. They became full status citizens. They have contributed prime ministers and presidents, captains of industry and military leaders. They are, in fact, the majority of Israeli Jews today, and a very successful majority, I might add.

In contrast, the Palestinians, in their host countries, were not given citizenship rights. The first generation, those who left in 1948, have almost all passed away now. Their children and grandchildren, and in some cases great-grandchildren, remain, deprived of citizenship rights in their host countries. They are in refugee camps that are actually cities by now, but with none of the normal citizenship rights, including the right to own property, the right to freedom of movement, egress, and other obvious political rights. All of these things are denied them.

That distinction is the key fact on the ground that is different between the Jewish refugees of 1948 and the Palestinian refugees of 1948. It is an important distinction, but it is not an important distinction in terms of the injustice of what happened in the first place. It is a reflection of the fact that Israel adopted a much wiser policy toward its incoming population. Of course, it encouraged that influx as well, as compared to the response of the surrounding Arab countries.

Let me now turn to a very important question relating to the nature of the flow of populations. I said I would come back to the NDP's response. To some degree, the NDP's response is governed by its reaction to one of the disputes that historians have in this area. I am now going to quote to summarize what this dispute is, from the

*Wikipedia* article, "Jewish exodus from Arab and Muslim countries". *Wikipedia* is frequently a very good place for summarizing these fundamental disputes in the historiography. It says:

When presenting the history, those who view the Jewish exodus as equivalent to the 1948 Palestinian exodus, such as the Israeli government and NGOs such as JJAC and JIMENA, emphasize "push factors", such as cases of anti-Jewish violence and forced expulsions, and refer to those affected as "refugees". Those who argue that the exodus does not equate to the Palestinian exodus emphasize "pull factors", such as the actions of local Zionist agents who encouraged Zionist ideology, highlight good relations between the Jewish communities and their country's governments, emphasize the impact of other push factors such as the decolonization in the Maghreb and the Suez War and Lavon Affair in Egypt, and argue that many or all of those who left were not refugees.

By implication, perhaps, this would include economic migrants or those who were making Aliyah for religious or ideological reasons.

The pull argument summarizes the New Democratic position.

Let me now give some examples of different countries. I mentioned that I would look at Tunisia versus Yemen versus Libya as examples of different treatments of Jewish minorities in countries that effectively lost their entire populations as a result of the post-1948 conflicts.

• (1020)

I will start with Tunisia and, again, I am quoting Sir Martin Gilbert.

Sir Martin Gilbert points out that Tunisia had a Jewish population in 1948 of 110,000, and by 1974, that population had declined to 2,000. Anybody can do the math: this is a drop of 98%. Therefore, 98% of the Jews either left or perhaps simply died. However, he gives an interesting example of the kind of force that caused Jews to leave Tunisia. He says that "on June 5, 1967, there were anti-Jewish riots. The Great Synagogue was burned. The Scrolls of the Law were destroyed. One Jew was killed".

What happened afterwards was that President Bourguiba of Tunisia "publicly condemned the riot, apologized to the Chief Rabbi, and ensured that the rioters were punished, compensation paid, and the synagogue rebuilt".

Jews massively left Tunisia anyway, but clearly it was not a case of an anti-Semitic regime or a president trying to make that happen, which is the best of the examples. However, there was a voluntary transfer of population, and I suspect it was a reluctant population transfer. Of course, there was widespread anti-Semitism, including violent anti-Semitism, within Tunisian society.

Between Yemen and Aden, Yemen had by far the larger of the two populations. The Jewish population in Yemen was withdrawn through an operation which was code named "Operation Magic Carpet".

Over the course of time between June 1949 and September 1950, there were 47,000 Yemeni Jews, 1,500 Jews from Aden, and a further 500 Jews from Djibouti and Eritrea—which is just across the Red Sea in the Horn of Africa—who were flown in transport planes provided by Israel, the Royal Air Force, and the United States air force to the new State of Israel. This was effectively the entire population of this area.

*Routine Proceedings*

A while later, there was an effort coordinated by the British to remove the entire population from Aden, which at that point was a British protectorate. As I said, the result was a complete depopulation of the area. This happened after a series of increasingly brutal and vicious attacks on the Yemeni Jews, many of which were informal or popular, but not coordinated by the government.

The rationale that was given by Yemeni Jews for leaving is summarized by a later scholar. Basically, the Yemeni Jews were driven by a number of factors. One factor was an idealistic belief that they would have a new and better home in Israel. A second factor was the kind of discrimination, often murderous discrimination, they faced back home in Yemen. Another consideration was that if the rest of the community was leaving, what does one do? Is one's community the building one lives in or is it the people one lives among? These were the forces that brought them to Israel.

I will now turn to the last example, which is the clearest case of people being refugees in the absolute formal sense. This is Libya's story.

In Libya, the population went from 38,000 Jews in 1948, to 20 in 1974. In November 1945, more than 100 Jews were murdered in anti-Jewish riots across Libya. In 1951, with Libya's independence, all Jewish ties were cut with Israel and Jewish organizations abroad. In 1963, the Jewish right to vote was rescinded, there were mass arrests, and Jews were forbidden to hold public office. Finally, in 1970, Colonel Gadhafi announced the seizure of all Jewish property, without compensation.

● (1025)

Over 100 Jews were killed. Homes, shops, and synagogues were looted and destroyed at the time of the Six Day War in 1967. Sir Martin Gilbert provides a useful map of towns in which more than 100 Jews were murdered, some tortured, some burnt alive, in the 1945 riots.

In this case, these were former refugees and they fled. Their situation may not be the situation of every Jew who arrived from the Middle East to Israel, but clearly, many of these people were genuine refugees and therefore it seems reasonable to treat them in the same manner as the Palestinian refugees when looking for any settlement.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has often referred to himself primarily as a parliamentarian. We have had some discussions about his respect for the House, his respect for democratic principles, and the role that we all play as members of Parliament. Therefore, he is well aware of the role that he is playing today in attempting to delay and obstruct the debate that the House was seized with over a Conservative member having been affirmed by the Speaker as likely in contempt of Parliament. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville passed the three-point test set out by the Speaker, for misleading the House about something, ironically, as important as our own election laws. That is what the member for Mississauga—Streetsville misled the House about. That is what the debate was supposed to be about today.

My friend down the way has a great deal of respect and must be aware that he is being used by the PMO in order to delay the House for three hours through this tactic rather than discuss the merits of one of his colleagues who knowingly misled Parliament in order to

justify and rationalize the Conservatives' unfair election act. That is what this is about.

I have respect for my friend down the way. I have respect for his memory and his love of this institution. Therefore, he cannot be ignorant of the fact that in participating in this debate in the way they are, by obstructing Parliament's debate over a member of the Conservative Party having misled Parliament, is an affront to this place. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville was found in contempt and we need to pursue that debate, not any chicanery coming from the Prime Minister's Office.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, one of the consequences of being one of the lower-key members of the House of Commons is that I am regularly praised in the course of attacks on my party by the opposition. I thought if I could decontextualize some of these comments, just so the party can say nice things about me, I would have a very impressive piece of campaign literature.

I also respect the House leader of the opposition, and he is free to use that in his campaign literature if he wishes.

I am really here to discuss the first report of the Standing Committee on International Affairs and feel best qualified to do that rather than to comment on any other subject.

● (1030)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat passing strange that the member would choose to bring the report to the House and provide those comments today, but that is not to take away from the important issue of Jewish refugees. This issue has been discussed for many years. We are all concerned about the plight of all refugees. Yesterday, I attempted to have an emergency debate on Ukraine brought to the floor of the House, in recognition of the possibility of refugees coming out of Ukraine.

I am sympathetic to many of the comments that the member has put on the record with regard to refugees. Given his role within his caucus, would the member provide some feedback on the situation in Ukraine and the impact on refugees?

Issues have been raised within the Jewish community in Ukraine. Perhaps the member might want to provide some comment on that aspect too.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I can provide as much useful commentary as I would wish to this very interesting question. I would say something, though, about the Crimean situation. It is an idea of the kinds of complexities that can occur. For what it is worth, by the way, I have a Ukrainian Jewish ancestor; my great-grandfather came from Ukraine and went to Russia and Poland in the early decades of the 20th century before the Russian revolution, and later on emigrated to Canada and thereby spared his descendants the Holocaust, which came about 20 years after that.

*Routine Proceedings*

I would just observe that this is the kind of difficulty we can have. The Crimea in particular, which is the focal point of this, not only has strategic importance because Sevastopol is a naval port, but also has an ethnic mix that contains some Jews there as well, though it is a very small population. Also, my favourite Russian Jewish author, Isaac Babel, wrote the Sevastopol stories and they are well worth reading.

There is a Russian population; we are told it is a 60% majority. There is a Ukrainian population in the Crimea, as well as the Crimean Tatars, a Muslim group descended from the Mongols, who have lived in Crimea for their entire history and who were rounded up and sent away by Stalin to central Asia, deported with what I assume was permanent intent but allowed to return in decades since that time. Now one of the fundamental issues in Crimea is the issue of who has what land, given that it was redistributed from the Tatars to Russians long enough ago in the past that it is unclear how one could resettle the Tatars in their rightful lands without disrupting Russians. This is the kind of vexed problem one sees by parallel with countries like Israel and the other countries in the Middle East where populations have been deported. It is unfortunately one of the consequences of mass non-voluntary population movements.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his remarks. Regarding my parents too, although my dad served throughout the Second World War, my mom was in fact deported to Nazi Germany as forced labour; so that type of a migration is very clear and very present in our family. While my dad was a soldier, he was deported to a Siberian gulag for a time, but fortunately lived to fight another day. Those kinds of forced migrations, forced imprisonments, and totalitarian actions on individuals and groups of people are very clear within my own family history, recent history because it has all happened within the last 75 years.

As the hon. member drew comparisons between Crimea and what is happening in the Middle East and migrations over the last number of decades and the last century, I would like to ask him how the situation with the overall Middle East issue factors in, and how he might recommend that we here in this House and other Houses around the world approach the issues in the Middle East.

• (1035)

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, dealing only with the refugee issue, because that is the one before us, I will point out that the last century has been the century of mass refugee movements. One of the maps that Sir Martin Gilbert provides includes a list of the top refugee movements in the world in the 20th century. All of them are astounding catastrophes. This is probably an apocryphal quotation, but the story is that Stalin said that one death is a tragedy and a million deaths is a statistic. When one reaches the level of 30 million people in the 20th century forced from their homes and forced to leave as refugees, one gets some idea of the kind of tragedy that has been involved.

The Palestinians who had to leave Israel and the Jews who had to leave the Middle East are actually very far from the largest refugee movements. The very biggest movement was five million Jews who were driven out of what is now western Poland but, at the time, was an area of Germany that had been German ethnically for hundreds of years. There have been Romanians driven out of Bessarabia; the

Tatars, as I mentioned, were rounded up and driven out of the Crimea, only to return some five decades later. There are so many others that is hard to keep track of them all, but one gets the point. The India-Pakistan partition was another terrible example with millions of victims.

In each of these cases, it seems appropriate to try to deal with the human tragedy separately from the geopolitical considerations of who was right and who was wrong. There is no doubt in my mind that in the great war between the Soviet Union and Germany, the Nazis were in the wrong. That does not change the fact that those five million refugees were human victims. I think the same thing can be applied to any other situation, including this one.

Let us deal intelligently with those human tragedies and say that the same standard of justice must be applied to all people from all countries who were affected by this, regardless of what political affiliation they had and regardless of the merits of those states that were involved back in 1948 and in the present.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am not very happy, considering that this government's audacity and its arrogance with regard to democracy and our Parliament are incredible. Today we are holding a debate on a Conservative member who made a completely false statement to support a government bill aimed at completely amending the Canada Elections Act without any democratic process. He did so to support the Conservative Party. That is really what this is about.

[*English*]

The Conservative disdain for our democratic principles is absolutely breathtaking, because today they have moved a concurrence motion to occupy three hours of debate in the House, and what the House was meant to debate today is of most interest as to the reason the Conservatives have used this tactic.

Let us walk through the sequence of events, because it is important in the context of today.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Talk about the motion.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives can continue to heckle if they want. We will stay on point and support Canada's Parliament and the democracy that it is founded upon.

When the Conservatives actually broke the law in the last campaign and the one before that—

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** You guys enabled Communists for decades.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, excuse me; there are now heckles of Communism coming from the other side. This is from a government that has complete disdain for our democratic values and for the House of Commons. I would ask the Conservatives to come to some level of order, rather admit to the guilt and disdain they have for this place.

When they broke these laws in the previous election—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla is rising on a point of order.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, while my colleague seems to be on a bit of a roll this morning, unfortunately, it has nothing to do with the discussion at hand of refugees. He seems to be thinking that this debate happens to be about Bill C-23.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ask the member to come back to relevance and the issue before the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We all know that the issue of relevance has a very broad definition within the House. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has been addressing, if I understand his comments, the motivation of the purpose for this motion, which is certainly relevant to the motion at hand.

The member may continue.

● (1040)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Thank you for the clarification, Mr. Speaker. The motivation for this concurrence motion today is in light of the fact that the Conservatives were caught. They got caught having written a law. Rather than comply with the laws that exist—with their dirty tactics such as the robocalls, the in-and-out scandals, all the rest that the Conservatives do to try to rig the election, and hopefully rig the next election—they wish to change the laws to permit their dirty tactics, to muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer, and to prevent him from talking and encouraging Canadians to vote.

Rather than comply with the law, the Conservatives change the law to fit their own needs. Then they put a time allocation on that very debate, rather than go with the traditions of Canada in which the opposition parties and the Chief Electoral Officer would be brought in, in an inclusive way. Canadians would be brought in when dealing with something so foundational as our electoral laws. That has always been the history, regardless the political stripe of the governance of the day—

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

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives continue to heckle because they have nothing else to say. The point of the effort today is to provide delay and distraction from what has happened, because in setting time allocation on a debate about our democracy, in refusing public consultations on our election laws, Conservatives have abandoned their basic Reform principles so far that it is breathtaking. The founders of the Reform Party have called it such, as Mr. Manning did this past weekend.

To then add insult to injury, in order to then rationalize why this law is needed, Conservatives invent facts, mislead the House, and invent stories that did not happen, as the member for Mississauga—Streetsville did.

They can continue to heckle, only confirming their lack of ability to actually enter into a debate. If they want to have a debate about the election laws in Canada, we welcome it. If they want to have consultation with Canadians, we welcome it. The Conservatives do not. Why? It is because they have to invent things in order to rationalize their bill, to justify their election law.

Then they were caught. What a shame. They were caught misleading the House. The Conservative MP twice told something to Parliament and Canadians watching that was not true and then half admitted that it may have been a misstatement of fact. It is not a

misstatement of fact. In common parlance that we are not allowed to use here in Parliament because it is unparliamentary, most Canadians call that a lie. Here we call it misleading the House. The member was found on a prima facie case of contempt. We all know how hard that is to do. It is not easy. A politician has to work really hard to be found in contempt of Parliament, but the Conservative member did. Congratulations to him for such infamy. There are a few on the list—Bev Oda, Art Eggleton—but there are not many who have been able to do this.

They get caught having disdain and disrespect for Parliament. Then in the course of the debate over that motion, they now seek to invoke closure over that. It is not good enough to have been caught; they want the thing to go away. In the midst of all that, to further add insult to injury, they say they do not even want to debate that; so they are going to move a concurrence motion today to take up three hours of the House's time, rather than talk about a Conservative MP misleading the House. That is what is happening today.

The Conservatives purport to be a democratic party of any notion. It is reprehensible that they continue to hold this place in such contempt. The word is an important word, and words matter for those of us who are engaged in this public service. Our words should matter.

The Conservative member for Mississauga—Streetsville was caught out. He told something that was not true in order to rationalize a bad election bill, an unfair election act that would deprive many Canadians of their right to vote and would muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer from talking to Canadians and encouraging them to vote. What modern G8 country would ever have such a thing, where the Chief Electoral Officer is banned from talking to the electorate about the importance and need for voting, particularly those groups who do not vote: poor Canadians, young Canadians, aboriginal Canadians? That is what the Conservatives have done.

In the midst of all that, they invent stories to justify their bill because they do not have anything else. They do not have evidence. They do not have facts. They have not consulted with anybody other than the Conservative Party of Canada, as if it were somehow the vehicle for all good things democratic. This is the same Conservative Party of Canada that perpetrated the robocalls scandal, that used its database to go after Canadians and deny them their right to vote, that broke the election spending limit by the in-and-out scandal, by a bit of a shell game, passing money into a riding then out of a riding, thereby breaking all the election laws.

● (1045)

The Conservative Party was were found in contempt of court. It engaged in what the judge called “trench warfare”.

**Hon. John Duncan:** You know that's not true.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, that is true. A sitting judge in Canada accused the Conservative Party of exhibiting trench warfare in defence—

**Hon. John Duncan:** You know that is not true, Nathan.



**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I know that is not true? Mr. Speaker, I absolutely know it is true? If the government whip would like to read a court document from time to time, he would know that is exactly what his party did.

All of this the Conservatives have done to help rig the next election, to put a little more favour for the Conservative Party of Canada, and in the midst of this, the Conservatives move this concurrence debate. In the midst of this, they say there is something more important to talk about than contempt for Canada's Parliament, that there is something else that needed to happen today and today only, as if it were somehow timely.

This is extraordinary. These folks get us used to all sorts of deplorable tactics. It is an abusive relationship they have with Parliament.

I move, seconded by the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie:

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

Let us get back to the debate at hand.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1125)

The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:

*(Division No. 72)*

**YEAS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dion	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé

Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Freeman	Garrison
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamouroux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Mathysen
May	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Rafferty
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	Stewart
Sitsabaesan	Thibeault
St-Denis	Tremblay
Sullivan	Valeriote— 116
Toone	
Turnel	

*Routine Proceedings*

**NAYS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lauson

*Routine Proceedings*

Lebel	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 149	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, if I pick up the thread of where we are, I can now address a question to the hon. House leader for the official opposition, who had finished his speech.

This is not just a procedural question but a substantive one. Now that the motion has failed, what is his view on the value of the debate the government members have now insisted we pursue for the next coming hours?

• (1130)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and all Conservatives just now voted to delay a debate that was going on in the House about a Conservative MP who misled Parliament about the Conservatives' own unfair election act. This is what they have resorted to, because they do not have the facts on their side. They do not have evidence on their side. They have to make up stories about election fraud that they claim to have witnessed and then claim to have not witnessed.

The Speaker in this case found that the member had exhibited contempt for Parliament, one of the most serious accusations that can be made of a member of Parliament. Rather than discuss the merits of that, the Conservatives have attempted to take three hours away from that debate.

The Conservatives also put us on notice, just last night, that they want to shut the whole debate down on a question of privilege over one of their members having misled Parliament. Rather than trying to justify it and saying what they will do to prevent MPs in the future

from doing what the Conservative member for Mississauga—Streetsville did, they did two things. First, they congratulated him. They said, “Well done, sir”, first for having been caught, “those things happen”. Then he came in and said that it was a misstatement of facts.

The Conservatives' reaction to the debate on a sitting MP being found in contempt of Parliament, or the very likelihood of that, is to shut down completely debate about an election act that is the foundation of our democratic principles, which Canadians have fought generations to sustain and maintain.

In our history we have always found ways to come together when deciding the rules of the game, when deciding how Parliament should conduct itself, how elections will conduct themselves. However, this Minister of State (Democratic Reform), and I use the term loosely, decided that he would make an exception. They would only consult with Conservatives, not Canadians and not the Chief Electoral Officer. They would only meet with Conservatives about what the rules should be. Some of the rules in place in this election act are against misdeeds and actions by the Conservative Party itself in the last election. They are having to clean up their own mess, their own fraudulent behaviour.

This debate today is only an attempt to delay the inevitable, which is one of the Conservative members being found in contempt of this place, joining the illustrious ranks of Bev Oda and Art Eggleton, who lied about Afghan detainees. They should be ashamed of themselves and their dirty tactics.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the issue before the House right now is actually a report from a committee dealing with the fate of certain Jewish refugees in the Middle East and their treatment and the history there. It has probably escaped many people watching at home on television that it is what is being debated right now.

Since that is the actual item before the House, I was wondering if the hon. member, on behalf of the NDP, as their lead speaker on this very important item of public policy to many Jewish-Canadians and people who take an interest in the Middle East, could tell us the position of the NDP on the two recommendations in the report we are actually debating right now.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, this is what the Conservatives have come to. They did not move this debate yesterday. They did not think this debate was important enough to move last week or whenever this report was in hand. They thought it was important to move this debate today and say that the plight of Jewish refugees coming from Europe is important to talk about today, not yesterday, not the week before, not when we were debating other things, but when we are debating a contempt motion against a Conservative MP.

How dare the Conservatives use issues to cover over the fact of their own contempt for this place and suggest that Jewish refugees is the topic they would use and then say, “How dare anybody speak to a contempt motion against a Conservative MP?” That is the fact of the matter. The Conservatives know what they are doing. Shame on them for doing it.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the House leader for the official opposition whether he, like me, has started to hear from constituents about their feelings on someone who has deliberately misled the House on such an important topic as elections, a very fundamental part of our democracy.

I have started to receive emails and phone calls in my office from people expressing their real concern about the direction this is headed and the real concern about what the Conservative Party is doing.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, the traffic in my office has been incredible on this, and not just on the initial action of the Conservative backbencher MP who knowingly misled the House, according to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

If that was not bad enough, the Conservative Party's reaction to this was to do two things. The first was to rationalize it and say that everybody does it. The Conservatives said that they do not justify or commend it, but everyone does it, so it is okay. The second action by the Conservative Party, its natural reaction to one of its own members being caught having misled the House, was to say that he came forward, and what a good fellow he was.

We asked why the member took two weeks to come forward and admit that what he said, twice, was completely untrue. He said it once during debate and then again a couple of hours later. The Conservatives said that it was a misstatement of facts. Why did it take him two weeks?

The thing he claimed to have seen was electoral fraud. It was stuffing ballot boxes. Lo and behold, Elections Canada seems to have some interest in a sitting member of Parliament having witnessed a crime. It wonders why a member of Parliament, or any citizen, having watched that, did not report it. He also claimed that he saw the ballots being taken out of the dumpster and used by a party. Which party's office would he have had access to, as a Conservative? I have no idea. They were used by a party to then illegally vote in an election. That is what he claimed to have seen.

What an incredible statement by the Conservatives. In reaction to one of their MPs being caught out, they rationalize it, congratulate him, and say that everybody does it, so it must be okay. That is shameful.

Now we see this. Now we see the government being willing to invoke closure on the whole thing and shut it down.

•(1135)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the House leader earlier asked the NDP if it could explain its position on the two recommendations. I would just read the second one, which states:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada encourage the direct negotiating parties to take into account all refugee populations as part of any just and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts.

I was just wondering if the member opposite could explain why he is avoiding answering why it is that the NDP cannot support that resolution.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, that is unbelievable. There is no shame on that side of the House.

If the Conservatives want to go through the historical reference, I welcome the parliamentary secretary to stay and wait for the answer. If they want to go through the historical reference of which party in the House of Commons stood up for Jewish refugees when they were being expelled from European countries, it was the New Democratic Party, previously the CCF.

If the Conservatives want any lessons in history as to who stood up for the Jewish people, we welcome that type of debate. We welcome that type of observation of history, because it was his party, in a previous incarnation, that refused those same refugees, along with the Liberal Party.

Let us get to the reason and motivation for the topic of this debate, as the leader of the Green Party asked about earlier. The only reason, the only motivation for this, and the reason the Conservatives did not move it yesterday or find the urgency on Friday or Thursday or previous days, is that they wanted to move this concurrence motion today, because what we are talking about today? We are talking about one of his members of Parliament, whom he supports and whom he just voted to support, having been found in contempt of Parliament by the Speaker of the House of Commons. That is what they are deliberately doing today.

It is contemptuous. It is adding insult to injury for Canadians that they seem to so disregard the truth and have such ambivalence toward Parliament, the place we are all meant to support, regardless of our political persuasion.

These folks have gotten to the point where it is campaigning all the time. It is total war all the time. They stand up and use the argument that some report from a committee, today of all days, and no other day, needed to be debated. The coincidence suggests that what they are trying to do is what they always do: avoid accountability, turn their faces away from Canadians, and not do what they are meant to do as members of Parliament, which is hold government to account and hold this country in some modicum of respect.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, individuals who are viewing what is happening today in the House might be a bit confused.

A report was tabled. The first speaker talked at length about the Jewish refugee factor, which I am going to comment on toward the latter part of my comments. That was followed by the NDP House leader talking about the privilege issue, which we debated for several hours yesterday, and reading into it the motivation for having this bill here.

I am going to add a bit more on the issue of priorities. Yesterday I raised the importance of what is happening in Ukraine. I will try to make all three issues relevant to the debate we are having right now.

Where do I start? It is strange that the government, through the PMO, would have chosen today, of all days, to bring forward this particular report. Is the report important? Absolutely. It is very important. We in the Liberal Party do not question that whatsoever.

*Routine Proceedings*

We find it strange that the Conservatives would bring it forward and have that debate today. Why do we say that? If we review what took place yesterday, it was a serious privilege issue that would be referred to the procedure and House affairs committee. We hope and trust that the Conservatives will do the right thing by voting in favour and allowing PROC to deal with the situation.

The situation is that a member did intentionally mislead the House, which is a violation of the rules of the House and potentially puts this member in contempt of the House. The only way that can be appropriately dealt with is if PROC is afforded the opportunity to call witnesses. Yesterday I even suggested a couple of witnesses, including the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

In a nutshell, the issue we talked about yesterday is that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville made a specific statement on February 6. I will cite an abbreviated portion of the statement. He said:

I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards, going to the campaign office of whatever candidate they support and handing out these voter cards to other individuals, who then walk into voting stations with friends who vouch for them with no ID.

The point is that the member witnessed an illegal activity. When he made that statement, he acknowledged that he witnessed an illegal activity. Did he go to Elections Canada? Did he report it to the police?

Several weeks later, the member stood in his place in the House. He did not necessarily apologize but said that what he said on February 6 was wrong.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** It is not relevant.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I indicated that I would bring forward all three issues to make it relevant.

What motivated him from the day he made the statement on February 6 to when he made the retraction on February 24? When I addressed the issue, I suggested that maybe the member was contacted by Elections Canada. I had no way of finding out if that was true. I did not put in an inquiry, but someone did. There was an alleged email that indicates that Elections Canada was aware of the member's statement. I asked the parliamentary secretary if he asked the member for Mississauga—Streetsville whether Elections Canada contacted him. There was no answer.

• (1140)

I believe that the member needs to come to the PROC committee to answer the question, was that the motivation that caused him to retract his statements?

I would say that it is clear proof that the member did intentionally attempt to mislead the House and that there does need to be a consequence. At this point I will not say what type of consequence it should be, but we do need to recognize that it would be a contempt of the House and that it needs to be dealt with. That was the debate yesterday.

Then we ask ourselves why they chose this motion or report today. By having this issue reported today it prevents that debate from continuing.

From the perspective of the Liberal Party, we want to get to the truth of the matter. It does not mean we need to have endless debate inside the chamber.

Yesterday I stood in place on behalf of the Liberal Party and said there was a serious crisis in Ukraine and that we needed to deal with what was happening there. In the last 72 hours Russian troops have been mobilized in Crimea and are causing all sorts of issues. We can think of it in terms of its impact on Ukrainians and Ukraine, but I would suggest that it has an even more profound impact on the whole region and the world. The financial markets have been responding to this. People of Ukrainian heritage around the world are concerned about what is taking place in Ukraine, and in Canada, as I indicated, there are 1.2 million people of Ukrainian heritage plus others. One does not have to be of Ukrainian heritage to care about what is taking place in Ukraine.

Yesterday I moved a motion that we have an emergency debate on the issue, given the mobilization of Russian troops and the impact that is having, and given what the Government of Canada has said in terms of the Canadian ambassador in Russia—

• (1145)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. James Lunney:** Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the attention of the Chair the fact that we had a vote to go back to a very important concurrence motion here. It is the report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development recognizing the Jewish refugees in the Middle East and North Africa.

With all due respect to the member, I know that Canadians are concerned about Ukraine. We had a delegation visit there just recently and we had an emergency debate a couple of nights ago.

I was wondering if the member would like to address the issue of the debate today, the concurrence motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North on the same point of order.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. If the member had been listening to the NDP presentation, he would have found that almost the entire presentation was on what I was referring to. At the beginning of my presentation, I clearly indicated to the House that I would be talking about three issues, including the report, and then clearly demonstrating why all three are relevant to my comments. Therefore, the member needs to be a bit more patient to understand the relevance to the issue at hand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley on the same point of order.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, you addressed this earlier in the day, not 30 or 40 minutes before this discussion.

*Routine Proceedings*

I understand why the Conservatives do not want to talk about one of their members being found in contempt of Parliament. However, they continue to disrupt the speeches of people in order to pretend that this has not happened and then hold up another important issue to avoid that conversation. The points of order just help circle the stain around what is happening here today, which is that the Conservatives have interrupted an incredibly important conversation about one of their own members being found in contempt of Parliament.

We would think that the Conservatives, particularly those who come from the Reform branch of the party and thought that democracy was important and that Parliament mattered, would be interested in this debate, in either defending the Conservative member from Streetsville, as the government House leader and his deputies have done, or perhaps by saying that there is a problem and that the punishments should be greater because there seems to be little deterrence. The Conservatives have said that he should be congratulated, not condemned, for being in contempt of Parliament. It is fascinating.

Mr. Speaker, you just ruled on this point of order that because of the context, because of the intention and motivation behind this procedure by the Conservatives, there clearly is latitude for members of Parliament to speak to that motivation, as my Liberal colleague and I have done.

• (1150)

**The Deputy Speaker:** To the member for Nanaimo—Alberni, I made a ruling already this morning on the basis that the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley was raising what on the surface might have appeared to be a separate issue but was related and relevant to the motivation of the member who originally brought the concurrence motion forward.

I have been following the discourse by the member for Winnipeg North and am not finding quite the same tie in. I have heard the member for Winnipeg North say on two occasions now that we will soon see the relevance of his speech, so I would invite him to draw that relevance to the attention of the House. That noted, he can go ahead with his speech.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I trust those points of order will not be taken off my time.

As I was saying, the debate today on this particular report brings up a question of timing, something that is important for us to take into consideration. That is why I started by saying that if we contrasted the opening speech on the report and the NDP House leader's comments, we would find that they were almost two totally different issues, unless we start talking about motivations. Motivation and the way in which we use time in this place are ultimately what cause the Speaker to allow a great deal of latitude on the relevancy of debate. I do not know for sure, but I do anticipate even more debate.

Yesterday I attempted to bring forward an emergency debate on Ukraine and commented on why I thought that should be the case. Earlier this morning I forwarded to the Speaker yet again another notice on this critically important issue, because significant changes have taken place, in particular, the mobilization of Russian troops, and other actions over the last 72 hours. A government backbencher

even stood up and asked for unanimous support of a motion recognizing some of the changes.

My point is that we need to look at the way we use time in the House. We need to give more attention to Ukraine given the crisis there. Three hours could be designated for debate on this important report from the committee. Was it timely to discuss it today? That is somewhat debatable. I would rather have an emergency debate on Ukraine today and have this report tomorrow. However, the government has a great deal of say on something like that. Hopefully, we will get some indication from the government on the formal request for an emergency debate that I will be making to the House later today.

I said I would comment on all three. The third is the actual report itself. I highlighted the importance of the report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. The committee made a significant effort to better understand the situation of Jewish refugees from Middle Eastern nations and North Africa. We can appreciate why it was important for the committee to tackle the issue. Canada plays an important role around the world and if that is done properly, we can play a strong leadership role.

It is interesting to note that the committee was made up of an all-party group of MPs. The committee listened to presentations. One could contrast that with the last trip of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Ukraine, in which the government decided not to include representatives from all sides of the House. It would have been a better trip if there had been more unity, but I am a bit off topic.

With respect to this report, people from our party, such as Bob Rae, our former leader, and our current foreign affairs critic, the member from Montreal, did a phenomenal job of ensuring that our party was represented. They had the opportunity to listen to many different presentations. I understand that at times these were very emotional.

• (1155)

Maybe what I should do is to read a letter that was provided to me by the member for Mount Royal, someone who is highly respected inside the House of Commons and throughout the world. I believe it is a good thing to get this on the record, and if members will forgive me, I will read it:

*The Forgotten Exodus*

...It is sometimes forgotten that...[the UN Partition Resolution of November 29, 1947] was the first ever blueprint for an Israeli-Palestinian two-state solution. Regrettably, while Jewish leaders accepted the resolution, Arab leaders did not, and by their own acknowledgement, declared war on the nascent Jewish state.

Had the Partition Resolution been accepted, there would have been no Arab-Israeli war, no refugees and none of the pain of these last 60 years. Annapolis could now be the site of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of an Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Yet the revisionist Mid-East narrative continues to hold that there was only one victim population, Palestinian refugees, and that Israel was responsible for the Palestinian naqba (catastrophe) of 1947.

### *Routine Proceedings*

The result was that the pain and plight of 850,000 Jews uprooted and displaced from Arab countries—the forgotten exodus—has been expunged from the historical narrative these past 60 years. Moreover, the revisionist narrative has not only eclipsed the forgotten exodus, but denies that it was also a forced exodus, for the Arab countries not only went to war to extinguish the fledgling Jewish state, but also targeted the Jewish nationals living in their respective countries. The United Nations is preparing, yet again, to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people on this 60th anniversary of the UN Partition Resolution, but will ignore the plight of Jewish refugees.

Indeed, evidence contained in a recent report, *Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries: The Case for Rights And Redress*, documents for the first time a pattern of state-sanctioned repression and persecution in Arab countries—including Nuremberg-like laws—that targeted Jews, and resulted in denationalization, forced expulsions, illegal sequestration of property, arbitrary arrest and detention and the like.

These massive human rights violations were reflective of a collusive blueprint, as embodied in the Draft Law of the Political Committee of the League of Arab States. This is a story that has not been heard. It is a truth that must now be acknowledged.

The UN also bears express responsibility for this distorted narrative. Since 1947, there have been 126 UN resolutions that have specifically dealt with the Palestinian refugee plight. Not one of these resolutions makes any reference to the plight of the 850,000 Jews displaced from Arab countries. Nor have any of the Arab countries involved expressed any acknowledgement, let alone regret. What, then, is to be done?

The time has come to rectify this historical injustice, and to restore the “forgotten exodus” to the Middle East narrative.

Remedies for victim refugee groups—including rights of remembrance, truth, justice and redress—must now be invoked for Jews displaced from Arab countries, as mandated under human rights and humanitarian law. In particular, each of the Arab countries and the League of Arab States must acknowledge their role in the perpetration of human rights violations against their respective Jewish nationals.

Further, the peace plan currently being promoted by the Arab League should incorporate the question of Jewish refugees from Arab countries as part of its narrative for an Israeli-Arab peace, just as the Israeli narrative now incorporates the issue of Palestinian refugees in its vision.

On the international level, the UN General Assembly should include references to Jewish refugees as well as Palestinian refugees in its resolutions. The UN Human Rights Council should do likewise.

The annual Nov. 29th commemoration by the United Nations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People should be transformed into an International Day of Solidarity for a Two-State Solution, including solidarity with all refugees created by the Israeli-Arab conflict.

#### ● (1200)

Furthermore, any bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations—such as those being promoted this week in Annapolis, which one hopes will presage a just and lasting peace—should include Jewish refugees as well as Palestinian refugees in a joinder of discussion.

Where there is no remembrance, there is no truth; where there is no truth, there will be no justice; where there is no justice, there will be no reconciliation; and where there is no reconciliation, there will be no peace—which is what we all seek.

This is an editorial that was written by my colleague from Mount Royal, a fine, distinguished member of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the first thing that is quite obvious when we listen to what my colleague from Winnipeg North said is that there are no trivial matters addressed in this House.

In the short time he had, he tried to draw our attention to three fundamental issues: first, the Conservative government's reform of the Canada Elections Act, in light of the discoveries made over the last few days; second, the situation in Ukraine; and finally, the report on refugees currently before us.

I would like to ask my colleague from Winnipeg North how he thinks the government chose to prioritize these three important

issues. If I had had to prioritize them, I would not have put them in the same order. Indeed, we would not be discussing a committee report right now, but rather the Canada Elections Act, which affects all Canadians, or the conflict in Ukraine, which is a global issue.

In what order does my colleague think these issues should be addressed? What basic principles should be considered to allow all these important issues to be properly taken into account and given the time needed? What order would best reflect their importance?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. If I were a government House leader, maybe sometime in the future, and had these three issues before me, I would work with the opposition House leaders and indicate to them that this is a serious issue in terms of misrepresentation. I would allow for and encourage debate on the idea, upon which there hopefully would be consensus to limit the debate on the privilege issue so it would go to the procedures committee, where it would be dealt with in a more wholesome way and the matter would be positively resolved, whatever the outcome might be.

We would have spent some time on that debate. I would then allow for and encourage an emergency debate on Ukraine, because that is exceptionally timely. We need to have that debate. I genuinely believe that.

This report is very important too. It is just not as timely. This report could have been accepted; whether that is today, tomorrow, or Friday, would not take anything away from the importance of the report. After all, we are talking about somewhere in the neighbourhood of 850,000 displaced refugees dating back to 1948. It is a very serious issue. Liberals do not question that. The timing of it is what we question.

In short, I would negotiate some sort of compromise that would have this matter of privilege sent to the procedures committee. The Ukrainian crisis has to be debated, which I would have at some point in the not too distant future, as early as Wednesday or Thursday, if I felt it was necessary this week.

#### ● (1205)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple. It goes along with the question asked by my colleague from Trois-Rivières and it is a reaction to the member for Winnipeg North's response.

We do not often have concurrence debates here in the House of Commons, but there is one before us now. I think that the relevance and timing of the motion is in question.

I would like to know what the member thinks would be the most appropriate time to hold such discussions, discussions not only on the motion before us, but also on the various motions that have been moved that we must comment on, and on the content of certain committee reports that we must debate, such as the one we are discussing now.

What would the member for Winnipeg North propose as a basic rule for all parties to follow when it comes to these concurrence debates on committee reports?

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, it is important that we recognize the privilege issue supersedes other debates, and it should. It is very important that we follow the rules. On the surface, based upon the Speaker's ruling, based upon what the member for Mississauga—Streetsville said on February 6, and based upon some of the information that has been provided to us in between, this is an issue of a serious nature. It is a potential contempt of Parliament. That is a priority issue, and it has to be debated.

For me and for the Liberal Party, we recognize the importance of this issue. We would like to see the government say that it recognizes the importance of it and that it is going to allow it to go to the procedures committee now. Let us get it to the PROC committee where we can hear witnesses and deal with the issue appropriately, and then come back to the House to have some sort of permanent solution to it. That is what should happen.

I am not going to, in any way, try to limit the debate on the privilege motion itself.

However, I can tell members that if the privilege motion were to pass, it is in our collective best interest for Parliament to get it out of the House and into committee, where committee members could deal with the privilege, get down to the truth of the matter, and find out if the member for Mississauga—Streetsville is in contempt of Parliament, and, if so, what the consequences should be. That is the way that I would deal with this issue.

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to join this debate today. This is with reference to a report from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, recognizing Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. Clearly this report, as we have heard from previous speakers, is an important one that is worthy of debate and discussion. I am delighted to have that opportunity today.

The Middle East has been a profoundly complex region for centuries, and the Arab-Israeli conflict has been one of the most persistent issues on the global agenda for decades. Today we have an opportunity to consider how Canada, recognized worldwide for our enlightened approach toward individuals and communities in need of refuge, can appropriately address the issue of Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa in a principled way.

In May 2013, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development heard the profoundly personal stories of Jewish people who were uprooted from their homes of many centuries in Egypt and Iraq, and their subsequent migration to Israel or Canada, for which they have never received appropriate recognition.

In my address today, I will be discussing the prevailing context for Jewish communities at the time of Israel's independence, the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the current state of the peace process as it pertains to the government's response to the committee's recommendations.

Large parts of the over 4,000 years of history of the Jewish people is a history of exile, persecution, exclusion, and anti-Semitism. As we consider the questions in front of us today, it is important to recall

the profound horrors endured by Jewish communities around the globe.

Throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern era, Jews have experienced persecution almost anywhere they have lived. It is for precisely these reasons that in the late 19th century, Theodor Herzl formalized the case for the establishment of a Jewish state. Amidst pogroms in the Russian empire and widespread anti-Semitism in Europe, Herzl's vision resounded with the Jewish diaspora, and thus began significant Jewish migration to Ottoman and Palestine in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

It is important to note that at the time, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities often lived together peacefully in the Middle East, in adjacent if distinct communities in the great cities of Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad.

However, at the same time as the momentum behind Jewish migration to the Holy Land grew, the geopolitical arrangements of the previous centuries were beginning to unravel. As European alliances erupted into World War I, the weakening Ottoman Empire collapsed, after ruling over a large part of the Middle East and North Africa for half a millennium, including over 400 years in Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Europe's colonial powers took control over remaining parts of the empire, with France claiming Syria and Lebanon, and Britain gaining a mandate over Transjordan and Palestine in 1920.

Increasing anti-Semitism in Europe following World War I accelerated Jewish migration to mandate Palestine, further building on the small Jewish community that had formed, some of which had been present for centuries. During the period of the British mandate, the Jewish population of Palestine grew from one-sixth to nearly one-third of the overall population, and tensions began to grow between the Jewish and Arab populations, resulting in riots in Jaffa and a massacre in Hebron in 1929.

A decade later, back in Europe, the Jewish people endured some of humanity's darkest days, and during the Holocaust, the Nazis systematically murdered over six million Jewish people. While not the subject of today's discussion, it is important to recall the sheer horror of the Holocaust, the impact that this dreadful experience has had on the collective Jewish psyche, and the guidance that this terrible sequence of events should provide to people of conscience everywhere when discussing the modern State of Israel.

●(1210)

After the Holocaust, the international community did indeed come to recognize the compelling need for the establishment of a Jewish state. Canada was proud to be one of the countries preparing the blueprint for peace as part of the 1947 UN Special Committee on Palestine, contributing the services of Sir Ivan Rand, a Canadian Supreme Court justice.

That committee, with Rand playing an important swing role, proposed a two-state solution: a Jewish state and an Arab state, together with an international regime governing Jerusalem. The committee's recommendation ultimately resulted, on November 29, 1947, in the passage of UN General Assembly Resolution 181, setting out the partition plan.

*Routine Proceedings*

Canada was proudly among the 33 countries that voted for that resolution to ensure it gained the two thirds of votes required to pass, despite pressure from Britain to abstain. Unfortunately, among the 13 countries that voted against Resolution 181 were a number of neighbouring states in the region that would not support the establishment of a Jewish state.

It was no surprise, then, that following Israel's declaration of independence in May 1948, a protracted state of war followed. Israel was immediately attacked by neighbouring Arab states. The Haganah, predecessor to today's Israel Defense Forces, successfully defended the newly established Jewish state, and by the time of the armistice in 1949, had in fact expanded its borders well beyond those envisaged in the 1947 partition plan.

Those Palestinian Arabs who remained in their homes throughout the war period were granted Israeli citizenship. Those who fled were deemed Palestinian refugees.

As the committee concluded in its November 2013 report, one of the main messages to emerge from the committee's hearings is that two refugee populations were created by the Arab-Israeli conflict: one Palestinian and one Jewish. Just as Canada was driven by its humanitarian values to support the establishment of the State of Israel, so too Canada played an important role in supporting the needs of Palestinian refugee communities, both directly and through the UN.

The committee's hearings, however, have brought overdue attention to a second refugee population created following the 1948 war, that of the Jewish communities throughout the Middle East and North Africa. As the detailed presentations to the committee show, over 850,000 Jewish people lived in Arab countries in 1948. As noted earlier, these communities had lived together peacefully with their Christian and Muslim neighbours for centuries.

Following the adoption of the partition plan and the declaration of independence of Israel, Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa faced a changed landscape, becoming the subject of suspicion, fear, and violence. Within 10 years, over half had left these countries, with the vast majority of the remaining families following in the next 20 years.

Today, the once-vibrant Jewish quarters of Damascus, Cairo, and Sanaa are Jewish in name only. In many cases, as the committee poignantly heard, when Jewish families left, they left with nothing, despite leaving land and homes behind.

There is, however, no UN agency responsible for the primary services of these populations. There are no camps housing them. Most resettled in Israel or in welcoming countries such as Canada. As the committee heard, however, these ultimately divergent outcomes do not negate the need for recognition of the experience of Jewish refugees who were displaced from states in the Middle East and North Africa after 1948.

The eventual success of the State of Israel and the successful integration of many Jewish families into other countries do not diminish the need to acknowledge this very difficult experience.

●(1215)

The government is also in agreement with the committee's view that recognition of the experiences of Jewish refugees does not diminish or compete with the situation of Palestinian refugees. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the statements and actions of the Government of Canada do not undermine current negotiations or seek to prejudice their outcome. In this regard, the ensuing history of the Arab-Israeli conflict is pertinent to today's discussion.

Amidst an environment of continued hostility toward the Jewish state, Israel continued to mature into a strong democracy. During the upheaval of the Cold War, Israel continued to attract Jewish migrants from all over the world. They saw in Israel a place where they would forever be free from persecution. Israel was not, however, free from enemies. Following the 1948 war, Jordan had occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Egypt took control over the Gaza Strip, both areas that were part of the planned Arab state envisioned in UN resolution 181. As tension mounted, the Six Day War erupted in 1967, and Israel's victory resulted in its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as the Sinai and the Golan Heights. A second conflict in 1973 with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan confirmed Israel's military supremacy in the region.

In the ensuing decades, in addition to demonstrating strength, Israel has demonstrated its willingness to make peace with its neighbours when such efforts are genuine. As a result, in 1979, Israel and Egypt signed a historic peace accord, which returned the Sinai to Egypt and ended the hostilities between Israel and the largest Arab state. In 1994, Jordan followed suit, and signed a peace treaty with Israel. The latter agreement was signed in the context of great optimism for peace in the region, with secret talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, or PLO, resulting in the Oslo accords of 1993, granting the Palestinians self-governance over parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian aspirations of statehood, left unfulfilled since UN resolution 181, seemed within reach.

The great optimism of this period was shattered, however, with the assassination in 1995 of Yitzhak Rabin by an extremist Jewish settler, Yigal Amir. With the architect of the Oslo accords gone, commitment to the process faded and, instead, nearly two decades of intermittent violence and continued military occupation have ensued.

This brings us to the present day. The nearly 20 years since Rabin's assassination have seen numerous attempts by the international community, and in particular the U.S., to bring the two sides back together to achieve a final status agreement. Wye River, Sharm el-Sheikh, Taba, Annapolis, and Amman have been the sites of summits and conferences, but none have resulted in an agreement acceptable to the parties.

Canada's foreign policy objective throughout has been a comprehensive, two-state solution reached through a negotiated agreement between the parties that guarantees Israel's right to live in peace and security with its neighbours and leads to the establishment of a viable independent Palestinian state.



*Routine Proceedings*

Today, with U.S. stewardship, an opportunity to achieve such a historic peace may be before us. Under the leadership of U.S. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry, the peace process has begun again in earnest, with Palestinian and Israeli negotiators meeting regularly since July 2013. It is understood that all final status issues are on the table, including borders, security, settlements, and security for Jerusalem and refugees. This follows a period during which hopes for peace had all but faded, and the Palestinians sought to gain recognition through unilateral actions, such as a statehood bid at the United Nations.

● (1220)

Canada's support for a negotiated settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, like our opposition to the statehood initiative in November 2012, is based on the recognition that a just and lasting peace will only be achieved through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, as spelled out in UN resolutions 242 and 338.

Today, these negotiations may present the last chance to achieve the two-state solution. For those committed to the defence of the Jewish state and the establishment of a Palestinian state, the current process is a genuine opportunity for peace.

Secretary Kerry has obtained explicit backing from the Arab League for the initiative, reiterating the Arab peace initiative that would make an Israel-Palestinian peace the cornerstone of Israel's security in the wider region, in recognition from its neighbours. Unlike the Madrid process of the 1990s, this is a direct, bilateral consultation with strong U.S. engagement. In line with Canadian statements in recent years, it is our view that this is the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace.

For these negotiations to be successful, third parties need to allow the process to unfold and not seek to prejudge its outcome. It is our assessment, therefore, that now is not an opportune time to implement the committee's second recommendation. As the issue of Jewish refugees in the Middle East and North Africa is not currently under negotiation, a request by a third party such as Canada to insert this issue into talks at this stage is unlikely to be helpful.

The current negotiations build on years of history, and the sequencing and layers of nuance between Palestinian refugees, the right of return, the recognition of the Jewish nature of the State of Israel, and a host of other issues, lie in a delicate balance. Introducing the issue of Jewish refugees at this stage may set back the discussions and may risk violating the principle that the committee sought to respect in ensuring that the recognition of Jewish refugees does not diminish or compete with the situation of Palestinian refugees.

In keeping with Canada's principled approach to the conflict, we agree with the committee's first recommendation that the Government of Canada officially recognize the experience of Jewish refugees who were displaced from states in the Middle East and North Africa after 1948. Such recognition, long overdue, would be historic and would place Canada at the forefront of the international discussion on Jewish refugees. Canada's official recognition would be one small step in acknowledging this difficult period for Jewish communities of the region.

Given the current delicate state of affairs with closely held negotiations ongoing, it is not an opportune time to implement the second recommendation. By seeking to influence the parties to acknowledge the plight of Jewish refugees at this time, Canada would run the risk of having its recognition of Jewish refugees diminish or compete with the situation of Palestinian refugees. At this stage, therefore, we believe that the appropriate course of action is to officially recognize the experience of Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa while continuing to support U.S.-led efforts in bringing the parties toward a comprehensive, two-state solution.

Peace will only be reached through a negotiated agreement between the two parties that guarantees Israel's right to live in peace and security with its neighbours and leads to the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state.

This brings my comments to an end.

● (1225)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest here and in the lobby to my friend's comments about this report on a very important issue.

My question is to gauge his comfort level. As was discussed before you took the Chair in this debate, Mr. Speaker, the timing of this debate is most curious. The House of Commons was in the midst of discussing a point of privilege that the Speaker had ruled on: finding a prima facie case of contempt for Parliament by one of his members. This report was issued in November last year, but it was on this day that the government needed to bring in debate on this issue, one of incredible sensitivity to the Jewish community both here in Canada and abroad.

I admit that I have been getting emails from those in the Jewish community who are offended. They feel that their issue is being used to block a debate about a member being found in contempt and they do not know why the Conservative government would do this. Allow the debate to go free.

I will conclude with this. If this was such an important and urgent issue to the Conservatives, one would have assumed that a report issued in November of last year would have seen the light of day before March of this year.

The timing is beyond coincidence. It is cynical.

I wonder if he feels comfortable—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please.

The hon. member for Don Valley West.

**Mr. John Carmichael:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, as we heard from the previous speaker in this debate, that had he the opportunity to be the whip for the third party, and I incidentally encourage him in his aspirations, then he too would have a problem determining the priority of these different issues, because there are so many important issues right now.

*Routine Proceedings*

It is important for us to balance all of the issues of the day as they come before us and give them all time. Clearly, this issue is one that has importance. The committee has made its recommendations to the House, and I think it is important that we have appropriate time to discuss this issue.

● (1230)

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Don Valley West for his excellent speech on a very important and significant historical issue.

Our Prime Minister was recently in Israel and spoke in the Knesset, where he said that Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state is non-negotiable and is absolute.

I ask my friend to comment on our government's position on Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, and how he can distinguish it from the positions of both the Liberal Party and the NDP. As well, can he understand, as I certainly can, the reluctance of the two parties today to discuss this very important issue, given their stand on Israel?

**Mr. John Carmichael:** Mr. Speaker, it is true that we just returned from a historic state visit to Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan with our Prime Minister. It was a remarkable opportunity to witness a number of different cultures and issues that were pertinent to this time.

Our Prime Minister spoke in the Knesset in what was, without question, a historic presentation. He spoke to the friendship between Canada and Israel, and it was based on democracy.

The Prime Minister spoke to the fact that our country recognizes Israel's right to exist and would stand with Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East, most importantly, because there are those who surround Israel who do not believe that country has the right to exist.

For this debate to conclude appropriately today, we have to agree, I believe, that there is a two-state solution that must be found. It will be found only by the two participating parties coming to agreement on that discussion, and clearly they will both agree that Israel has the right to exist in a safe and secure environment.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the Conservatives preach so much about the importance of democracy and yet seem unable to take a look at themselves in the mirror.

The hon. member for Don Valley West said that it is important to address issues as they arise. If we addressed the issue of the member for Mississauga—Streetsville's contempt of Parliament, it is precisely because a Speaker's ruling was given. This is not about the opposition playing games, as the Conservatives often like to say, and it is not about fearmongering or any of the other excuses the Conservatives always use.

The Speaker rose in the House and presented his ruling on the extremely serious accusations made regarding a bill that affects our democracy and elections. When such an issue is before us, we must begin debating it immediately so that it can be examined by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The Conservatives want to change the subject by claiming that there are other more important issues that need to be addressed. However, if an on-the-spot Speaker's ruling is not a priority in the House, then I do not know what is.

Does the hon. member recognize the importance of yesterday's Speaker's ruling, which we should be discussing right now?

[*English*]

**Mr. John Carmichael:** Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying how privileged I am to have the opportunity to address this issue here today. This is an important debate.

My colleague for York Centre spoke about the Prime Minister's recent state visit to Israel, the West Bank, and Syria. However, throughout the morning we have heard much debate on where the priorities are. Is it the Speaker's ruling? Is it the Ukraine? Is it Syria?

There are many issues today that are very relevant, and all of them need to be discussed. This one brings me particularly poignantly to the issue of refugees.

On this recent trip to Jordan, I had the good fortune to travel by helicopter to the Syrian-Jordanian border. I witnessed hundreds upon hundreds of men, women, and children carrying their worldly belongings across the border. I can tell members that it was heart-wrenching to see the plight of the Syrian refugees as they fled for their lives with all that they could carry.

This issue is of particular importance. The timing is now. We have the opportunity to discuss it, and I think we should carry this debate to its conclusion.

● (1235)

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the refugee situation we are discussing today involved 820,000 people. It was a massive displacement of people from their homes, lands, culture, and language. They had to leave everything behind. Here we are just a few decades or maybe half a century later.

I wonder if the member would comment on how it is possible that a displacement of 820,000 people could largely be forgotten. Everybody seems to know about Palestinian people and the Palestinian refugees, which is a common thing to talk about, but how is it possible that the displacement of so many people has largely been forgotten?

**Mr. John Carmichael:** Mr. Speaker, it is hard to imagine.

In this day of instant messaging and instant information, we hear about crises that are occurring by the minute and in real time. Clearly 825,000 refugees who, I guess, almost went into obscurity suffered all of the same horrors as the refugees we watch today.

I cannot explain the situation other than to say that it is time we recognized it. Today's debate is an important opportunity to in fact take that time.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am deeply troubled and shocked to see that the Conservatives are using as serious an issue as Jewish refugees for purely partisan purposes.

*Routine Proceedings*

## MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

No one is fooled, and that is the worst part. This is not because the Conservatives want to debate a report that was tabled last fall and discussed in committee nearly a year ago. They want to avoid the debate about one of their own, who may be in contempt of Parliament. That is all they want. They are manipulating a very serious issue.

The government loves to muzzle scientists and civil society. I meet with many representatives from community groups who are afraid. What does it say when people are afraid of their government? It is terrible. The Conservatives want to muzzle the public service and do not want to listen to Canadians. They refuse to travel throughout the country to hear what Canadians have to say about their electoral reform proposal. In addition, it is quite clear that they do not want Parliament to function properly and they do not want to hold debates—they use gag orders, extensions and cheap political stunts like the one we are seeing here today. I cannot think of any other way to say it. They try to stifle all debate. They are not being transparent.

My democracy is suffering, but I will continue to fight for it. I know that all of my NDP colleagues will continue to fight for our country's democracy.

In light of that, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1240)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[English]

## PETITIONS

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a large number of petitions.

First it is my honour to present petitions from 14,000 petitioners across Canada calling on the Government of Canada to stop being soft on crime against animals. Canada must strengthen the language of animal cruelty law and remove animal cruelty crimes from the property section of the Criminal Code. We must recognize animals as beings that can feel pain. They are not property, and criminals who abuse animals must face conviction and serious penalty. Those who have done serious crime must do serious time. It is time for Canada to act and protect our furry friends.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the Government of Canada to provide seniors with affordable, reliable and fast public transit. The petitioners note that seniors with low incomes are isolated at home because some of them cannot afford bus tickets. Having more seniors on public transit means better health, better air quality, less gridlock, and better neighbourhoods.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third batch of petitions is from my constituents. They ask that the federal government make side guards mandatory on all trucks in order to save pedestrians' and cyclists' lives, and in order to save fuel.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the last group of petitions is also from my constituents in Toronto. The petitioners are asking the federal government to provide a permanent investment plan to support public transit, establish a federal funding mechanism for public transit, and ensure that there is a national public transit strategy so that we can deal with the \$18 billion gap in transit infrastructure needs.

[Translation]

## GATINEAU PARK

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to table this petition signed by dozens of people in the Gatineau region. The petitioners want Gatineau Park to have legal protection that will preserve it for future generations.

I feel it is important to table this petition in support of the member for Hull—Aylmer. In my riding, Alfred-Pellan, a group called Sauvons nos trois grandes îles is working to protect a region along the Rivière des Mille-Îles, and I am sure that the people of Laval and Alfred-Pellan are happy that we are also fighting to protect a park in the Gatineau Valley.

[English]

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon for the morning petition presentations. I have two petitions.

One is from residents of Pender Island, within my own constituency of Saanich—Gulf Islands. It is a petition that has actually been overtaken by events. The petitioners are calling on the government to await a full scientific response from the National Energy Board from its environmental review of the northern gateway. Having read the National Energy Board's review, I can only say with great sadness that the National Energy Board did not produce a scientifically-based, evidence-based report.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1245)

## 41ST GENERAL ELECTION

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from residents from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. They are calling on the government to bring forward a full inquiry to get to the bottom of the attempts to defraud voters in the 2011 election. The petitioners point out that each one of these efforts was an offence under elections law. Now that the administration opposite is moving forward on Bill C-23 to have a registry of robocalls, perhaps it would also be interested in getting to the bottom of who caused them in the last election.

[Translation]

## GATINEAU PARK

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support my colleague from Hull—Aylmer by tabling a petition called “Together let’s protect Gatineau Park”.

Many people have signed this petition to protect Gatineau Park, and I am pleased to table it today.

[English]

## CANADA POST

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House one more time to table petitions with respect to Canada Post. The petitions are signed by people from Kapuskasing, Hearst, Fauquier, Moonbeam, Ottawa, Sudbury, Iroquois Falls, Matheson, and Timmins.

Basically, the petitioners are concerned that Canada Post and the Conservatives are axing door-to-door delivery and killing jobs. They expect that 6,000 to 8,000 people will lose their jobs, and they are concerned with respect to the impact this would have upon seniors and people with disabilities.

The petitioners ask the government to reverse the cuts to services around Canada Post and to look, instead, for ways to innovate through postal banking.

[Translation]

## VIA RAIL

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to table a petition signed by about 100 people who are asking the government to direct VIA Rail to intervene and ensure that the railway between Bathurst and Miramichi will not be closed.

This contentious issue jeopardizes the future of passenger rail service in eastern Canada. This petition, signed by 100 or so eastern Canadians, is in addition to over 24,000 other signatures of people who want to protect VIA Rail’s passenger service in eastern Canada. These people are asking the government and VIA Rail to take action to ensure that this segment of the railway will not be closed.

## SYRIA

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition pointing out that more than 2 million Syrians have fled Syria and another 4 million have been internally displaced within the country.

The petitioners point out this is the worst humanitarian crisis the world has seen in years and that the neighbouring countries cannot carry this burden alone. The petitioners are therefore calling on the Canadian government to significantly increase the number of Syrian refugees it sponsors, propose various measures to do so and ensure that no Syrians are returned to Syria under any circumstances.

## GATINEAU PARK

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition to protect Gatineau Park, signed by many constituents from the national capital region.

As I have said many times, our park is not really protected by any federal legislation. We must absolutely correct this problem for future generations. Again, I hope that all members of the House will support this bill, which will truly provide a legacy for future generations.

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a number of regions in Canada have natural treasures that are worth protecting. There is nothing more effective than legal protection.

That is what dozens of citizens are calling for. They signed a petition to protect Gatineau Park and its 90 endangered plant and 500 endangered animal species. I am pleased to support and present this petition to the House.

● (1250)

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I present a certified petition to protect Gatineau Park.

It should be noted that even in this day and age we have to intervene to protect green space from speculation and people who have no respect for their environment. It is shocking and unfortunate that even today we still have to do this. In keeping with this legislation, I would like the House to automatically protect the environment to leave a legacy for future generations.

[English]

## VIA RAIL

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I table another petition regarding VIA Rail’s passenger services between Montreal and Halifax.

The petitioners are concerned by the cuts in service in northern New Brunswick. They are concerned that not only would that create a real hardship for the residents who rely upon the rail service for personal transportation but that it would spell the end for the service all the way from Montreal to Halifax.

Counting this petition, the petitions that have already been tabled, and forthcoming petitions that have yet to be tabled, there are now a total of 24,000 signatures.

## IMPAIRED DRIVING

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of Canadians concerned with the current impaired driving laws being too lenient. They are asking that tougher laws be implemented, along with new mandatory minimum sentences for those convicted of impaired driving causing death. They want to see the Criminal Code of Canada redefine the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

## UKRAINE

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I did yesterday, I rise because the Liberal Party believes there is, in fact, a need to have an emergency debate today with regard to the ongoing crisis taking place in Ukraine.

In particular, over the last 72 hours we have seen the deployment of Russian military troops in the Crimea area. There is a great deal of apprehension and concern both in Ukraine, obviously, and also throughout the world, particularly in Canada, where it is estimated that there are more than 1.2 million people of Ukrainian heritage and other Canadians who are very much concerned and want to convey one message as much as possible on the Ukraine crisis. This would emphasize issues such as the need for Canada to participate in observing what is happening with regard to sanctions, the issue of those who perpetrated violence during the protests, and of course, most importantly, what has been happening over the last few days regarding the deployment of military personnel.

Yesterday, when I moved the motion, the Speaker thought there might have been a day as an opposition day today or a supply day. We know that is not the case. The urgency exists today. Many are watching to see if we will move ahead and allow this emergency debate to take place. It is only four hours of our time to address what is a very important world issue that is having a very profound impact on the citizens of Ukraine. We want to send a very strong message to the people of Ukraine that we are supportive and, as a nation, will do what we can to demonstrate that we care and are prepared to act as one, wherever possible.

That would be the purpose of having the debate today. I trust, upon reflection, you will see that there is merit for it, Mr. Speaker. If not, maybe you could canvass the House to see if there is unanimous consent for it to take place.

*Privilege*

● (1255)

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The Chair thanks the member for his request. At the outset, I would state that the Chair is quite sure that all members of the House and, indeed, all Canadians feel strongly about the importance of what is going on in the Ukraine and its relevance to Canada.

Having said that, in his ruling yesterday, the Speaker articulated several reasons why he did not feel that an emergency debate was the appropriate step at this point. The member for Winnipeg North pointed out the fact that today was expected to be an opposition day, but I would point out that the opposition day happening in the near future is still pending and would provide an opportunity for that to take place. As a result, the Chair is not inclined at this point to take the suggestion.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MEMBER FOR MISSISSAUGA—  
STREETSVILLE—REFERENCE TO STANDING  
COMMITTEE

## MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the privilege motion of the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The motion is in order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their place so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

Seeing several members, I would ask members if they would keep the length of their questions similar to questions and comments, a minute and 15 seconds to a minute and 30 seconds.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for those following along in this sordid affair of a Conservative MP being found in contempt of Parliament by the Speaker, the Conservatives have now added even further insult to injury to Canadians. The context for this was their so-called fair elections act, which would muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer and make it more difficult for Canadians to vote. They put time allocation on that. They limited the debate. Rather than consult with Canadians, they said there would be no consultations with Canadians about our elections law and no further debate in the House of Commons, and then they had evidence made up by Conservative MPs to justify and rationalize the debate. When it was pointed out that the Conservative MP was not telling the truth to Canadians and Parliament, he was found in a prima facie case of contempt by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

*Privilege*

Extraordinarily, the Conservatives think the best way to remedy this is to congratulate the Conservative MP for not having told the truth and for what a great fellow he is, and to say that everybody does it, so that is fine too. Then, while we are in the midst of the debate about how to make this better, so that the Conservatives do not keep rationalizing their bad legislation through completely invented and falsified accounts of something so important as voter fraud, they are shutting down the debate on that.

When we only have a hammer in the toolbox, every problem looks like a nail. That is what the Conservatives do. They shut down debate, shut down Parliament, and hold the place in contempt. That is what is being done here today, nothing more, nothing less. It is shocking to me that a sitting Government of Canada finds this kind of behaviour acceptable and to be encouraged. What message are the Conservatives sending to Canadians about how much respect they have for the people who put them here, those who voted for them, and the vast majority of Canadians who did not and who would certainly not again come the next election.

My question to the government House leader is this. How do the Conservatives have the audacity to stand here and shut down debate in our Parliament when we are dealing with an issue wherein a member was held in contempt for not telling the truth about a flawed and unfair elections act proposed by his same government?

• (1300)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, the question we are dealing with is one that is quite clear-cut. There is a motion that the comments of the member be referred to the procedure and House affairs committee. The question we have to ask is whether that would serve any utility. There is no dispute about what happened. The member made comments in the House. He came back and corrected those comments to the House. He apologized to the House for his incorrect comments. The question then becomes what would be served by reference to the procedure and House affairs committee. There is nothing new that we would learn. The facts are there. They are simple. Therefore, there is no utility in that exercise, the same as there is no utility in continuing to discuss and debate it in the House.

We know what happened. The hon. member corrected the record and apologized, which certainly should have been accepted at that point. One cannot picture anything of great utility that would come from a further discussion of the matter at the procedure and House affairs committee. If one wants to know what kind of insight could be derived at the procedure and House affairs committee, one need only look at the speeches that have occurred so far in this debate on privilege from the official opposition, that being lots of noise, no light, no illumination, and no new facts.

We know what the facts are. They are quite simple. It is time to move on.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government House leader is dead wrong. Let me paint a visual picture for him.

On February 6, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville rose in the House and stated that he had personally witnessed an illegal activity. This was a significant statement. A day or so later we understand that Elections Canada might have been brought into the picture by wanting to know why the member had not reported it to

the police or Elections Canada. What motivated the member for Mississauga—Streetsville to make that statement and then come back to the House and say he had made a mistake?

The Conservatives talk about getting tough on crime, but what about getting tough on consequences? Contempt of the House of Commons is very serious. The only way we are going to get to the bottom of this is if it goes to the procedure and House affairs committee. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville needs to indicate what motivated him. Was it because someone from Elections Canada contacted him and asked him whether or not he had reported having witnessed this crime to the police? What precipitated it? We do not know.

The government House leader does not seem to see this as a big issue. Could he indicate clearly to the House that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was not contacted in any fashion by Elections Canada or the commissioner? Could he indicate that Elections Canada had nothing to do with motivating the member to come back and change the record three weeks later? It is a critical point. It would go a long way if the government House leader could provide assurance on this fact. Could he clearly indicate that Elections Canada did not contact the member for Mississauga—Streetsville?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, all of us in the House have a custom of taking people's word as the truth. With that custom comes a heavy obligation, the heavy obligation that they must always tell the truth. Although rhetoric and debate at times may tempt people to stretch the truth, the fact is that it is a very serious duty and obligation.

In this case, the hon. member, having misspoken, took that obligation sufficiently seriously enough that he came back to the House and corrected it. That is as it should be. When members find they have misspoken, they must come back to the House and correct that. It is an important duty and obligation.

The only thing that precipitated this motion even being in the House is the fact that the member came here himself and corrected the record. The paradox is this: should he face consequences for doing so? We would be creating exactly the opposite of the incentive we wish to see. We would be creating a situation where people would no longer be encouraged to come to the House and correct the record and tell the truth for fear of facing a contempt action, for fear of having their name dragged through the mud. We would be creating exactly the opposite of what I think we all agree is the right thing, coming back and correcting the record when members have misspoken.

That is another reason we should not take this matter further to the procedure and House affairs committee. It would create, if I may say, an environment where people would be discouraged from carrying out their important duty and obligation of telling the truth here in the House.

• (1305)

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening attentively to the government House leader on this issue, and I find his mastery of what George Orwell called “newspeak” to be truly astonishing.

He says that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville had misspoken, as if he had come in and called someone by the wrong riding name. Let us look at what the member said, and then ask ourselves why the government is trying to shut down debate.

This is a quote from the member of Parliament for Mississauga—Streetsville:

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about this vouching system again.... On mail delivery day when the voter cards are delivered to community mailboxes in apartment buildings, many of them are discarded in the garbage can or the blue box. I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards—

—and using them to vote.

That is what the member said. It was completely false. That is not misspeaking. Everything that we interpret has to be looked at in a context. Elmer A. Driedger, the author of numerous tomes on legislative drafting and statutory interpretation, always says that the best way to understand the meaning of something is to look at the context.

Let us look at the context. The government has introduced a bill that it has the temerity to call the fair elections act. It would allow unlimited spending by the Conservatives, the same Conservatives who were convicted in the in and out scandal, the same Conservatives whose database was used for the robocalls. We say that deserves a full and complete debate.

One of the things the Conservatives have put up as evidence in favour of scuppering the fundamental law of democracy in Canada is this type of witness, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

We say this: shutting down debate puts a big circle around the stain of what the Conservatives are trying to do.

[*Translation*]

Trying to deprive the people's elected representatives of their right to debate a law that underpins our democracy is unacceptable, and it is your duty to refuse that request.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to quote from what the hon. member said in this House on February 25. He came to this House and said:

I would like to sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House for the statement that I made. It was never my intention, in any way, to mislead the House, for which I have the greatest amount of respect.

He came to this House and he apologized. That is what we expect of members. In fact, the Chair in his ruling on March 3, 2014, said:

The Chair takes...note that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville...has apologized for his mistake.

This was, of course, the Speaker's ruling that led to the motion by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley that we are now debating.

What is interesting is that subsequent to both of those, we have, for example, the leader of the opposition's critic on these very matters, the member for Toronto—Danforth, saying:

That was not an apology. We must keep in mind that our colleague said it twice. If this had been phrased as an apology, we might be in a different universe. We might not have had a question of privilege.

### *Privilege*

It was an apology. He said "I would like to sincerely apologize", yet the leader of the opposition's critic for this very matter says the member did not apologize. Did that member misspeak? Did he mislead the House when he said that? Is that the kind of matter that the member for Toronto—Danforth should now, as is happening to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, be held in contempt for?

In the Speaker's own ruling, it is a matter of fact that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville apologized, yet subsequent to that the member for Toronto—Danforth denies it and says no such apology occurred. It is a misstatement of fact.

However, if we go down this path the opposition wishes to go, that is the kind of thing that leads to an ongoing argument for contempt and finding of contempt.

The opposition should acknowledge there was an apology made, and it should be accepted by all of us as gentlemen and gentlewomen.

• (1310)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find somewhat disingenuous the talk about how the member used the word "misspeak", because on several occasions when opposition members of the House have had to rise to apologize, the Conservatives have never, ever let the issue go. It was never point finale for them. They would never say they would never bring it up again, that he or she had already apologized and therefore let us all drop it.

Let me go back to the context that the member for Outremont just talked about. Look at the context in this situation with the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. If he had witnessed the incident or someone had told him that it had taken place, I could understand some two weeks then going by and his coming back to the House to say he had misspoken because he had just found out that his information had been wrong. Perhaps he read somewhere in a document what had happened. He reported it to the House, but then came back and said he had misspoken. That happens: the evidence proves the contrary.

The context is that he saw it himself. He said on several occasions that "I saw this happen". It took him two weeks to realize that his memory was not what it used to be.

It is a little disingenuous to say that he misspoke and that all things are innocent in this realm. They are not as innocent as they seem. Remember, it was Elections Canada that received the complaints that brought him to his feet in the House. Something happened at Elections Canada, not within his own conscience. It was about what he saw.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, as we debate and consider this motion, I would say to the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor that he take heed of the advice of his own colleague from Kingston and the Islands who said, in effect, that we do not want to create an environment where we discourage people from coming forward and correcting the record. That is a very important principle and I think his caucus colleague was onto something important.

*Privilege*

I think we treat all hon. members as honourable, but we also have to create an environment that encourages that. We have to say that when they come to the House to set the record straight and acknowledge that they have misspoken, it should not be the trigger for their being found in contempt, for being dragged through the mud. But that would be the consequence if we proceed with this.

We would be creating a situation where any time any member came to the House to correct the record and to put the facts on the table, which is the duty and obligation of all of us, they would be punished, rather than being treated as having been honourable and done the right thing. They would be faced with a motion for contempt, have their names and reputations dragged through the mud and face what is a very unpleasant experience here for having set the record straight and told to the truth to the House and, in this case, having apologized to the House.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of quick things. It seems like the member is challenging the Speaker's ruling. In his statement the government House leader said that the member did not intend to mislead the House. There are three criteria to be found in contempt of Parliament. One of them is that it must be established that the member knew at the time that the statement was incorrect and that the member intended to mislead the House. That is what the Speaker ruled on, that in fact he did intend to mislead the House. Why do we know this? Because he was arguing for this badly flawed election bill.

The government House leader has a bit of a conundrum on his hands. In his celebration of the honour and respect of the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, who was caught not telling the truth and then two weeks later had a moment of conviction, half apologized, and came back to the House, he is saying this action should be celebrated. Would it not be better if the member had just not misspoken the first time, if he had not misled the House the first time? Yes, he was found by the Speaker to be in *prima facie* contempt of Parliament.

One of the criteria is that the MP was trying to mislead the House. That is a fact. The member just stated the contrary. He just said in effect, "I think I'm going to challenge the Chair on this one; I think the Speaker's ruling is wrong, because the member for Mississauga—Streetsville did not in fact intend to mislead the House and Canadians about something so critical as our election laws". He says this in justifying why the Conservatives needed this massive overhaul that, by coincidence and circumstance, benefits the Conservative Party of Canada, lo and behold, why the Conservative Party refuses to have public consultations, why it refused to consult with the Chief Electoral Officer.

To the member's point about why we want to debate this and to the point about why he wants to shut this down, yes, the member did intend to mislead the House. Yes, he was aware of what he was doing at the time and he was doing it for the most cynical of reasons, to try to convince Canadians and MPs that the bill was required, that there was a problem that he had personally witnessed, a crime that he had witnessed, when in fact it was not true and he knows it was not true and he knew it at the time. How can the government House leader defend such reprehensible action?

●(1315)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I find the comments of the opposition House leader very puzzling. He seems to imply that his own motion is one that should not be debated and decided by the House because that would in some way mean passing judgment, or, if you will, appealing the Speaker's ruling. However, he was the one who made the motion, and he put it to the House that the House should decide on it.

Paradoxically, he seems not to want to have the House decide on it having moved the motion, which I find odd. That is why we are trying to ensure that the House can actually decide on this question.

More significantly, I ask him, if this is the path we are going down, what do we do, for example, with the member for Parkdale—High Park? I consider her to be a very honourable individual. She said that the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville would not apologize for his statements. In fact, we know that on February 25 he told this House, "I would like to sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House for the statement that I made".

He did apologize for his statements. The Speaker referred to it in a ruling on March 3. Yet, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park said that he did not. Apparently, she said something that was not true in this House. Am I suggesting that she is not an honourable person? No, she is a very honourable person. This happens.

The question then becomes, having done that, should she be found in contempt of this House? When she comes back and corrects the record and says she is mistaken—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member appears to be insinuating that the member for Parkdale—High Park knowingly misled the House, when in fact, on February 24, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville did not apologize. He said he was correcting the record.

I would like the hon. member to retract any attacks on the member for Parkdale—High Park.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I will go back to the government House leader in response to that point of order, but also ask him to conclude his remarks on the previous question.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I will respond to the point of order by saying that I will get to that member next. He apparently is wilfully blind to a major factor in this debate that the Speaker referenced in his ruling of March 3, that the hon. member apologized for his mistake.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has spoken to the motion arising out of the Speaker's ruling and is wilfully blind to what the Speaker actually said, wilfully blind to what the hon. member said on February 25, when he said, "I would like to sincerely"—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please.



I will go back to the member for Timmins—James Bay on a point of order, but I would remind all hon. members that it is a point of order specifically around a point of order, not debating an argument that has been made.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, we were told last night that we cannot use the word “lie”. We were told that. We respect that. We are told that we cannot say that the member “deliberately misled”, yet the hon. member uses the word “wilfully”.

I ask the Speaker to rule that he is attempting to say that I lied in this House, which is not true. I treat my privileges with respect, and I treat this House with respect. I would like the Speaker to ensure that both sides follow rules of decency about the attempt to claim that people are deliberately misleading this House, that people are deliberately lying, or that people are wilfully misrepresenting issues.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** As a general point the Chair agrees with the point raised by the member for Timmins—James Bay, which is that there is language which is considered unacceptable in this place. The Chair would ask all hon. members to refrain from using that language.

Specifically in terms of what the government House leader said today, the Chair will review the transcript and will return to this House if necessary.

I will go back to the government House leader to quickly wrap up on his answer so we can move on to another question.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up the point of order. The hon. member makes my point well in his response, and that is, of course, to not have regard for the statement of the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville that “I would like to sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House..”. The statement he made in this House constituted an apology. It could not be clearer than that. It was noted by the Speaker in the ruling on March 3. Yet, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park did not reference it.

My view is that when she comes back to the House and apologizes, she says she is sorry, that she misspoke and she was not correct, I should not then, and nor would I, encourage anybody to make that an occasion for raising a point of order asking that she be found in contempt of this House. That would not be appropriate.

• (1320)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons of what the Speaker’s ruling said on this matter.

I think it is important that we remember that we have had a ruling from the Speaker. It is not a matter of opinion. The Speaker said, “At the same time, the fact remains that the House continues to be seized of completely contradictory statements”.

The Speaker then went on to rule, based on a previous decision from the previous Speaker of the House, the hon. Peter Milliken, who said “...if only to clear the air”. If only to clear the air, the Speaker ruled that we could delve deeper into getting the truth of what occurred.

### *Privilege*

The last shambles of a discussion was a diversionary tactic. As important as the motion is that the House deal with the report of the committee that looked into the matter of unresolved issues of injustice to Jewish refugees, I agree with members who said that it was a cynical ploy and not worthy of those who have championed the cause of Israel and Jewish refugees in the past.

However, as we look at this issue right now, we have not cleared the air. I have questions, and I am very fair-minded. I have stood in this place and defended the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville. However, I do not understand how such very contradictory statements could be made, particularly on an issue as fundamental as the right of Canadians to vote, the issues raised in Bill C-23, for which we have not a scintilla of evidence that we have a crisis in Canada of voter fraud. The only evidence brought before the House was that from the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville, which he has now admitted was not true. We are left in a conundrum of no explanation, and time is running down the clock.

It appears that the Conservatives do not want us to do what the Speaker said we had a right to, what Peter Milliken said a House has a right to, which is to clear the air.

The air in this place is polluted with diversionary tactics.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on whether or not the air is polluted, but I will say that there is no contradiction left on the table. The only contradiction is between the statement that the member originally made and then his correction eliminating the earlier statement, saying that it was not accurate. There is no mystery any longer. There is no question to be probed into. It is very simple. The question then becomes, what is the committee going to study?

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville would say the same thing that he said in this House when he corrected the record. He no doubt would say the same thing that he said in this House. He apologized. He corrected the record, apologized to all Canadians, and apologized here in this House.

What is the value that will be served? What is the contradiction?

I am sure the member is not under any illusion that having corrected the record he stands by the original misstatement that he made. I do not think anybody believes that in this House. I do not think anybody thinks he stands by that.

There really is no contradiction left to be studied. There is no mystery. It is a fairly straightforward matter.

**Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government House leader could help the House understand why a member would admit to a mistake and apologize, when theoretically he could have said nothing and chose not to.

I am trying to get sense of this, and perhaps the House leader could help me understand it. Is this about a member trying to do the right thing, or, from what I hear in terms of questions opposite, is this just about politics?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member has put it well. I think he has put his finger on one of the difficulties we have as a House.

*Privilege*

We are being asked by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to send this off to the procedure and House affairs committee, and his suggestion, of course, is that the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville is in contempt of the House, when the hon. member came back and corrected the record.

Had the member for Mississauga—Streetsville not done that, had he kept his counsel to himself, having recognized that he misspoke but not bringing it to the attention of the House, he would have failed in his duties and obligations to this House, which is the duty and obligation to tell the truth.

Yet, his reward for fulfilling his duties and obligations is to have the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley hit him with a procedural fist in the face and suddenly say that if one is going to come here and tell the truth, if one is going to come here and correct the record, one will face consequences for that.

Member could face consequences any time that they come to correct the record. There will be all kinds of members looking around saying “Geez, I misspoke myself once in a debate”.

The member for Timmins—James Bay is another member who said that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville never apologized, even though that was after the Speaker observed in his ruling that the member had apologized. Should he be now found in contempt?

I am sure that member will come forward and say that he is sorry, that he was not aware that had happened, and he will apologize to this House for having misspoken. I am sure he will do that. I have confidence that he will do that. I hope he will do that.

However, I do not think, having corrected the record and corrected the mistake, that the member should be rewarded with the punishment of a motion for contempt.

● (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the arguments that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is trying to make. With all due respect, I think he is dodging the issue.

He said that we do not want to create a toxic environment, but I think that is what is happening. Since I was elected to the House in 2011, I have been shocked to see that democracy is not respected in a democratic country like ours. We are elected by members of the public, who want to know what the government is doing for them, but unfortunately we constantly find ourselves under gag orders. This Conservative government has issued a record number of gag orders.

My colleague made erroneous statements, but I am not a legal expert. My background is different from that of many of my colleagues who are experts in law. However, the member said his own volition that he had witnessed that. I would assume that that is what led the government to introduce this bill to eliminate—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has approximately 20 seconds to respond.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, we see a paradox here. The House Leader of the Opposition has put a motion to the House asking the House to do something. We now have a motion before us, which I have put, saying let us get on with it, let the House decide the motion that he is asking it to decide. He is no doubt going to get up and vote that he does not want the House to decide the motion that he has put to the House.

It is very paradoxical, but it shows the difference between New Democrats, who do not want to get things done, and our government, which likes to get things done.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Call in the members.

● (1410)

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

(*Division No. 73*)

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockett
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill

*Statements by Members*

Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hilyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lauzon
Lebel	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Plamondon
Poillievre	Preston
Raith	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 150

Jones	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro (sor)	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- fall)
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote— 119	

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

[English]

**MEDICINE HAT VOLUNTEER**

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege to stand here today to talk about one of my constituents, Evelyn Stall. Evelyn has been a very active volunteer in Medicine Hat and elsewhere for over 80 years. At 95 years young, Evelyn is as active as ever in voluntary activities. Here are just a few examples of her dedication.

In the past, Evelyn has served as a volunteer on the City of Medicine Hat Transit Advisory Board, the Medicine Hat Police Service Restorative Justice study committee, the Volunteers in Action Association, the Needs of the Elderly Planning Committee, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Canadian Mental Health Association and City of Medicine Hat Senior Services.

This past year, her monthly project sees that retirees come together for special luncheons she organizes. One was “Italy”, another “Hawaii”. Stories about these places were shared as well as stories about “What is love”. I can say that Hatters love Evelyn.

Evelyn continues to be an inspiration to us all. Her contributions over the past several decades have been noted and will now be in the official record of the House. I wish Evelyn the best in the future.

**NAYS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Côté
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Groghé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**UKRAINE**

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are all united in our desire for peace and stability in Ukraine, and we will stand with all those who reject the use of armed forces to resolve differences.

[English]

It is wrong to use military means to achieve what you cannot through the ballot box or through non-violent protests. The actions of the government of the Russian Federation are being condemned around the world.

[Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following translation:]

The Russian people are also crying out for peace. We see demonstrations against this action. I call on the Russian people to use their voices to urge their government to change direction and walk towards peace.

\* \* \*

**UKRAINE**

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Russia's invasion of Crimea violates global peace and security. Putin's effort to destabilize Ukraine is reprehensible. Putin cannot be trusted, and his word is worthless.

Russia fails to meet civilized standards of behaviour and must be held accountable. As our Prime Minister said, "President Putin's actions [could well] put his country on a course of diplomatic and economic isolation that could see Russia exit the G8 entirely". Putin uses the old Soviet playbook, the same fabrications, the same agent provocateurs, and other Soviet techniques to violate sovereign nations. My parents witnessed this in Poland in 1939, yet in 2014, history is tragically repeating itself.

Canada's position has been clear: the territorial integrity of Ukraine must be respected. Days ago, I was in Ukraine meeting with its transitional government and protestors, who sacrificed their blood on the Maidan so that they can seek their own destiny. They ousted Viktor Yanukovich, who killed, kidnapped, tortured his own people, and stole Ukraine's treasury.

Canada stands with the people and the government of Ukraine today and tomorrow.

*Slava Ukraini.*

\* \* \*

**CANADA-AFRICA PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION**

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a little more than 10 years ago, the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, or CAPA, was formed. In its first decade, CAPA constructively engaged with fellow African parliamentarians to help them entrench democratic principles and to share best practices in our dual roles of overseeing government and legislating.

[Translation]

Over the course of that first decade, the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association built a good reputation among our Canadian and African colleagues, among African ambassadors to Canada and Canadian ambassadors to Africa, at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, as well as among NGOs operating in Africa.

● (1415)

[English]

On behalf of my colleagues in the House and the Senate, I express our gratitude for having had the opportunity of getting to know this vast, diverse, and complex continent and its 54 countries. I also wish to express CAPA's strong desire to continue to strengthen our relationships with our fellow African parliamentarians in the coming years.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I just had occasion to talk with the Ukrainian ambassador to Canada and share with him the fact that our party stands with Ukraine and Ukrainians in these troubling times.

We have just learned that the Russian defence ministry is boasting of having tested an intercontinental missile. Can the Prime Minister please update the House on these troubling events?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we stand, obviously, with the people of Ukraine and with our allies at this very difficult and troubling time. There have been ongoing discussions, as you can imagine, between leaders and between foreign ministers on the subject of Ukraine. We appreciate greatly the open and shared discussions that have taken place between Canadian leaders on the same subject matter.

Again we reiterate that we are very much with the people of Ukraine at this difficult time. We know that the military intervention remains a top priority within these discussions and we call upon the Russian leader to withdraw troops and respect Ukraine's sovereign territory.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, can the government tell us if it accepts Vladimir Putin's explanation that the troops deployed in Crimea are not Russian troops?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the army currently on Ukrainian soil is from Russia. That is obvious. Therefore we must stand united in this situation.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

There is a very concerned, troubled people in Ukraine right now, given the presence on the ground of what appears to be a very aggressive Russian army.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what messages have been sent by the Canadian government to Putin?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have been speaking in no uncertain terms directly to the leadership in Russia that the activities we have seen in Crimea are absolutely unacceptable. We have *démarched*, at the highest level, the Russian ambassador to lay down in no uncertain terms that the rhetoric that has been used by the Russian president is in no way factual and is in no way a justification for a Soviet-style military invasion in the 21st century.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will again ask the Prime Minister to comment on the most recent events and the fact that the Russian ministry of defence is boasting about having tested an intercontinental missile.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition. I thought question period started a little later.

We continue to regard the situation in Ukraine with the utmost concern, and we continue to examine our bilateral relations with President Putin and his government.

This morning, I ordered that all bilateral activities between the Canadian Armed Forces and the Russian Federation's military forces be suspended effective immediately.

[English]

Obviously, we view all of these military activities of the Russian Federation and of President Putin with the gravest of concern. Operation Vigilant Eagle and all other planned activities are being suspended.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our participation in the G8 summit in Sochi has of course been cancelled, and we agree with that. The question for the Prime Minister is this: given the potential effect on the world economy, is he planning on talking with our allies to hold a G7 meeting?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, all of our G7 partners have suspended their preparations for the G8 summit in Sochi. It is my view that all of these actions, including the suspension of G8 summit preparations, should remain in effect until such time as President Putin's government leaves all occupied sovereign Ukrainian territory.

In terms of a G7 meeting, I spoke to President Obama on that matter on the weekend. I have suggested that, and I know there are discussions among G7 sherpas about the possibility of a G7 meeting in the upcoming weeks.

•(1420)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are obviously deeply concerned about the situation

unfolding in Ukraine, and we stand in absolute solidarity with the Ukrainian people at this very difficult hour.

I wonder if the Prime Minister could advise the House of the present status of the Canadian embassy in Kiev. Some time ago that embassy was closed, and I wonder about the present operations of the embassy in Kiev. It may be useful for Canada to have some diplomatic facilities and tools at its disposal.

What is the government's plan with respect to the embassy and our ambassador?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member and the support of all parties for the government's actions.

He will know that the Canadian embassy in Kiev has been closed. It has been closed because, obviously, it was near to and became connected with some of the unfortunate protests and violent activities that were occurring in the city some time ago. It will be not reopened, obviously, until such time as we believe it is safe for Canadian personnel.

In the meantime, we are looking for every avenue through which we can continue to maintain our relationships with the Government of Ukraine, as I discussed yesterday with the Prime Minister of Ukraine.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government also withdrew the Canadian ambassador from Moscow to have consultations. That is a move that was supported by members of this House yesterday in a resolution.

I wonder if the Prime Minister would indicate his present plans with respect to our embassy in Moscow, and what instructions, at least to this present time, he has been able to give to the Canadian ambassador.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs informs me that the ambassador has just arrived and will be meeting with him later today, but let me be absolutely clear in terms of what we have said about this.

Under the current situation, all of our economic and diplomatic bilateral relationships with Russia are under examination and will continue to be under examination. Working in concert with our allies, we will continue to search for ways to apply ongoing pressure and isolation to the Putin regime until such time as Russia reverses its course of action.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the People's Republic of China made an interesting statement indicating that it too supported the independence, the sovereignty, and the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

I wonder if the Prime Minister would indicate whether the government has been able to communicate with the Government of China, or any other country in the Asian sphere, to help reinforce that very vital message of what the world expects here, and that is the independence, the sovereignty, and the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are working with our allies and other countries all around the world to make sure that the position of Canada and our G7 partners is firmly understood.

Just to reiterate, what has occurred, as we know, has been the decision of a major power to effectively invade and occupy a neighbouring country, based upon some kind of extraterritorial claim of jurisdiction over ethnic minorities. We have not seen this kind of behaviour since the Second World War. This is clearly unacceptable.

It is our view that the world community, as it reflects upon these actions, will isolate Russia as a consequence.

\* \* \*

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps referring back to fraud statistics and making bizarre and unsubstantiated claims that eliminating voter ID cards would eliminate fraud.

As many as 800,000 people used these cards to cast their ballots in seniors' residences and long-term care facilities. Up to 70,000 used them on first nations reserves.

Would the minister put aside his bizarre, make-believe attacks and tell Canadians if he honestly believes these voter ID cards are the source of electoral fraud, yes or no?

• (1425)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if the minister came down from his ivory tower, he would see that his view differs from reality.

If a resident receives a voter card with the former resident's name on it, he cannot simply vote in that person's place because he needs to present another piece of identification. There is already a system in place to ensure that people do not defraud the system in this way.

Why does the minister want to impose a measure that will only make it harder for young voters to vote?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, young voters who are students can use their student card, for example.

Second, the voters list is used to generate the voter cards, and there are errors for one in six names on that list. Elections Canada maintains that list, not the government. Those are therefore Elections Canada's errors.

What is more, 39 other forms of identification are accepted. Elections Canada will be required to inform voters of these forms of identification.

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see the attitude of the minister, who thinks he can remain comfortably ensconced in his office in Ottawa and still know everything about democracy and what Canadians want.

The people in the communities are not saying the same thing. Not one of my constituents is complaining about the work done by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Why is the minister refusing to get out of his Ottawa bubble to reform the democratic system of all Canadians? Why is he trying to muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer and take away his investigative powers?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats are the ones living in a bubble. They are the ones who believe that a person should be able to vote without any form of identification.

Canadians believe that, with 39 options for identification, it is reasonable to expect a person to present a document to prove who he is. There have already been 50,000 serious errors with these voting methods. We are going to eliminate that, and the NDP should support us.

[*English*]

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like so many things this government does, the unfair elections act was simply thrown together, and the only consultations the government did were with other Conservatives. This bill takes away the commissioner's direct signing authority at Elections Canada. Instead, the commissioner cannot hire experts without permission.

Did the minister consult with Elections Canada before forcing this change on them, or was he just hoping to sneak this through without anyone noticing?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the measure to which the member refers is a standard measure that applies to numerous officers of Parliament already. It allows, at the same time, total independence for the way in which the Commissioner of Canada Elections carries out investigations. In fact, the fair elections act will give new independence to the commissioner. The commissioner will have total control over investigations, staff, and all of his future decisions, which he does not have right now.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**ETHICS**

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has long feigned ignorance about the Senate scandal. Not only were we expected to believe that nonsense, but now we are also supposed to believe that when Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy met in the Prime Minister's private boardroom, he knew nothing, saw nothing and heard nothing.

Does the Prime Minister often sit, headphones on, staring at the ceiling and whistling while crimes are being committed in his private boardroom?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP report was very clear. It stated that the Prime Minister had no inkling of Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy's plan. The Prime Minister also said that if he had known about the plan, he would have put an end to it immediately.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we asked the government what the Prime Minister knew about the two key meetings that took place in his so-called “private, high-security boardroom” regarding the Senate payoff and cover-up scandal.

The answer was—well, there was no answer, so let us try to go a little simpler.

When was the Prime Minister informed that there were meetings in his boardroom between the conspirators who are now under criminal investigation, or does the Prime Minister find it more convenient to not ever find out what actually happens in his high-security office?

• (1430)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know it will not surprise you that I take the word of the RCMP when they say that the Prime Minister had no idea that the situation was occurring. The Prime Minister also said that had he known, he would have put an immediate stop to it.

Moreover, the report by the RCMP shows the lengths to which the Prime Minister went to assist the RCMP, including ensuring that his staff assisted and provided any information they needed. Thousands of emails were turned over. Waivers were signed. We are doing all that we can to assist the RCMP in this investigation, and we will continue to do that.

\* \* \*

**PRIVACY**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will hand it to my colleague in showing us the extent that the Prime Minister will run to avoid accountability over the criminal acts that may have been committed in his own office.

Speaking of this, yesterday we found that the government used the Aga Khan's speech as a pretext to data mine information on Canadians for the Conservative Party. This was a momentous occasion for the Ismaili community, yet the Conservatives used this historic occasion to inappropriately gather data for the Conservative Party.

Could the government tell us if it really thinks it is appropriate to use a state visit by a religious leader to gather personal information for the use of the Conservative war machine?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me just say how proud and honoured I was to be in this chamber to hear the words of the Aga Khan last week, and to hear the affection and esteem in which he holds this country.

I know I was proud and I know that all members were proud. It really highlights not only the good work that the foundation does but also the extraordinary work that the Ismaili community has done to help build this country into the great place that it is. I am very proud of that, and I know all members of this chamber were too, at least they should be.

We will continue to advance initiatives that highlight how great Canada is on the world stage.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Aga Khan came to Canada to share a message of tolerance and openness that is strikingly similar to the NDP's “Working together” slogan.

Apparently, the message went way over the heads of the Conservatives. They put the Aga Khan's speech up on the Prime Minister's website, but in order to listen to it, people had to submit their email address. Where did all of those email addresses go? To the Conservative Party.

Do the Conservatives think that it is ethical to use diplomatic visits to add to their database, yes or no?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, I was very proud to hear the speech delivered by the Aga Khan in the House last week.

*[English]*

I would hope all members share that sense of pride we felt in hearing the Aga Khan, hearing his words and hearing the affection he has for this country. I was also proud that across this country so many people wanted to hear the words of the Aga Khan.

It also highlighted not only the good work of the Aga Khan and the foundation but also the extraordinary work of the Ismaili community in this country to help build a better, safer, stronger Canada, and we will continue to advance that both at home and abroad.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have made drastic cuts to public services such as employment insurance and Canada Post, they have made partisan changes to the Canada Elections Act, and they used a diplomatic visit to boost the Conservative Party's database. Let us not forget the Wright and Duffy scheme, which was orchestrated in the Prime Minister's very own boardroom.

Are the Conservatives trying to recreate the glory days of the Liberal sponsorship scandal? When will they stop governing for the Conservative Party and start governing for everyone?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a million jobs created, \$3,400 in the pockets of Canadian taxpayers, a justice system that is focusing on the rights of victims, massive amounts of re-investment in our Canadian Armed Forces—we are getting our natural resources to markets, we are opening up new markets for our small, medium and large job creators, and on and on.

It is this Conservative government that is transforming the way this country is seen, not only abroad but also here at home. Canadians are proud of that.

*Oral Questions*

As well, we had an extraordinary showing at the Olympics, which I am very proud of. Canadians have every right to be proud of this country. We will continue to stand up for that and to make sure that all Canadians continue to be proud.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING**

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the Oscars broadcast, the government ran partisan commercials that apparently cost over \$100,000 each.

The government has already spent \$113 million promoting its economic action plan, and many see that as wasteful spending. The Conservative government could have given more to the victims in Lac-Mégantic, for instance.

Why does the government continue to waste so much money on partisan ads, instead of helping Canadians in need?

• (1435)

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to be informed of our major program to lower the unemployment rate and implement our economic action plan. We are very proud of this action plan, which will improve Canada's economic situation. That, of course, is our challenge, but we must not forget the results achieved by the government's economic programs.

[English]

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ruining Sunday's Oscars, the government ran economic action plan ads at an estimated cost of more than \$100,000—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, order. The hon. member for St. Paul's still has the floor. Order, please.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians have been devastated by disasters, including floods in Alberta and the ice storm in Ontario. Recovery is ongoing. When Canadians see these ads, they hear the flushing of dollars better spent on things that matter, including disaster relief.

Can the government justify spending millions of taxpayers' dollars on partisan advertising when so many are struggling to rebuild?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for her Oscar for feigned outrage. Well done. She should make sure her acceptance speech is not too long because then the music will start to build.

The hon. member should remember that when her party was in power, advertising dollars from the government actually did not go to advertising. They went into the pockets of all those miscreants. We advertise programs designed to help people and our economy, and we will continue to do so.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are 262,000 fewer jobs for young Canadians than before the downturn. Instead of investing in the student summer jobs program, the government decided that Canadians who were

watching the Oscars on Sunday needed an expensive dose of partisan advertising. At a cost of \$100,000 per slot, those ads cost Canadians one student job per second.

How can the government possibly justify this ludicrous advertising expenditure?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to celebrate the record investments of this government in the creation of employment for young Canadians.

The future is looking even brighter, because I am pleased to inform the House that last Friday I received information from the Council of the Federation that 12 provinces and territories have accepted in principle the Canada job grant.

[Translation]

I am also pleased to inform the House that I just signed an agreement on that subject with the Government of Quebec.

[English]

We will proceed with the Canada job grant.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we are becoming accustomed to the lack of transparency on the part of the Conservatives, who do not answer our questions and hide financial information.

Yesterday, when we spoke to the lack of information about employment insurance in the main estimates, the parliamentary secretary spat out a talking point on EI reform. Let us be serious.

Now that the Conservatives have had 24 hours to think about it, can the President of the Treasury Board tell us why there are no details about employment insurance in the main estimates?

[English]

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House and the hon. member that there have been no changes to the EI program. This was simply an administrative decision.

The way the EI program works, we spend whatever money it takes to match the legislative priorities of the EI program. It is actually not a votable item in the estimates, and it was decided by officials, and I agree with them and stand by them, that if it is not a votable item in the estimates, it should not appear in the estimates.

• (1440)

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, well, there is another Academy Award, for refusing to give a single answer on EI.



*Oral Questions*

The purpose of these estimates is to show Canadians how their money is going to be spent. The government is providing us with a report on estimated spending with no details about the employment insurance operating account. This is a serious matter. It involves tens of billions of dollars.

I will ask again. Will the government now tell us exactly how much money will be spent on EI?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure hon. members that we will spend the exact amount that needs to be spent, depending upon the number of unemployed who qualify for EI. I cannot give the number now because the year moves forward and we cannot look backward until we publish the public accounts, at which point the hon. member's question will be answered in full.

\* \* \*

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the estimates show how the Conservatives are happy to keep cutting away at rail service until it is gone.

VIA Rail has been operating without a legislative framework since Brian Mulroney's legislation died in the Senate. We have now updated Brian Mulroney's bill for preserving and protecting VIA Rail.

Will the government support my bill that I tabled this morning?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, VIA Rail is responsible for its own operations and has been doing so, providing passenger service in this great country for many years.

We as a government ensure that VIA Rail has the appropriate amount of resources it needs in order to carry out its job. However, VIA has to be responsible with taxpayer dollars and ensure it is providing the highest quality of service that it can.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday, mayors from New Brunswick and eastern Quebec met in Campbellton to put together a plan to save passenger rail service in their region. They requested a meeting with the transport minister to study the options.

Will the minister agree to meet with the mayors and work with them to find a solution, or will she just sit back and approve these cuts in eastern Quebec and the Maritimes and abandon VIA Rail?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to receiving the invitation from the mayors. I am always happy to meet with stakeholders in the matter. I have a great relationship with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and when I receive the letter, I will be responding positively.

\* \* \*

**MULTICULTURALISM**

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Multiculturalism. Last week at the University of Windsor, an anti-Jewish referendum was held and it was a one-sided resolution to endorse the boycott, divestment, and

sanctions movement against Israel. During the referendum campaign, acts of vandalism took place, which police have described as hate crimes intended to target and discriminate against Jewish students.

Would the minister please inform the House as to the government's response to this racist referendum and these unacceptable crimes of hate?

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his hard work in this place. We stand in solidarity with the Jewish students and others on campus who are being forced to endure this travesty. We condemn this one-sided resolution that singles out Israel alone with boycott, divestment, and sanctions.

As the Prime Minister has said, Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state is absolute and non-negotiable. This new type of anti-Semitism is despicable and does not belong in Canada.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Legislature has unanimously passed a motion calling on Ottawa to expedite action to address the grain crisis. The Premier of Saskatchewan has called for the intervention of the federal government stating that, "We are at the point of last resort".

Canadian farmers are pleading for action. Can the Minister of Transport, as is her mandate, commit today to expedite the necessary regulations in consultation with the farmers?

●(1445)

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is in constant consultation with producers in western Canada. We are also in good consultations with the provinces. I had an hour-long meeting with Premier Brad Wall last Thursday. We continue to communicate. We welcome the motion they put forward. I understand the Province of Alberta may be doing the same.

We welcome that input as we winnow through all of the options that are before us, to put our best foot forward, moving forward on behalf of western Canadian farmers.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, even Saskatchewan's premier, Brad Wall, is now echoing the NDP and asking the transport minister to step up—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Welland still has the floor.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure why they would laugh at the Premier of Saskatchewan, but that is their choice.

Farmers in Saskatchewan still have not been able to sell last year's crop because rail companies will not take it to market.

*Oral Questions*

When will the Minister of Transport listen to western farmers and to the western premiers and introduce rules to fix this, or are the Conservatives simply going to have another meeting just like the one the Minister of Agriculture suggested we will do again. One more meeting. Action is required. When will the government take it?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with all parties involved in the western Canadian grain movement, the whole supply chain.

Yesterday, we put forward a very valuable piece of legislation on behalf of western Canadian farmers so that they could get the cash advances they require. Instead of carrying on with that debate and moving that piece of legislation forward, opposition members filibustered. If anyone needs to look in the mirror as to who is holding back western Canadian farmers, those members should.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last weekend, Conservatives from out west, including Brad Wall and Jim Prentice, called on Conservatives in Ottawa to introduce greenhouse gas emission targets for the oil and gas industries. In addition, Jim Prentice said that if Canada wants to be an energy superpower, it will have to be an environmental superpower as well.

Will the Minister of the Environment condemn these radical comments? Will she finally take action?

[English]

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is a world leader when it comes to addressing climate change. We continue to work with the provinces and the territories on reducing emissions in the oil and gas sector, and it is premature to comment further on further regulations.

I can say that, thanks to our actions, we have seen significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Unlike the NDP members who think they can tax their way out of every problem, our government is getting results without introducing a carbon tax.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is premature to comment further? We have been waiting three years for this.

I know the Conservatives hate taking advice from progressives, but now they are actually ignoring true blue Conservatives. They are treating Jim Prentice and Brad Wall like foreign-funded radicals.

Even Conservatives know that the government failure on this file is hurting our economy, it is damaging our international reputation, and it is leaving a massive ecological debt for future generations.

When will the minister heed this advice and, as Brad Wall said, “pivot to the environment”?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are taking action. We have introduced new emission regulations for vehicles,

and we were the first major coal user to ban the construction of traditional coal fired power plants.

Thanks to our actions, carbon emissions will go down by 130 megatonnes from what they would have been under the Liberals. We are accomplishing this without the Liberal and the NDP carbon tax, which would raise the price of everything.

\* \* \*

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a report on the cost of violent crime in Canada contains sobering statistics. By far the largest cost is for sexual assault and other sexual crimes at nearly \$5 billion, and 90% of these victims are women.

The government talks tough about protecting victims, unless that victim happens to be a woman. When will the government put in place a national action plan to end violence against women—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Etobicoke North still has the floor. She has a few seconds left to finish her question.

The hon. member for Etobicoke North.

• (1450)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, when will the government put in place a national action plan to end violence against women, and launch an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and all members that the loss of Loretta Saunders is a firm reminder of the realities faced by not only aboriginal women but all women when it comes to violence in this country.

We as a government have made it a priority to bring forward legislation that not only toughens penalties but sends a strong message of deterrence and denunciation for any form of violence, including against children, but certainly against women, certainly against vulnerable people.

To suggest otherwise, or to suggest in any way that this government is insensitive to those challenges, is absolutely misleading.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is a \$5-billion disaster in the Canadian grains industry. It is not the farmers' fault. It is the utter failure of the Conservative government's rail bill, Bill C-52.

The law must be amended to better define rail services, to measure proper performance, and to compensate farmers with liquidated damages when the railways fail.

Liberal amendments to Bill C-52 would have fixed all these mistakes. Why did the minister and all those western Conservative MPs vote against these amendments?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is awfully hard to take direction in agricultural policy from a party whose only agricultural policy to date is legalizing marijuana, so everybody can cultivate it.

\* \* \*

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in 2011, Justin Stark—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Mr. Speaker, in 2011, Justin Stark, after completing a seven-month tour in Afghanistan, committed suicide in his Hamilton barracks.

In the years since, his grieving mother sat through endless tribunals while the military debated whether or not her son's death was work related.

Mrs. Stark has just received an envelope from the military. In it was a cheque made out to her son for one cent.

One cent; after all this mother has gone through, this is inexcusable.

What will be done by the minister to ensure that this never happens to another grieving mother again?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that this is absolutely ridiculous. I extend the apologies of everyone in the government to his mother. We thank that individual for the service he gave his country.

That being said, this is an insensitive bureaucratic screw-up. I have just learned of it now, and I will take steps immediately to ensure that something like this should never happen again.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we appreciate the sentiment of the Minister of National Defence.

However, this is not the very first time something of this insensitive nature has happened to the heroes of our country who unfortunately take their own lives. We just want to make sure the minister fully understands exactly what has transpired here, because that cheque was not sent from the Minister of Defence; it was sent from Public Works and Government Services Canada; so somewhere along the line there is a change here in this issue.

Can the minister now assure us that this will never happen again? Can he assure us, in writing, that he will contact the family—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of National Defence.

#### Oral Questions

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, I extend my apologies and those of the government to the mother of Justin Stark.

Again, as I indicated in the previous answer, I will take whatever steps are necessary to make sure a bureaucratic screw-up like this never happens again.

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#### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House want to see qualified veterans placed at the front of the line for posted federal public service jobs. That is because only this side of the House truly supports Canadian veterans transitioning from military to civilian life.

Will the Minister of Veterans Affairs please update this House on the position PSAC took and what he intends to do about it?

● (1455)

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

A senior Public Service Alliance of Canada spokesman, John MacLennan, said the following about putting injured veterans at the front of the line: "It's not right.... It's disrespectful to public servants, topping up opportunities for veterans...".

Big union bosses do not like helping injured veterans get federal public service jobs if they are qualified, which we, of course, are putting forward.

Will the opposition parties follow their big union bosses and vote against the hiring veterans act?

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just before the crisis, the employment rate was 64%. It is now 62% and has been for at least two years.

What is more, Statistics Canada has confirmed that the supplementary unemployment rate, which includes discouraged searchers and involuntary part-time workers, is over 10%.

With this sort of results, how can the Prime Minister describe his finance minister as the best in the entire world, particularly since the finance minister seems to share the Prime Minister's vision less and less?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that over one million net new jobs have been created since the end of the recession. Over 85% of them have been full time and 80% in the private sector, and the future looks good. Both the IMF and the OECD predict that Canada will be a major job creator in the future.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about jobs. There is an increasing number of unpaid internships in Canada. Nearly 300,000 young Canadians are doing unpaid work. These young people work hard and did well in school, but unfortunately, they are being forced to accept entry-level jobs and work without pay for long periods of time, often in very difficult conditions.

The youth unemployment rate shows that it is extremely difficult for young people to access the labour market.

What does the minister intend to do to ensure that these young people are treated fairly?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

We are making record investments in training young Canadians so that they can find jobs commensurate with their skill levels. That is why we proposed the Canada job grant, among other measures.

As I said before, I am very pleased to announce that we have reached an agreement in principle with all of the provinces and territories to move forward with these investments and thereby get employers more involved and increase private sector investments in the training of workers, including young Canadians.

\* \* \*

[English]

**SEALING INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the seal hunt has helped to support rural coastal communities in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, and the north for centuries.

Sealers put their lives on their line each time they step on the ice. I presented Bill C-555 in order to put in place better protections for all those involved in the seal hunt.

Would the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans please tell the House our government's position on this bill?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for West Nova for his hard work on this file and for defending the seal hunt.

We have seen the actions of animal rights groups and foreign radicals disrupt the hunt and put the lives of sealers, licensed observers, and DFO personnel at even greater risk.

I am proud to announce today that our government will continue its commitment to the seal hunt by supporting Bill C-555. We hope the rest of the House follows our lead. Whether it is at the World Trade Organization or on the ice of the north Atlantic, sealers can rest assured that our government will continue to fight for them.

\* \* \*

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, truck drivers have faced excessive wait times at Port Metro Vancouver for

nearly the past ten years. Now, we are facing a possible shutdown of the port.

This port is crucial for the flow of goods in and out of B.C., and a shutdown could affect the entire country. Truck drivers and port officials must resolve this dispute in good faith at the negotiating table.

My question to the minister is: What is the minister responsible for Port Metro Vancouver doing to resolve this conflict?

● (1500)

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that question. We are indeed concerned with what is happening at Port Metro Vancouver right now. This government has invested heavily in the Asia-Pacific gateway, with the expectation that both port officials and the industry, including truckers, will work together to ensure that our goods flow in a very good way.

That being said, I have spoken to my counterpart in British Columbia, Minister Stone, over the weekend regarding this. We have been in contact with Port Metro Vancouver's CEO. We expect they will continue to work together, but if they cannot, then we and the province are willing to help in terms of bringing this to a conclusion.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the RCMP made the unilateral decision to reclassify the Swiss Arms Classic Green carbine rifle as prohibited, extinguishing the liberties of thousands of law-abiding Canadians. This decision lacked both judicial and civilian oversight, yet it is unclear to me that it was offside our current legislation.

The Minister of Public Safety has announced amnesty to individuals affected, and the government has mused about compensation for forfeiture. While these are positive steps, they fail to address the cause of the problem. The cause is the blatant legislative deficiency.

To the Minister of Public Safety, when are we going to see specific definitions of prohibited firearms and variants thereof? When are we going to see clear regulations in place to protect law-abiding gun owners from arbitrary bureaucratic—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

As I mentioned yesterday, we are going to bring forward an amnesty to ensure that individuals in possession of these firearms can keep them legally. As I clearly indicated, we will continue to implement measures that put the safety of Canadians first without penalizing them. We are currently looking at all the options.

*Privilege*

[English]

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Eugene Melnyk, a distinguished Ukrainian Canadian businessman, philanthropist, and honorary director of Help Us Help the Children, a humanitarian organization founded in Canada, which provides medical supplies, clothing, and vital care to children living in 220 orphanages throughout Ukraine.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to request the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move that this House acknowledge that the value of Canada's democratic institution, as the life of this country, cannot be reduced to value for tax dollars or return on investment; recognize that Canadians expect responsibility, transparency, and accountability from their elected representatives; and invite the Auditor General to conduct a comprehensive audit of the House of Commons' expenses, including members of Parliament, in addition to the Office of the Prime Minister, and ministers of cabinet.

I would hope to have unanimous consent so that the House would be treated equally with the Senate.

**The Speaker:** I think the members have already expressed it, but I will try anyway.

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

**Some hon. members:** No.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PRIVILEGE**

STATEMENTS BY THE MEMBER FOR MISSISSAUGA—STREETSVILLE —  
REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE

The House resumed from March 3 consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this motion on the point of privilege regarding the member for Mississauga—Streetsville is such a strange situation. We usually like to start our speeches by saying that it is an honour to rise in the House, and it is an honour, but it is sad to be speaking to a subject like this one.

My colleagues from all parties spend a lot of time going door to door, visiting organizations, participating in events and talking to their constituents. We are no strangers to cynicism and negative comments about the work that we do as MPs and politicians. As elected members of Parliament, part of our job is to change that reputation and show people that we can have a positive impact on our communities and on their daily lives. We hope to earn their trust after an election, regardless of the circumstances of the election, whether we had a hard-fought win or we came in on a wave, like the orange wave in Quebec. We all have a responsibility to earn the trust of our constituents.

It is very troubling when members do things or say things that mislead the House, as in the case before us today. This situation is

worthy of being examined, especially since it is related to Bill C-23, the electoral “deform” bill. This bill will change the very foundation of our democracy. Some aspects of the bill are very worrisome, and the public is not necessarily aware of them.

I want to expand on that point. When we rise to speak during debates in the House of Commons, we are not necessarily doing so just to convince our colleagues. We certainly hope to convince some of them, but at the end of the day, we rise to speak not only on behalf of our constituents, but also to them. We communicate ideas, try to help them understand the bill and, in most cases, share our thoughts on the bill and how our party feels about it.

When we debate a subject and try to explain a bill as complex and important as the one that amends the Canada Elections Act, we have to make sure that people know the real story. When a member actually misleads the House, and therefore the people we represent—those from Chambly—Borduas in my case—and all Canadians, that is extremely troubling.

My colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley said it well: if we look at the situation, we realize that the intervention by our colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville was clearly made with the intention to mislead the House. First, it has to be said, the statement was made not just once, but twice, at two different times. Obviously we are all aware of the time we are talking about the most, which was February 6, in the House. I was here and we were all surprised to hear such a thing. However, since the member said the same thing twice, the three conditions were met. You, yourself, said so in your ruling yesterday, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member was aware of what he was doing, he intended to mislead the House and this was not really a mistake.

Yesterday, the Conservatives gave some interesting speeches—and that is being kind—and we are hearing the same things again today: the member is fair and honest. He simply misspoke and he has apologized.

As I said in the House yesterday, a mistake is forgetting someone's birthday, someone you have not seen in a long time. Mixing up the name of a riding such as Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, which is long and complex, that is a mistake. It is an easy mistake to make when speaking in the House, especially if one is trying to speak without notes.

However, when someone stands in the House—as a member duly elected by the people, I dare say—and that individual states, with confidence and certainty, that he has seen a crime committed in his riding, that is a very serious accusation.

● (1505)

That is a far cry from mixing up numbers, a name, a date or any other information. We realize that the member was willing to come back to the House and have his remarks corrected in the *Hansard*. However, I doubt that the government, which proudly claims to be tough on crime, would be willing to forgive other criminals who simply apologized. I am not saying that the member opposite is a criminal, but he did commit an unforgivable act in the House, one that could be considered contempt of Parliament. That is what we are discussing today.

*Privilege*

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that there was no contempt, that we have all of the facts and that there is no need to study the issue in committee. However, during question period, when the Minister of State for Democratic Reform was asked how many cases of fraud were the same as those identified by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville in the House, he said that there were some, but he did not say how many or provide any details.

The minister is not able to provide clarification, but it seems that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville can. He corrected his statement, but that led to a lot of confusion. We therefore need to clear things up in committee.

It is essential to say things that are accurate. Nobody should mislead the members of the House and much less the people of Canada. This is very serious, because this is not a routine bill. In the past, the Canada Elections Act has not been the kind of thing that gets changed frequently. The changes proposed by the Minister of State for Democratic Reform are especially significant because they had to be put forward following a series of accusations and deeply disturbing scandals. In this case, we are talking about robocalls, but there was also the in-and-out scandal and the very serious Liberal scandals, such as the sponsorship scandal.

People are worried, and with good reason, about how elections are conducted. This bill was introduced long after a motion moved by the member for Toronto—Danforth, if memory serves. The NDP asked the minister of state for democratic reform at the time to introduce a bill within six months.

Not only has all this time been spent on introducing the bill, but false statements were made that misled members. This illustrates the bad faith shown by this government, which has the gall to defend the member in question.

Ms. Therrien, for instance, stood up to disclose factual things about employment insurance. There are other situations in which public servants may have made mistakes, and this has created a difficult situation for the government. In each of these cases, the government did not hesitate to publicly destroy those people's reputations. The Conservatives did not hesitate to put the blame for a difficult situation on public servants, instead of accepting that they were elected to form a government and assume their responsibilities.

It is interesting that the government is not treating a member of its own caucus the same way, after he acted inappropriately by misleading the House and Canadians. We would have hoped that the government would show its own members the same hard line that it shows public servants and other Canadians who sometimes do difficult jobs. There is a double standard here.

• (1510)

We in the NDP sometimes engage in overheated rhetoric in the House. We are all guilty of that. At the end of the day, however, we are talking about the truthfulness of the facts. We are talking about misleading the House. That is what the member did, and it needs to be studied at committee. It is not an exaggeration to say that our democracy depends on it. After all, this bill aims to deform—or reform, as the minister would say—our election laws. We really need

to examine this issue and have a much higher standard for the members of this House.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his excellent speech on such a key issue.

In theory, we should all agree that good public policy must be based on sound research and verifiable facts. The government is amending the Canada Elections Act, the bedrock of our democracy, not just without facts, but with incomplete facts that are being presented as the rationale for amending the Canada Elections Act. Now we are seeing that it was not true, that it was all made up.

The Conservative member invented a story to try and justify the bill introduced by his colleague, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform. They are trying to mislead parliamentarians and the public by making us think that fraud has been committed when, in fact, it has not.

The Conservatives are unable to clearly show what exactly is the problem they are trying to fix. Instead, they are using backbenchers to try and convince us that a problem exists where there is none. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

• (1515)

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, although I respect and enjoy our dear friend Jean-René Dufort, it is rather sad to hear that the two best sources of information are *Infoman* and the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, with his false information. That says a lot about the work that was done.

It is even more mind-boggling when we consider, as I mentioned in my speech, that in its motion, the NDP asked for a bill within six months. It took much longer than that, not to mention, as we read in the media, that the initial bill was rejected by the Conservative caucus. I wonder why. That may be part of the problem pointed out by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. After all, he said he witnessed certain things in a campaign office. There must not be many campaign offices that opened the door to the Conservative candidate, except for one, and I will let my colleagues guess which one.

In the end, these are not just simple stories about Bob in my riding who had this or that problem; we are talking about criminal offences. That is very serious.

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It is a shame to base a bill on hearsay and to finally realize that it was no more than that.

In his speech, my colleague asked a very specific question, and I would like him to come back to it. It was about the importance of sending these cases to committee. I would like him to explain, to me and to the House, why it is important for parliamentarians to carefully examine this situation in committee.

*Privilege*

**M. Matthew Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are convinced that the member misled us. What is more, the Speaker's ruling shows that the Speaker somewhat agrees with our position. As I said, and as my colleague mentioned in his comments and questions, the fact remains that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville did not simply present us with misleading or erroneous information, to put it politely and in parliamentary language. The facts he presented to us are directly related to the bill and were used by the government to support this bill that seeks to change the very basis of our democracy.

As much as I respect my colleagues, the controversial nature of these amendments and the controversy raised by this electoral “deform” bill show that the debate among members may not be enough.

I think that it is therefore all the more important to send this issue to committee to understand the accusations the member made. He retracted his comments, saying that he had heard about this happening, but there is a lot of confusion surrounding the issue. Did he see it happen? Did he hear about it from someone else? Did someone in the Prime Minister's Office tell him to say that? Did the government base the bill on that information? We believe so, but we must really examine the issue and find out more so that we have the correct information when we vote on Bill C-23. As I said, and it bears repeating, we are talking about the very basis of our democracy.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring a different perspective to the debate before us. Today's discussion has focused on a mistake made by a member of this place. However, as we have also heard from others in this chamber, the hon. member has apologized and voluntarily corrected the record.

It is not surprising that the member has proactively corrected his statement. I am pleased to say that I have known the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville for more than 15 years. I know him to be reliable, trustworthy, and a dedicated member of this place.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville works hard to serve the people he has been elected to represent. In fact, he is one of the most community-focused members of this place. There are countless examples of this. From his annual seniors forums and constituent round tables, to his recent job forum, yearly tax clinic, and creation of a volunteer medal, this member is dedicated to serving the community which he represents. He regularly holds town hall forums in Mississauga—Streetsville on virtually every issue, to inform and solicit input from his constituents. This member of Parliament was elected in 2011, but even before his election he was an active resident of the city of Mississauga.

He was born in Ottawa, in 1967, and his family returned to Mississauga the next year, where he has lived ever since.

The member has a keen interest in community volunteerism and public service. Having served on more than two dozen boards and committees in Mississauga, including for seven years on the Mississauga Committee of Adjustment, he gives back to Mississauga each and every day. He has an interest in working with organizations, including the Mississauga Food Bank, safe streets

Mississauga, the Mississauga Sports Council, the Peel children's aid society and foundation, the Mississauga Arts Council, and the Mississauga Public Library Board.

His outreach work does not end there. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville has built a professional career, advocating for the rental housing community and affordable housing initiatives, as president and CEO of the Greater Toronto Apartment Association, a position he held from May 1999 until he was elected to Parliament in May of 2011. He regularly interacted with public officials and all orders of government throughout the greater Toronto area. His direct input into housing issues has had a major effect on public policy in Canada.

For years he hosted a widely acclaimed public affairs television program on Rogers Television in Mississauga. I watched it many times and learned a great deal about public affairs issues. He interacted with many of the leaders of the political world in Canada, and the business and arts community, and through that program enlightened and informed the people of Mississauga.

In Ottawa, he is hard at work for the constituents he represents. He serves as a member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities; and the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. These committees have dealt with a number of important topics, including opportunities for older persons in the workforce, the Centennial Flame Research Award for persons with disabilities, and opportunities for aboriginals in the workplace.

I would like to use my time today to highlight some of the important accomplishments made by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville over the past three years. I would like to demonstrate to this place that we must not let today's debate overshadow the hard work and many accomplishments of this hon. member.

I can say with confidence that this member is one of the most hard-working, community-focused members who sit in this place. He has participated in countless outreach activities each and every year, which have had a positive impact on the people he represents. The hon. member hosts a yearly job forum to provide information on the services that are available to constituents in assisting with a job search. This forum provides an opportunity to connect residents and local organizations, in the hopes of broadening their job search and helping them seek out new tools for employment opportunities.

The job forum brought out many Mississauga—Streetsville residents and employment organizations. It included a presentation from a wide variety of local organizations. Because of this forum, constituents of Mississauga—Streetsville were made aware of the wide variety of free services available to them when searching for employment. That is much appreciated in a city like Mississauga, where we have unemployment that is higher than the national average, for a number of reasons, including that we have many new Canadians who find they have to spend extra time looking for that first new job in Canada. This member takes that task seriously and does everything he can to help new Canadians integrate well into our economy.

*Privilege*

• (1520)

The member also hosts an annual seniors forum, which focuses on how we can assure a secure and dignified retirement for our seniors that reflects the contributions they have made to this great country. At these forums, the member has highlighted our government's action on several files, including enhancements to the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors, providing an annual top-up amount that will benefit more than 680,000 seniors; and increased funding for the new horizons for seniors program, which ensures that seniors can benefit from active living and participation in their communities. The member works to eliminate mandatory retirement, allowing Canadians to choose how long they wish to remain active in Canada's workforce. He supported a pooled retirement pension plan, which is a low-cost pension option to provide additional help to seniors who are saving for retirement. This member is focused on taking strong action to support our seniors. We should not let today's debate overshadow these accomplishments.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville has also introduced a very popular award, with the establishment of the Timothy Street Medal of Honour, for residents of Mississauga—Streetsville. Timothy Street was the founder of the Town of Streetsville, and this medal of honour was devised by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville in his honour. This award recognizes leaders in our community for their selfless dedication to making Canada a better place through volunteerism. Following the very successful Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, the hon. member decided that his community should have an annual medal to celebrate the great volunteers in the city of Mississauga who have made a difference to our community. Each year, in January, the member presents 10 medals to residents who have been nominated from the community for their exemplary volunteer service.

Furthermore, the member can be seen at activities throughout the community each week. I see him at these events, and I am always impressed with the time he spends connecting with the people of Mississauga. Here are some examples. He recently welcomed the Minister of Status of Women for a round table at Mary Kay cosmetics, on Meadowvale. He attended a groundbreaking ceremony at the GO Transit terminal in Streetsville, with the Minister of Transport, for the Mississauga transitway project. Later that same night, he attended the World AIDS Day event, hosted by the Peel HIV/AIDS Network; and the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce winter gala. The list goes on.

Last month, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville attended the Vietnamese Association of Toronto new year's Tet Festival, and later that night, he attended the Shen Yun performance at the Living Arts Centre of Mississauga. He recently visited Streetsville Leisureworld to present World War II veteran Art Lett with a valentine for a vet, and to thank him for his great sacrifice for Canada. He also attended the National Council of Canadian Tamils' dinner in Richmond Hill. He joined the Minister of State for Sport as an honorary coach for the Mississauga Winter Classic between the Streetsville and Appplewood hockey teams, and he attended the third annual Vianney Academy of Learning's family fun day and skate at the Vic Johntson Community Centre.

I could spend the remainder of my time today listing the many important activities that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville

participates in each and every week. However, I would also like to take this opportunity to discuss some of the government programs that the member has advocated for while working hard for his constituents here in Ottawa. The member has played an important role in securing funding for central projects in Mississauga—Streetsville. The member was able to announce the new horizons for seniors funding for the people of Mississauga—Streetsville. Seniors in the riding will have new opportunities to volunteer, mentor younger generations, and help raise awareness of elder abuse, thanks to funding through the new horizons for seniors program. Four organizations in Mississauga—Streetsville have received funding through this program. They include the Peel Multicultural Council, the Canadian Coptic Centre, the Hindu Heritage Centre, and the Toronto—Sri Lankan Ex-Tamil Police Officers' Club.

However, the support does not stop there. The member knows that world-class infrastructure is the backbone of our country's economic productivity. It helps to get goods to the marketplace more efficiently, and connects Canadians and our businesses to the world, generating jobs and growth. It also has the added benefit of reducing commuting times so that families can spend more time together.

• (1525)

For these reasons, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville has tirelessly advocated for investments in infrastructure. The constituents of Mississauga—Streetsville have benefited from the recent investments in infrastructure funding. In fact, over \$4.5 billion was invested in greater Toronto area infrastructure projects by this government between February 2006 and January 2014.

The City of Mississauga has received \$250 million toward GO Transit, and the Mississauga bus rapid transitway has received an investment of \$83 million. In addition, the City of Mississauga has now received a whopping \$131,823,271 from the gas tax fund. This money will provide the city with the funds it needs to expand public infrastructure projects. These are just some of the many ways the constituents of Mississauga—Streetsville benefit from the representation of this hard-working member.

I would like to conclude today by reviewing the main points that are central to this debate. The hon. member has apologized and has voluntarily corrected the record. There is nothing for a committee to study. All of the facts are known.

We do not want to create an environment in which hon. members are punished for doing the right thing, and that is exactly what a continuation of this debate would perpetuate. Instead, we should continue with the business that should be before us, business that focuses on the reasons Canadians elected us. Canadians can count on our government to continue to focus on what matters to them: jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. That is what we should be debating today.



Once again, I return to the point that we must not let today's debate cloud what the hon. member has accomplished for the people of Mississauga—Streetsville. He is a member who works hard for the people he represents. He is a community-focused member who promotes countless programs that benefit the people of Mississauga. From his annual seniors forums and constituent round tables to his recent job forum, a yearly tax clinic, and the creation of a volunteer medal, this member is dedicated to serving the community he represents. He has advocated for a world-class infrastructure system that helps people across the city and has advocated for record best investments in that regard.

These are just some of the many programs the constituents of Mississauga—Streetsville benefit from, and I look forward to continuing to work with the hon. member to increase these important investments for our city.

• (1530)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member who just spoke.

I have a lot of respect for all of my colleagues in the House, including the one we are talking about today. However, now that we know that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville misled the House and gave information that was not true or correct, will the member for Mississauga—Erindale have faith in the information provided by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville the next time he rises in the House?

In the future, will my colleague be inclined to wonder whether what the member for Mississauga—Streetsville says is true, since he could simply come back to the House two days later to say that he is sorry for not telling the truth?

How can we trust this member in the future now that we know he is capable of saying things that turn out not to be true?

[English]

**Mr. Bob Dechert:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite clear. This member actually voluntarily apologized and corrected the record. There are many who have done otherwise. I have known this member for more than 15 years. I know him to be an honest, hard-working person. He has done the right thing and should be recognized for having done the right thing. If we take this opportunity to recognize that this member has done the right thing, I think we will set a good precedent for others in the future.

[Translation]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate hearing from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. How interesting that they are never quite as forgiving when it comes to justice issues, what with the government imposing pretty harsh minimum sentences.

I am trying to understand the logic behind his rhetoric this afternoon. He seems to be saying that an apology should suffice and that because the person stood up and apologized in the House, the matter should be considered closed.

Does my hon. colleague opposite think this means that when one misleads the House, a simple apology to the House suffices? Is rising

### *Privilege*

and voluntarily apologizing sufficient in all cases? Are there any cases that he feels should go to the committee?

I have so many questions. I know the member apologized, but why did he swear to such clear and precise facts? Sometimes the media accuse members of the House of being vague and imprecise. In this case, it was the opposite. A member persuaded us to believe something by telling us what he saw and observed.

Naturally, when we heard his claims, we had to sit back and think about reconsidering our stance on the bill, but he knew, and this is no excuse, that he was trying to get us to change our minds by telling us things that were not true.

Does my hon. colleague think this means that even if the Speaker finds that the House was misled, a simple apology is always enough? Is that what people on the government benches are claiming?

• (1535)

[English]

**Mr. Bob Dechert:** Mr. Speaker, in my view, there is nothing for the committee to study. All the facts are known.

In fact, what this motion does is penalize people for doing the right thing. This member realized that the record was not correct. He voluntarily came to this place. He stood here in front of all of his colleagues and said that he had made a mistake, that he was apologizing, and that he was correcting the record.

If we cannot accept that as fair-minded people, then I guess none of us knows very well the golden rule my parents taught me. I think we have to look at the facts and realize that this member did the right thing. If we persist with this kind of a motion, we will force or encourage people to not come forward and do the right thing in the future. That would be a really poor result.

Again, in my view, the point has been made, and I think it is time for this House to get back to the business of the people, which is making sure that their election laws are fair and that they have jobs, growth, and prosperity.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, in the course of the debate, ever since the Speaker's ruling that this House is currently aware of two completely contradictory statements before us and that we should, in his view, clear the air by allowing this to go to committee, I have been wondering why the response from the Conservative members, such as from the hon. parliamentary secretary, has been to suggest that this is some sort of punishment and that somehow we will be penalizing people for coming to this place and telling the truth. I would think quite the contrary lesson would be learned, which is that members are at their peril if they try to tell us something when they know it is not true and they later tell us that they are sorry and that it was not true.

I accept that the hon. member has apologized. He is also a friend of mine. I am not interested in destroying his reputation or taking away his voluntary achievements or his accomplishments as a member of Parliament.

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However, I would like to know why on two occasions we were told that there was this actual eye-witness evidence of voting fraud, which is the substance of and at the heart of taking away the rights of Canadians in future elections, in Bill C-23, when, in fact, nothing of the sort occurred.

I think we need to get to the bottom of that, and I do not know how we do it by cutting off debate and ending this today.

**Mr. Bob Dechert:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was quite clear. He corrected the record about what he did or did not see happen. He did that voluntarily. That is exactly the kind of thing we want to encourage.

My point is simply that in my view, the opposition party is using this as a matter of partisan advantage to delay debate on the fair elections act. The opposition members know what the answer to the question is. They know that there are no more facts to be brought out here. This is simply being done to delay the debate on the main legislation. I think that is a disservice to the people of Canada.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the comments just made by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, the Speaker's ruling was very clear: misleading statements were made in this House, and we deserve to know which were true and which were false. The member presented two completely opposite versions.

I would like to quote Speaker Milliken, who preceded our current Speaker:

Misleading a minister or a member has also been considered a form of obstruction and thus a prima facie breach of privilege.

That is serious. What the member said was more than just a factual error. It is not as though he made an error in calculation or read the calculator wrong. No, what he said was very specific. He said he clearly saw fraud committed against the Canadian electorate and against Canada itself. According to the member, fraud was committed, and now we are supposed to accept that he can simply rise here and say he made a mistake in terms of what he saw.

Frankly, I do not think that is enough. We need to take this further. We need to understand exactly where the mistake was. This House must be respected, especially by members, to demonstrate that the House represents Canadian democracy. The member's remarks call all of that into question. I hope the parliamentary secretary will demonstrate that he believes in the role of the House and that this matter deserves further debate and discussion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Dechert:** Mr. Speaker, again, I believe that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville did not have the intention of misleading the House. When he realized that there was a question about the veracity of what he had said, he quickly came forward and voluntarily corrected the record, so there is no doubt about what he did or did not see.

That is exactly what we want to encourage, and I see no purpose in continuing this debate any longer.

[*Translation*]

**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE**

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-16, An Act to give effect to the Governance Agreement with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**PRIVILEGE**

STATEMENTS BY THE MEMBER FOR MISSISSAUGA-STREETSVILLE—  
REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE

The House resumed consideration of the motion

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will start by discussing the essential points of the matter we are discussing today.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville simply misspoke during the fair elections act debate last month. Entirely on his own volition, the same member later corrected the record and apologized to the House. Correcting or clarifying the record when a member says something that is incorrect is the type of action that I think members and I, and most Canadians, would expect. Sadly, based on the cynicism spread by the opposition, some might even find a politician apologizing to be refreshing for a change.

By contrast, let us compare the member for Mississauga—Streetsville's actions with those of the NDP.

Day in and day out, the NDP members make outlandish statements in the House. Often, these contain eyebrow-raising interpretations of events or facts, or extreme hyperbole. The only difference is that the NDP's sanctimony in making so many outrageous statements makes it hard for Canadians to even believe what they say, but it does sow cynicism among Canadians.

In fact, we should look at the real reasons why the NDP moved this motion.

Do the NDP members honestly feel that their rights as members were infringed upon? Definitely, no. Does the NDP honestly feel that further sanctions are warranted? No, if it were honest. Is the NDP transparent about its motives? Definitely not.

This is nothing more than an effort to create a smokescreen aimed at derailing the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The opposition is trying to do whatever it takes to derail the committee's number one priority, the fair elections act and the fine work done by the Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

Not only is the fair elections act a much-needed update to Canadian election laws, but it is also much needed now. As our Chief Electoral Officer has said, new legislation needs to be in place this spring for it to have effect for next year's general election.

However, as is often the case with the NDP's actions and policies, it has not considered the ramifications.

Motion No. 428, sponsored by the member for Burnaby—Douglas, has been referred to the procedure and House affairs committee, and I understand that it was one of the next items for study, right after the fair elections act. In adopting it, the House also adopted a deadline for the committee to do its work. This is a motion that the entire NDP caucus voted for, which does not say much since it has virtually always voted as one bloc.

If members would like to witness the NDP members and their logical gymnastics, I would like to hear them explain why the NDP is delaying study of their colleague's own private member's motion in order to study this matter regarding the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, a matter that has been resolved to its fullest extent and to which nothing more could be gained from committee study.

In fact, I have a challenge for the member for Burnaby—Douglas. If he is sincere about the procedure and House affairs committee studying Motion No. 428 quickly, then he will vote against this privilege motion. The entire NDP caucus claims that it strongly supports Motion No. 428. Why then is it delaying study of it?

The opposition is saying one thing to its supporters and then doing precisely the opposite. Do as I say, not as I do. That seems to be the creed of the NDP.

The NDP claims that it supports setting up an electronic petition system to allow more access for Canadians and to improve democracy. Let me emphasize to all Canadians watching this debate right now that by its actions in moving the motion, the NDP is trying to do nothing more than stifle a democratic committee from investigating that very proposal. Yet, the NDP does not show any regret.

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

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Speaker, its members hate it when I point that out.

When the member for Mississauga—Streetsville misspoke in the House, he corrected the record and apologized.

When the entire NDP caucus says one thing to its constituents and then acts in completely the opposite direction in the House, it not only fails to apologize but, sadly, it does not even feel any shame.

We are still waiting on the member for Timmins—James Bay to apologize to his constituents for his reversal on the gun registry vote.

By telling its constituents one thing and doing another, the NDP's actions are an affront to democracy. Do as I say, not as I do. That is what it is saying.

● (1545)

Let us look at a few other important pieces of business currently at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Motion No. 431, sponsored by the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, was passed just last month. That motion reads:

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to: (a) consider the election of committee chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all the Members of the House of Commons, at the beginning of each session and prior to the establishment of the membership of the standing committees; (b) study the practices of other Westminster-style Parliaments in relation to the election of Committee Chairs; (c) propose any necessary modifications to the Standing Orders

### *Privilege*

and practices of the House; and (d) report its findings to the House no later than six months following the adoption of this order.

Just like the motion by the member for Burnaby—Douglas, Motion No. 431 passed the House and deserves to be studied by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Again, and unfortunately, the NDP's obstructionist actions are causing needless delays at committee.

Yet again the House adopted a deadline as part of its order to the committee to study the issue. For this particular matter it set a six-month deadline, which means that the procedure and House affairs committee will need to wind up its work by the summer.

There is yet another item referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs just last week that the opposition seems intent on delaying and obstructing, Bill C-518, Protecting Taxpayers and Revoking Pensions of Convicted Politicians Act. Bill C-518 would strip convicted crooked politicians of their pensions. We have to wonder why the opposition wants to avoid studying this. The New Democrats should not be protecting the pensions of politicians who break the law, but by their actions on this question of privilege, that is exactly what they are doing.

As we know, private members' bills are on a guaranteed timetable that includes a deadline of 60 sitting days for a committee to consider a bill. That means that our procedure and House affairs committee would need to deal with this by the first few sitting days in September. I hate to think that their motives are sinister, so I call upon the opposition parties not to pass this motion so that the procedure and House affairs committee can get on with its work.

On top of those items of business, the committee also has other important business before it not under the gun of a tight deadline. It has been working off and on for the past two years on a review of our Standing Orders, the very rules and procedures governing how we do our work on Parliament Hill.

In October, the House voted to refer this issue back to the committee so that it could study it as part of its ongoing agenda. Also in October, the House adopted an order of reference for the committee to study a different question of privilege. I understand that the committee is still working and trying to hear from the last witnesses on that issue.

Additionally, the procedure and House affairs committee will at some point get back to the five-year review of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons. It started that project some time ago, but its conclusion awaits committee having the free time to do so.

Here we have a proposal by the NDP to send something else to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to add to its very busy agenda. We already know all of the facts here. The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville came forward to acknowledge and apologize for what happened. He did that on his own, unrequested by the Speaker or anyone else. What is left for the committee to study? All of this leaves me scratching my head, wondering what the game of the NDP is. It has become quite clear.

*Privilege*

• (1550)

The NDP is simply looking to block and delay the fair elections act despite the Chief Electoral Officer saying that we need to amend our electoral laws by this spring for them to have appropriate effect by the 2015 election.

I call upon the NDP to let the procedure and House affairs committee finally begin hearing witnesses on the fair elections act. As I said earlier, this legislation needs to become law within the next few months. Despite the NDP's filibuster at committee, Conservatives believe that the committee needs to get down to work.

I understand that the Chief Electoral Officer and other important witnesses are ready to testify. We could have started hearing witnesses weeks ago, but the NDP is afraid to hear witnesses. Why do those members not want to hear from Harry Neufeld, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, and others? I think it is pretty obvious. Of course they do not want to hear Mr. Kingsley. He gave our bill an A minus. No wonder the NDP would not want him appearing before the procedure and House affairs committee. Why do those members not want to hear from first nation groups? Why do they not want to hear from groups representing those with disabilities? I think we can all figure it out.

The NDP claims that it wanted to hear from Canadians on the fair elections act, but every action the party has taken since the bill was introduced, from the filibuster at the procedure and House affairs committee to the debate on the motion here today to add to that committee's agenda, has been an attempt to disrupt the progress of the fair elections act and to avoid hearing from witnesses. That party may not like what it hears.

Why do NDP members not come clean with Canadians and admit that they are simply trying to be obstructionist? They do not care what it costs or what important legislation is held up as a result. That is exactly why the NDP will never form government. That party simply does not understand what it is like to balance priorities, an important part of governing.

I have only known the member for Mississauga—Streetsville for about two years, but I find him to be a good and decent member of Parliament, who has delivered a great deal for the residents of his riding. He rightly corrected the record in the House after realizing that he misspoke. I consider this matter closed. Most Canadians consider this matter closed. I encourage everyone to vote accordingly.

We all make mistakes in life. We all make mistakes as members of Parliament. I have made them myself. Just this morning the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands was at our committee and I mistakenly was going to allow her to vote, although she did not have a vote. We corrected that. It was not a big deal. We own up to our errors, and that is what the member for Mississauga—Streetsville did. End of story.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are not debating whether the member for Mississauga—Streetsville is a good person. I have worked with him, and I like him, too. We are debating something altogether different. I heard the

member use the word “misspeak” three times. To misspeak is to make a mistake.

I want to read the member for Mississauga—Streetsville's exact words.

I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards, going to the campaign office of whatever candidate they support and handing out these voter cards to other individuals...

That was on February 6. On February 24, he said the following:

I made a statement in the House during the debate that is not accurate...I have not personally witnessed individuals retrieving voter notification cards from the garbage cans or from the mailbox areas of apartment buildings.

I would not call that misspeaking. I have another word for it. If I did the same thing, I would be accused of doing something that I am not allowed to say here. If I were in court and had stolen something, I would still go to prison even if I apologized and said I was sorry.

Does the member not think that after what happened—which is more than just misspeaking—that there should be more serious consequences than simply saying that everything is fine because he apologized?

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Speaker, the member asked if there is not more to this, and should there not be consequences. Without talking to the person in question, I am sure that he regrets having misspoken. He corrected that. He may even be embarrassed by it, but I am not going to speak to that.

The consequences have been served. The member did the right thing by standing up in the House and clarifying what he meant. To push this further would be nothing but partisanship and grandstanding. Most Canadians would agree with me that this matter is closed.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that the Bloc Québécois will support the motion to refer this question of privilege to committee.

As we have already heard, there are two contradictory statements before the House, and that makes it difficult for members to rule on the integrity and veracity of the statements that were made.

It is important for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to examine the statements and all relevant information that would help them to shed light on this contempt of Parliament. Given the circumstances, it is increasingly difficult to determine what is true and what is false in the debate on Bill C-23.

It is increasingly difficult for the public to understand and assess the credibility of the information they get from the government. We all remember the government's false advertising to promote a training program that did not even exist.

Does the member also disapprove of the increasing amount of misinformation we are seeing from his government?

*Privilege*

•(1600)

[English]

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about misinformation and what have you. This is exactly the point that I have been trying to get through some of the thickness across the way. It is that the thing has been clarified. There was some wrong information put out, and the member has apologized for that. I do not know what else any of us could expect from the man. It is done.

Again, this is all about obstructionist policies. New Democrats do not want a fair elections bill to go forward. For the life of me, I cannot figure out why. Most of us sit on committees in the House, and in our transport committee, one thing the party across the way pushed for, in light of the tragedy that occurred in Lac-Mégantic last summer, was to travel to facilities to try to make sure we do things better for rail safety. In order to hold up this bill, that is one of the things New Democrats tried to hold the transport committee and all other committees up for ransom on.

I guess they have that right, but let us come clean. This is not about the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. This is another stall tactic. How long they want to do it only time will tell.

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his presentation. As always, it was easy to understand, it was very straightforward, and it makes common sense.

I am trying to grasp, quite honestly, the reason this issue would be sent to committee. A statement was made here and then the statement was rescinded here. Other than as a stall tactic, I am trying to get a handle on why the member thinks New Democrats would take this to committee. When they illegally took some \$340,000 from unions, which was illegal, we did not put up any protest. Maybe we should have, because that was illegal. This was a misrepresentation.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Speaker, I am feeling much better now that I know that I am not the only person in this place who has been thinking there was some funny stuff going on. I am glad to hear the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex feels the same way.

The member knows this is not about what the member in question apologized for. Again, it is about obstructing the fair elections act bill. His guess is as good as mine as to what the motive would be, but there is no doubt that is what it is about. It may be that New Democrats do not want to hear from people like Mr. Kingsley, who asked for this when he was in that position. It is funny that when a government gets asked to do different things and then does them, everybody wants to hold them up. It makes no sense to me.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this question is much more profound than they realize.

We were elected by the people and given the title of “honourable members”. Voters are under the impression that the person they are sending to represent them is honest. To me, honesty means telling the truth. We cannot just apologize and forget the whole thing. That worked when we were children and snuck cookies from the cupboard.

People from the 46 municipalities of Laurentides—Labelle are likely watching the debates on television and are trying to get a sense of what is being discussed. If those voters realize that it is possible for MPs to distort the truth in order to support their arguments and then simply have to apologize for having done so, they will be bitterly disappointed. It will make them more cynical.

This is more serious that we realize. We cannot just apologize and move on.

•(1605)

[English]

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member across from here. I do not know the gentleman well, but I have run into him. He seems like a decent guy, as well as the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

The member is basically saying that a member, or anyone else, should not apologize when he or she makes mistakes. It is an incredible statement. For the life of me, I will not be able to figure that one out, but maybe the member just misspoke and might like a chance sometime to clear that up in the House.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

As a parliamentarian, I want to remind all my colleagues, and myself, that we have a responsibility to Canadians, a responsibility to the House of Commons itself, which establishes the procedures and practices of the House, and a responsibility to our colleagues who are elected members who vote on bills.

This question of privilege reminds us that, although we are parliamentarians and have privileges such as freedom of speech, we cannot use those privileges any way we like and deliberately mislead the House and our constituents by making statements we know to be incorrect in order to achieve a personal or partisan objective. What is more, in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, on page 115, it states:

Misleading a Minister or a Member has also been considered a form of obstruction and thus a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

We also have a duty to earn the trust of our constituents and the voters who vote for us. The practice of making false or contradictory statements in the House needs to end. It can serve only to fuel the public's cynicism about politicians and the disengagement the public has from its civic duty, which is to vote. It is already extremely difficult to get voters to the polling stations.

*Privilege*

It is very important to me that we understand that it is in our best interest to faithfully apply the rules and procedures, as set by the House of Commons. We can have a bias based on our political stripes—I understand that—but we must show that the public's interest is our primary concern. We must do so objectively and with integrity, which means illustrating our points of view and the benefits of the bills we introduce without using smoke and mirrors. That is how we will win the respect not only of our constituents, but also of our parliamentary colleagues.

This is what the member for Mississauga—Streetsville said on February 6:

I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards, going to the campaign office of whatever candidate they support and handing out these voter cards to other individuals, who then walk into voting stations with friends who vouch for them with no ID.

That is quite absurd because, as we know, when we go to the polling station the card in question is not enough.

When the member for Mississauga—Streetsville said “I have actually witnessed”, he was saying that he had witnessed criminal offences being committed. That is a very serious statement that should be taken very seriously because it refers to election fraud.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville told Parliament that he had witnessed acts prohibited by Canadian law, acts that constitute election fraud according to Elections Canada. It is not a simple statement or mere speculation or even a misinterpretation. He said that he saw it with his own eyes. He said that twice, on two separate occasions in the House, to his colleagues. The first time, he asked the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification a question, and the second time, he addressed his colleague from York South—Weston.

On February 24, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville once again rose in the House to make a new and completely contradictory statement, saying that he had made a statement that was not accurate:

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to debate that took place on February 6 in this House regarding the fair elections act.

I made a statement in the House during the debate that is not accurate. I just want to reflect the fact that I have not personally witnessed individuals retrieving voter notification cards from the garbage cans or from the mailbox areas of apartment buildings. I have not personally witnessed that activity and want the record to properly show that.

That means that what he reported was not the truth.

Here is what I am wondering about: Why did the member for Mississauga—Streetsville change his version of the facts? Why did the member for Mississauga—Streetsville wait 18 days before giving us the new version of the facts?

●(1610)

Is it because Elections Canada contacted the member for Mississauga—Streetsville in the interim? Since this is clearly a case of electoral fraud, a very serious accusation, will Elections Canada investigate?

I think it is unacceptable that those members voted on Bill C-23, which is currently being rushed through committee, on the basis of false statements by one of our colleagues. Some colleagues decided how to vote on Bill C-23 on the basis of unfounded and inaccurate

statements. That is a serious blow to democracy and to the integrity of parliamentarians.

Erskine May is even more clear when it comes to a member later admitting that statements he made were false. Page 111 of *Parliamentary Practice*, 22nd edition, informs us that the Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt. It also states that, in 1963, the House resolved that in making a personal statement which contained words which he later admitted not to be true, a former member had been guilty of grave contempt.

We have a duty as parliamentarians to build a relationship of trust with our constituents. I represent the people of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles in the House of Commons. My constituents have the right to be able to count on me and the right to know what we are doing here. They also have the right to know where we stand on bills and why we are voting for or against them.

If tomorrow, someone from my riding of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles asks me why I did not support Bill C-23, based on what this person heard or read in the speech the member for Mississauga—Streetsville made in the House on February 6, 2014, I would think that my constituent had been misled. That is very serious, which is why it is important to act with integrity. All parliamentarians need to understand their duty and responsibility towards the public, towards voters and towards our mandate as parliamentarians.

The statements we make in the House are not limited to the House. They have repercussions on people all across Canada.

When I think about the contradictory statement made by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, I realize that the vote on Bill C-23, which is currently being fast-tracked through committee, will be based on erroneous information. The debate on Bill C-23 was not fair and honest. What is worse, it is tainted by an unfounded accusation for the sole purpose of getting the bill passed.

Is that our mandate as parliamentarians? I do not think so. Is that how we should be introducing bills that will affect the lives of millions of Canadians?

I highly doubt it. I want to talk more about our responsibility as parliamentarians. We spend many hours working on laws that affect the lives of Canadian families. If we do not follow the rules that are in place, what impact will these laws have on the daily lives of millions of Canadians?

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville should be questioned by the appropriate committee about what he did, so that we can determine where those allegations came from and why he used them to support Bill C-23.

*Privilege*

•(1615)

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague for her eloquent speech. She rightly pointed out our obligation, as elected members, to be accountable to our own constituents. It is important that people can have confidence in the House and the mandate they gave us, namely to represent them in an honourable manner. Allowing recent events to go unchallenged is unacceptable. We must get to the bottom of this issue.

As I have heard from both sides of the House, we can sing the praises of this member and his great bond with the people in his riding, but can we ask ourselves what could possibly have motivated a member to come up with such a story?

Indeed, this is the process that we will be engaging in if we manage to bring these people before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Is there not undue pressure to pass a bill that is not based on anything real?

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** Mr. Speaker, coincidentally, this happened just as Bill C-23 was being introduced.

I would like to think that this is not the case, but we cannot help but conclude that there must be a link between what the member said and the goal of wanting to fast track this bill through committee.

[*English*]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for Canadians watching, what we are dealing with here is the finding from the Speaker that there has been a prima facie case of privilege.

The common practice in this House, as described by former clerks of this House, is to refer that matter to committee for further study.

We need certain legal measures taken, because what we have here is a member who stood in this House and, in trying to persuade fellow members of this House and the Canadian public, said he personally witnessed people breaking the law. This member did not just have a slip of the tongue in that he said it once. He said it twice, on two separate occasions.

When something happens once, I think we all recognize that someone can slip up. However, when something is said twice, that is a sign of a deliberate, intentional statement. That statement was also completely false.

I have stood in this House for almost six years now and listened to the Conservatives say to Canadians that we have to get tough on crime, we have to hold people accountable, we have to hold people responsible. Young people who may have been caught with a marijuana cigarette when they were 20 years old have been denied, by the government, the right to apply for a pardon. People have committed crimes that have not been serious crimes and that have not created great victims, yet the government says they have to pay a heavier price, that they have to be accountable for their actions.

However, what happens when a Conservative stands in this House and deliberately misleads this House, not once but twice? The government says that all that person needs to do is to stand up and

apologize. There is no consequence. There is no further action to be taken by anybody, according to the government.

That is wrong. It is hypocritical. The government has made a practice of decision-based evidence making. That is what it does. It comes to a decision without the evidence. The evidence here is clear. We should be sending this to a committee to find out why this member deliberately attempted to mislead this House, what was behind it, and to take steps to make sure that member is accountable for his actions, just as the government wants Canadians to be accountable for theirs.

I would like my hon. colleague to comment on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** Mr. Speaker, this is not a small matter; it is about values and ethics.

Like many of my colleagues, when I got into politics, I assumed that, here in the House, we would solve real issues, state the truth and be truthful.

In the matter before us, the member made a misleading statement. He said things that were inaccurate and he will probably try to say that he did not intend to mislead the House. However, who is the House? We are the House.

If we feel as though he misled us, it is no trivial matter. Apologizing and going on to something else is not trivial. This is about elections and voter cards that were used illegally to increase the number of votes for one party. This means that the vote itself must be called into question.

It is important to be consistent and to be truthful in what we do.

•(1620)

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent and enlightening speech. She clearly explained the issue that is before the House today.

If I relied on Conservative Party members on the other side of the House, I would have no idea what the issue is. After hearing the speech by the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, I no longer understood the point of the debate.

I would like to remind hon. members of the topic of debate. In the context of the electoral “deform” bill, Bill C-23, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville rose in the House and made misleading statements. He misled the House.

We therefore asked the Speaker to investigate what had been said in the House to determine whether, prima facie, the member made false statements and misled the House. The Speaker responded in the affirmative. We have three criteria that allow us to determine whether the House was misled, and these criteria were developed by the Speaker himself.

I am going to summarize them. First, it must be proven that the statement itself was misleading; second, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and, third, the member must have intended to mislead the House.

*Privilege*

According to the Speaker's ruling, the situation meets those criteria *prima facie*. That is why this matter is before us. Will we refer it to the parliamentary committee responsible for examining this kind of issue, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs?

After hearing the speeches of the members on the other side of the House, I believe we have lost sight of the motion. Hon. members will remember that it reads:

That the question of privilege related to the statements made in the House of Commons by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

It is nothing more or less than that. I think that is clear. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville seems to have made two completely contradictory statements. We must go further and examine this issue.

Why must we do so? It is possible that the member spoke with Elections Canada or that Elections Canada communicated with the member. We do not know what happened. All we know is what the member himself said.

Hon. members will recall what he said in his speech on February 6. To paraphrase, he said that he lived in a very urban, very densely populated riding where there are a lot of apartment buildings and blue boxes. He claimed that people had found Elections Canada cards that had been discarded by voters in those boxes, and that they had picked them up so that they could take them to the offices of other parties, claim a new identity and possibly vote illegally.

It is a serious accusation for a member of Parliament to rise in the House and say that he has personally witnessed election fraud in Canada.

Let me go back to the original quote. I would like to do so because I think it is always better quote the member himself. What he said was very specific. That is why we have to wonder what the facts really are.

I would like people to pay attention to the details of what the member for Mississauga—Streetsville told us in the House. In response to a question he was asked following one of his speeches in the House on February 6, he said precisely this:

• (1625)

[*English*]

I will relate to him something I have actually seen. On the mail delivery day when voter cards are put in mailboxes, residents come home, pick them out of their boxes, and throw them in the garbage can. I have seen campaign workers follow, pick up a dozen of them afterward, and walk out. Why are they doing that? They are doing it so they can hand those cards to other people, who will then be vouched for at a voting booth and vote illegally.

[*Translation*]

A question is being raised in the House. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville did not merely miscalculate. He did not merely conjugate a verb in such a way that we did not know whether it was in the future or the past tense. It was not a typographical error. It was a specific and very detailed error. It would be very difficult for me to be mistaken for about three minutes of a speech. There might be perhaps one or two incorrect words in my speech, and I would definitely rise in the House and apologize for my mistake.

Here we are talking about a complete paragraph from the speech of a member of the House, where he said that he had actually seen a fraudulent act committed against the Canadian electorate. When he was asked to apologize and he returned to the House on February 24—18 days later—he did not do so. He merely stated that some of what he had said might have been inaccurate.

What was incorrect in all that? One specific thing? Everything? We do not know, and that is why it should be looked into by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The hon. member should provide more detailed explanations to Canadian voters, because those given so far are insufficient. He gave a brief apology of a few sentences in the House, whereas he made a 15-minute speech, and what he said over three minutes or so was downright incorrect, according to what he says. That merits the attention of this House.

We must have confidence that what is said in the House is accurate, honest and true. We cannot allow members to come into the House and say things as inaccurate as that. If someone truly saw what the hon. member claimed to have seen, that constitutes fraud. That is a violation of the Canada Elections Act. We are beginning to move into the criminal field. There are serious consequences for witnessing that kind of activity and keeping silent for three years. The member claimed to have seen this in 2011. This is 2014, and for all that time, he said nothing. He witnessed a very serious fraudulent act in his constituency and did nothing.

In this case, it seems to me, a member of Parliament has a much greater responsibility to act than an ordinary Canadian citizen. He knows this very well. He is a legislator. He is very familiar with the consequences of such a serious act. He has to report it. Either he failed to report that act, and today he is trying to hedge and have people believe it was a mistake, or it truly was a mistake.

I would like Elections Canada to tell us if there were any reports and if the member came forward at that time. Do we know what happened? That is deserving of the attention of this House.

Again, in the context of Bill C-23, the electoral reform bill introduced by this government, we want Canadians to vote in elections. For years, the voter turnout rate has been in constant decline. We should bring it up.

According to opposition members, the content of Bill C-23 will unfortunately achieve the direct opposite. It will stop people from voting and decrease the turnout rate even further.

With respect to voter cards, 800,000 seniors and 70,000 members of first nations used them to vote. Under the terms of the bill now before us, they would unfortunately no longer have that right. That is precisely why the member rose in the House. He wanted to condemn a practice that, as we see it, has helped people vote, rather than prevented them from doing so.

If this case is referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, we definitely want everything open to the public. That is why I am moving a motion. I do not want this to take place in camera.

• (1630)

I move, seconded by the hon. member for Québec:



that the motion be amended by adding, after the words “House Affairs”, the following:

“, and that all procedures in respect of this order of reference be held in public”.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The amendment is in order.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke for questions and comments.

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent speech and for the amendment he proposed to the original motion. If the motion is adopted this evening after the vote—and I truly hope that the Conservative members will support us—we must ensure that the meeting is held in public. I look forward to seeing the results.

With that in mind, I would like to hear the member's thoughts on whether we can still trust the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. In the future, this member will speak to other bills and present facts in the House. Can we trust the speeches and the facts that the member will give down the road? Can we still trust this member and what he says, and will we know whether he is telling the truth?

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Sherbrooke for his comments and question. I would like to congratulate him on the excellent work he is doing in his riding. I know that he works very hard for his constituents. I have met many of them who have told me as much.

Canadians must be confident that the elected members of the House are always acting in good faith and are always there to shed light on the truth and to debate bills honestly and respectfully. Canadians are increasingly cynical about whether things are happening by the book and about whether Parliament is working to deliver what Canadians want. When they elect us, they expect us to work for them. The public sometimes wonders whether members are just here to serve their own interests. That is not a member's role. Members are here to represent the people, and that is why we are referred to by our ridings and not by our own names. The idea is to represent the people here in the House.

As for the member in question, we are debating whether or not he made misleading statements. The Speaker's ruling demonstrates that, *prima facie*, the member met the three conditions, and therefore may have misled the House. Now it is up to the member to prove that he did not mislead the House. If he did, it will be most unfortunate.

• (1635)

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am truly worried about the state of democracy in this country, and I am not the only one. When I travel around my riding of Hochelaga, people tell me they are too. When the smallest positive thing comes from the government, they are happy, because they no longer expect much from the Conservatives.

A member said certain things here, and then he said the opposite, namely, that what he had said was not true. Then another member, the hon. member for Peterborough, said that he did not commit electoral fraud at all, and yet he is under investigation and four charges have been laid against him.

Democracy is really taking a hit, and I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments made by my hon. colleague from Hochelaga, and she is

### *Privilege*

right. Many Canadians are discouraged. It is important not to lose hope. They see that people on this side of the House have integrity, even though integrity is seriously lacking on the government side. The Liberal Party was just thrown out of office because of integrity problems. It seems that we are heading in the same direction.

Is there a rule that says that a government loses all integrity after 10 years in power? I have to wonder. Unfortunately, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville has proven that we are heading in that direction

I hope the members on this side of the House will be able to emphasize the fact that that we will maintain our integrity. We will certainly not follow the Conservatives' example.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak in today's debate. This is my first time speaking on a privilege motion, and it is not a subject I take lightly. Respecting privilege is a critically important part of the work we do as parliamentarians. I will get right to the point.

Some may call me naive, but I believe that all members of this House who come to this place make every effort to represent their constituents to the best of their ability. However, at times unfortunate incidents do occur, and words sometimes get spoken that we later may regret. Our friends in the media watch like hawks for this moment, no different from the partisan political instincts among us that watch for political opportunities from our opponents to be capitalized on. I would submit that, in large part, this motion is one of those moments.

To be clear, I am not attempting to belittle this incident. It is critically important that all members of this place strive to be accurate and factual in the things we say. In large part, that is why I believe we have *Hansard*, so that our words and votes can be part of the public record. *Hansard* ensures that we as parliamentarians can be held to account by the citizens who elect us to this place. Never let us forget that ultimately we are accountable to the citizens in our home ridings all across this great country. From time to time, even in my relatively brief time here, I have observed members who have done or said things and, upon reflection, issued an apology. While the demands for an apology may well be at times motivated by partisan interest, the act of giving an apology is one that all Canadians can share and understand. However, not in this place, if we are to support the motion moved by the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Let us make no mistake. There has been an apology in this place, although it has been suggested otherwise. I reviewed the record of *Hansard*. It is clear that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville stated:

I would like to sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House for the statement that I made. It was never my intention, in any way, to mislead the House, for which I have the greatest...of respect.

That is undeniably an apology from the member in question. Does anyone in this place doubt what I just said is an apology? I would submit not.

*Privilege*

I understand that accepting an apology can be difficult for some; more so in this case, as ultimately none of us in this place takes a situation like this lightly, nor do I submit we should. However, the larger question that remains is this. What is the outcome?

The opposition motion suggests that we send this matter to a parliamentary committee for further study. Let us just think about this for a moment. The record of *Hansard* is clear. We know what was said. We know a correction was subsequently made, and an apology—I would submit, a sincere apology—was offered by the member in question. We can debate on this topic for the next six weeks, but we cannot and will not change what was said, corrected, and then apologized for.

Likewise, we also know from parliamentary precedent in previous rulings that this House has a long history of accepting apologies, even in cases touching upon the privileges of the House of Commons. The fact that this House has a long-standing precedent of accepting apologies is a source of frustration to some. Obviously, the motion of the NDP House leader represents that view, rather than to accept this apology.

● (1640)

The motion suggests that we send this matter to the procedure and House affairs committee where it could be studied further. What is there left to study? All the material facts are already before the House. The House is in a position to make a decision based on the facts that lie before it.

Not only does the House have the benefit of all the facts being laid out before it, but the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville rose in his place in the chamber and apologized. At the risk of sounding too direct, the House is basically tasked with accepting that apology or not. In that regard, the parliamentary precedent is very clear, much as the Speaker established in his ruling yesterday.

As each of us has undoubtedly experienced at one time or another, “sorry” can often be the hardest thing to say, but it is absolutely the right thing to do in a case like this. Apologies often go a long way in resolving an issue. So too do they here in the House.

It is interesting that the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley often speaks of the need to increase civility in this place. I would ask the member how we increase civility if we choose to reject the principles of accepting an apology from a member who asks for our forgiveness.

I can share an event that recently occurred in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. Two weeks ago, the leader of the official opposition was in my beautiful riding. My riding, like many, is significantly impacted by the new electoral boundaries redistribution. While at a public event in my riding, the Leader of the Opposition made the claim that there was gerrymandering in this process. The Leader of the Opposition did this with no factual evidence and in the process impugned the reputations of three individuals tasked with the very difficult job of riding redistribution.

I should point out that the leader of the official opposition did not offer an apology for his comments, but I know that the good people of Okanagan—Coquihalla would accept an apology from the Leader of the Opposition if one were offered. That is why I can say quite firmly that I will not be voting in favour of the NDP motion. The

citizens of Okanagan—Coquihalla do not seek punitive measures where a humble apology has already been tendered.

Before I close, I believe it is important that the House not create an environment where members are punished for doing the right thing, in this case offering an apology. Let us not forget that the member's apology and his comments will forever be on the record in *Hansard*.

This debate is about many things. That, I would submit, is why it is an important one. There are indeed frustrations and challenges with outcomes, as will be the case in this debate. However, we must be careful to balance those challenges and frustrations with how they can impact the ability of a member to essentially right a wrong and offer a sincere apology in the process.

This is an important debate, and I would submit that it needs to serve as a reminder to all members of the need to strive for accuracy in our comments and interactions. Let us also consider the need to have an avenue to correct our mistakes and to apologize when we have made an error. I believe that lessons will be learned from this debate, but they will not be enhanced by further study at a parliamentary committee. As such, I will not be supporting the motion.

● (1645)

I would also like to thank all members for taking this time to hear my comments. I realize that we may not agree on the outcome of this debate, but I believe that we all share the importance of having this discussion. I will be accepting the apology of the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville, and I ask that all members of the House vote against this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. However, I disagree with him on one point in particular.

He said that an apology is enough to erase everything someone did in the past and to let that person avoid facing the consequences.

Some people can make mistakes or commit crimes that are punishable in our society. Does he think that if a criminal just apologizes, regardless of the crime he committed, he should be able to avoid facing the consequences?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, obviously the member in question rose in his place and gave a sincere apology, not just to the member opposite and not just to everyone in this place but to all Canadians. This is the consequence of the member rising, giving information that he later regretted, and apologizing for it. There are consequences. It is taking up time and resources that we could be spending discussing issues in our ridings.

I acknowledge that history cannot be unwritten. What went into *Hansard* is there. The reality is that the member has to go back to his constituents. I would say that the consequences are very real and are being felt by the member.

*Privilege*

•(1650)

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, throughout our lives as parliamentarians, we sometimes witness people making wild statements in moments of passion. Sometimes we hear people say things without really thinking. Often, members apologize, we accept their apology, and it ends there.

In this case, however, things have gone a little farther because we wonder what the intention was. Forgetting something, misquoting and deliberately saying something are vastly different from each other. That is the crux of the matter: was there or was there not ill intent?

To what extent does my colleague think an apology can exonerate a person who did something wrong? Where does he personally draw the line?

[English]

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that he brings the human element to our job. We have so many issues thrown at us, we have to ask ourselves where we are going. We debate many things in this place that are important to Canadians. Obviously, members representing the facts as accurately as possible is absolutely important, but again I go back to the point I made in my speech. What outcome do we want by going over the same facts we have before us, which are written in stone in *Hansard*? What do we expect a parliamentary committee to further discover?

One of the most important things we can do is acknowledge that an inaccurate statement was made, regret was shown, and the House deliberated on that and came to a decision. I say to the member, I do not know where one strikes the line. That is why there are 308 of us to cast our votes and say what is reasonable. Hopefully we can get past these things and focus on the priorities of Canadians.

**Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague talk with great thoughtfulness about an issue that touches us all in the House. It talks to the very integrity of the House. When a mistake is made and an apology is given, we have a choice. Do we accept that apology in good faith and in the spirit it was intended or do we not?

My Cape Breton mom used to say that to err is human but to forgive is divine. When one offers a sincere apology, we have a choice. We can either say that we are prepared to accept that apology or not. I felt that the member's apology was sincere.

I have heard members opposite try to find different ways to challenge the question. Was it a genuine apology, or did the initial comments have intent behind them? The way I look at it is that if the member in question had said nothing, we would not have known. In good faith, the member stood up and made that apology.

My colleague from Okanagan—Coquihalla gave an eloquent statement today. He gave his formal comments with a great degree of compassion and heart, which is something we could all learn.

At what point do we say that one can make an error but be forgiven and be understood by the House to be forgiven? Where do we draw the line where we say no, under no circumstances is the House ever prepared to do that? It is easy to be mean and ill-

intended. At what point do we take people at face value and in good faith? Could my colleague respond to that with his thoughts, please?

•(1655)

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, that is a line that each individual member has to draw. We have to weigh what is before us. We have to make a decision based on the motion before us and then move on. That is important to our democratic process.

I really value the statement the member's mother made, to err is human but to forgive is divine. In my lifetime I have heard lots of sayings and about a lot of ways to live.

Here is what I will finish with. Someone told me once that there are two types of pain in life: the pain of discipline and the pain of regret. All of us should use this as an example. If we are disciplined, if we represent our views well and accurately, we will not have some of these regrets. However, when one of us falters and comes forward with a sincere apology and we are prepared to accept that apology, we should take it and get on with the business of the House.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that we are debating the motion because there is a *prima facie* case here and there are very clear criteria: the statement was misleading, it was established that the member making the statement knew it at the time, and the member intended to mislead the House.

The member did, almost three weeks later, apologize for misleading the House, not once but twice. With all due deference to the member, there are questions of degree, which some of the other members have raised, about when the House is misled. In this case, I think it is an egregious case. Does the member not think it merits having the matter referred to committee so that we can look at the appropriate recourse?

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the sentiment. As I said earlier, members have to take into consideration what they feel is the best way to proceed.

On the *prima facie* case, let me turn now to the work of a former law clerk, Joseph Maingot, author of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, Second Edition. On page 221 of his most recent version, he writes:

*A prima facie case of privilege in the parliamentary sense is one where the evidence on its face as outlined by the Member is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to debate the matter and to send it to a committee....*

*While the Speaker may find that a prima facie case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred....*

We are the master of our own destiny. How we execute the business of the people is at our discretion. The member will have the opportunity to vote on that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that I will be sharing my speaking time.

*Privilege*

I am pleased to rise today on this very important issue, which goes to the very heart of our institution, Parliament and the House of Commons. It is fundamentally important that the House debate these issues because, as the Speaker has determined, there may have been a violation of our parliamentary privilege to be able to have all the information before us, and accurate information.

In this instance, the Speaker himself has told us that the information provided to us by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was incorrect.

Consequently, we, as parliamentarians, did not have all the information necessary to continue our deliberations and vote. A vote has already been held at second reading stage.

Consequently, it is this entire matter that is behind today's debate. This is extremely important. I believe that the House, through a parliamentary committee, should have the opportunity to examine the facts around the misleading statements. This is not the best place in which to conduct that kind of proceeding or put questions to the member who misled the House. That should be done instead in a parliamentary committee. The committee could ask questions and examine every factor that might have motivated the member for Mississauga—Streetsville to make misleading statements.

I do not see how a member could appear in the House with a speech prepared in advance, or not, and say to himself that he will intentionally give the House of Commons incorrect information.

I find it hard to believe that anyone could do that, but that is what happened in the case of the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. He arrived in the House and even said it on two occasions. One may believe that it was a trivial mistake, but when such a gross error is made twice, I do not believe it is the result of a minor language error, as the members opposite often say, as if they were mistaken about a figure, a comma or the name of a committee.

The member did not make a trivial mistake. He said he had witnessed a criminal act, one subject to fines and consequences under the Canada Elections Act. He said so twice, which is what surprises me most. He rose in the House on two occasions, in front of all parliamentarians and in fact all Canadians, because every parliamentarian represents Canadian citizens, to say things that he knew were false. I am not making this up. The Speaker has determined that what was said was false, based on three specific criteria that Speakers have used in the past.

This entire matter should be examined more closely. It is fundamentally important in our democracy and in our institution that we be able to get to the bottom of things. We know that this was not true because the member himself apologized. The question is not whether the information was false, whether it was incorrect, because the member told us that the information was false.

● (1700)

He apologized, thankfully, but that is not enough.

This brings me back to the question I put to the hon. member a few minutes ago. He seemed to suggest that a simple apology could erase all past mistakes. That is not the case, and our justice system is proof of that. If I drive at 160 km/h on the highway and get stopped, I cannot get off scot-free by sincerely apologizing to the police

officer and telling him I should not have done that and did not mean to cause any harm. The police officer is not going to let me off without giving me a ticket just because my apologies are very sincere.

It does not work that way, and all members know that. A simple apology cannot solve everything in our society, much less in the House, which symbolizes Canada and our democracy. It is not enough, and that is why we should get to the bottom of this matter and ask the member why he made these statements and whether he got this information from a third party.

These questions, which deserve answers, could lead to a committee report, under the normal process used by our institution. After reviewing the matter, the committee can prepare a report that will be tabled in the House. Then, all the members can read the report and examine it when the time comes to discuss it. Finally, members can vote in the House to determine whether or not the member's breach calls for sanctions.

This process must follow its course, and the next step is the vote that will take place this evening to refer the matter to a parliamentary committee.

I hope members will not show blind partisanship and will not be whipped by their whip when the time comes to vote. It would not be right if, on a question of privilege, the government used its majority and told its members, through its whip, to vote in a certain way.

This is not a government bill but a question of privilege. I hope some members, if not all of them, will support this motion to refer the matter to a committee. It would hurt our institution if such a fundamental question of privilege about a member who deliberately misled the House was settled through a simple vote won by the majority because the government decided to whip its members.

Therefore, I do hope that tonight's vote will be a free vote and that the matter can be referred to a committee. I hope to get the support of all members from all parties in the House.

● (1705)

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague, who is so good at explaining rules that can be rather dry.

I think it is admirable how he raised the fact that a review in committee might help us understand what could have led someone to twice deliberately break a basic rule, to tell the truth in the House.

The hon. member made an analogy to driving a car and being stopped by a police officer who notices that the driver was clearly speeding. Do hon. members not think that we must all tell the truth in the House?

I could say that I spend my time in my neighbourhood watching letter carriers with their flashlights delivering mail in the evening. I see that quite often. I have seen that at least two or three times. That would not be true. However, that would not be as serious as what happened in this case, where the member misled Parliament because he did not have a stronger argument to justify these changes in the rules.

*Privilege*

• (1710)

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher for his comments and his question.

Indeed, we need to look at the context in which these statements were made. We were debating an electoral reform bill, which, according to the minister responsible for the bill, appears to be based on speculation or rumours.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville made some unfounded and completely false statements to justify the bill and the measures that were going to be implemented to address a problem. Now we see that the problem this member raised did not even exist. The government is trying to justify a bill and regulations with a situation that does not even exist.

That is the context in which the statements were made. It is even more surprising and sad for the House that members are making such statements in a context like that and that the minister seems to be doing the same thing.

The only facts he came up with to support his bill are from an *Infoman* report. Although I have a lot of respect for that TV show, I do not think it should be used as the sole source of information for creating bills and amending federal laws.

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague and he raised an important point. The NDP believes that apologies are not enough. People have to take responsibility and acknowledge the harm they do. We really have to take this a step further and answer to the people.

My colleague said it very well: it takes more than apologies; we have to take action and take this further. When I see the Conservatives pushing through their election “deform” bill and completely ignoring Canadians and not consulting them, in the belief that the people are going to buy this and all the rest and that their party is going to completely change the country, I tell myself that it does not make sense. I wonder what they are doing.

I would like my honourable colleague to elaborate on the point he raised, that it takes more than apologies and that we must take action. I would like him to tell us again, as he did in his speech, why it is important to refer this case to committee and to take this further so that Canadians can feel reassured about what they are hearing today.

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Québec for her question.

It is the general attitude of the Conservatives. They seem to think that they can come out of any scandal unscathed and that Canadians will not notice. Our role as the opposition is to hold the Conservatives to account and to ensure that those in power are accountable to the people.

All too often, the Conservatives believe that it can all be swept under the carpet, that they can move on to something else and that everyone will forget. However, the opposition will certainly not forget. We will not forget all these scandals and this Conservative deception.

I said at the beginning that I would be sharing my time. I therefore yield my place to the member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

[English]

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for sharing his time with me.

This is a grave matter we are debating here. It goes to the credibility of this place. The comments that I will make at the end, I hope, will give pause to reflect on a situation where we have a majority government.

What is the situation before us? We were debating Bill C-23, which is proposing significant amendments to the Canada Elections Act, with a number of amendments that are facing huge debate across the country, but within a vacuum of ability for Canadians to speak out. In the course of the debate, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville decided to speak twice in this place and to share certain information. As has been raised here previously, it was in the course of debate on a very significant bill to Canadians that sets out the rights to exercise the franchise. The member has now apologized to the House and admitted that he misled this place on observations that he personally witnessed in the use of the voucher system.

Why is this important? It is because of changes to the voucher system that the government wants to proceed with, which is to do away with the voucher. Frankly, right now, hundreds of thousands of Canadians, from seniors to first nations to students, rely on vouchers to exercise their franchise. We are fortunate to live in a country where everyone in society has the right to vote if they are a citizen. I raise this matter because I have received letters. I understand the same letters have been sent to the minister responsible for the new election bill.

I received a letter from the president of the students' union for the King's University College, the president of the students' union for the University of Alberta, and the student association of Grant MacEwan University. These are all major institutions in my city.

What they relayed to me and the hon. minister is that they are deeply concerned that this move to remove the voucher is going to make it more difficult. Sieger Siderius, president of the students' association for the King's University College said: “...making the ability to vote more difficult seems antithetical to the inclusive democratic system that has developed in Canada”.

The president of the students' union of the University of Alberta, Petros Kusmu, said: “Voter turnout from students and youth is already relatively low in federal elections”. They think it is important that the government move toward making it easier for students to vote, and they are deeply troubled that to remove the ability to vouch may have graver results, lowering voter turnout from students.

The students association for Grant MacEwan University expressed the same concerns. “Students unable to provide [a] valid piece of identification under the *Fair Elections Act* as currently proposed risk disenfranchisement”. They are calling on me to call for the government to provide expanded consultation so they can voice their perspective.

*Privilege*

Given that the government is still refusing to allow a committee to travel to discuss this important piece of legislation, the only opportunity for a person to find out what is in the bill and what the issues are around the voucher system is to view CPAC, or come to Ottawa if they have the opportunity, if they are studying here, and observe the debate.

What did the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville say in this place? He said:

I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards, going to the campaign office of whatever candidate they support and handing out these voter cards to other individuals, who then walk into voting stations with friends who vouch for them with no ID.

He said that once. On February 6, he again said:

I will relate to him [he means the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification] something I have actually seen. On the mail delivery day when voter cards are put in mailboxes, residents come home, pick them out of their boxes, and throw them in the garbage can. I have seen campaign workers follow, pick up a dozen of them afterward, and walk out. Why are they doing that? They are doing it so they can hand those cards to other people, who will then be vouched for at a voting booth and vote illegally. That is going to stop.

As is clear in the House, and as the members representing the government side have attested to, almost three weeks later, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville stood up in the House and confessed that he completely misled the House, not once but twice.

• (1715)

How are we to be assured that Canadians following this debate managed to follow every day of it, so that they will have learned that in fact this hon. member had misled the House? This is a serious matter. This is a serious bill we are discussing and it is absolutely imperative that factual information be brought forward. There have been many questions back and forth in question period about proposed changes to the Elections Act, and a lot of concerns raised on behalf of constituents about the plan to do away with the vouching system.

This is a very significant matter. We are talking about the very right of Canadians to exercise their democratic right to vote for the members in this place. We have heard from young people, certainly in my city, who are deeply concerned about this proposed amendment. We had a member testify in the House that he personally had witnessed voter fraud with the use of vouchers, and then admit he never did witness any such thing. This is not simply a case where perhaps somebody had told him third-hand that there might be some fraud with vouching. He actually stood in this place twice and said that he personally had witnessed this and had witnessed voter fraud.

What is important is that, according to our procedures, the House Leader of the Official Opposition raised a question of privilege, the member spoke to it, and the Speaker issued a ruling. In issuing his ruling, the Speaker said that he had to consider three factors based on precedent. One was that it had to be proven that the statement was misleading; two, that it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time of the statement that it was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the member intended to mislead the House. The member himself has apologized that he has done all three. However, aside from that, the reason we are here debating right now is because the Speaker made a ruling in this

matter and, as the procedure goes, we do not get into this debate unless there is a prima facie case of contempt in the House.

We have heard a number of members state that we do not bring forward this kind of motion lightly, and it does not happen very often, and it certainly has not happened often while I have been in this place for more than five years. Therefore, it seems appropriate, given the procedures of the House, which are laid down in a chart in our procedural book, which is agreed to by all the members in the House, that there will be a vote in this place.

What happens when we have a majority government? We are having a debate here and we begin to sense how people might vote. It may be that those members on the other side might have a bit of conscience and think that this is reprehensible behaviour and that just standing up and saying, "Oh gosh, I should not have misled the House" is not enough, and that maybe this matter should be referred to the committee and an appropriate response taken. There is no predetermination of what the response is. The member could, for example, simply be asked to come before the bar of the House and apologize to the Speaker. It is not terribly reprehensible. We are not going to lock him up behind bars and so forth.

I am stunned that the members are complaining that we are taking up the time of the House on this. Would it not be nice if instead we were using the time to decide how many communities in Canada we were going to talk with about the proposed changes to the Elections Act, so that we could actually have a debate among Canadians on how we should change the law.

Clearly, my constituents and the youth in my city have expressed their will. They would like to have a voice in this statute. They have a right not to be misinformed on what has happened with the vouching system, and regrettably they have been given misleading information in this House. We can only hope that they have been able to follow this debate and that they know that in fact there is no clear evidence of fraudulent use of the voucher system.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to a specific point in the hon. member's excellent speech, namely the third factor to consider.

Of the three factors that had to be proven, the third is especially interesting. It must be established that the member had an intention, which has been done. If I say that a member is a liar, the Speaker will invoke the Standing Orders, I will apologize and he will accept my apology.

In this case, there is something more. In order to employ such a stratagem, there had to be intent. He did not say that the cards came back and that people had used them. He said it took place in apartment buildings, places where there are groups of people. There were therefore several cards. It had to be premeditated. Deep down, he intended to act as he did.

In the member's view, did he or did he not do so intentionally?

*Privilege*

**ROYAL ASSENT**

•(1725)

[*English*]

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I would simply have to say that it is not for me to determine. It is my understanding that the Speaker has so determined there is a prima facie case, otherwise we would not be here now, debating this matter.

What is of particular concern to me, and I am not about to compare our procedural rules with the Criminal Code, but I know as a lawyer, and as the Speaker would know as an accomplished lawyer, in the Criminal Code there is a difference between a summary conviction and an indictable offence. What is the difference? Intent. That is the difference between somebody simply being allowed to stand to say, “Oh, I’m really sorry. I quoted the wrong paper. My staff gave me the wrong paper. It’s a bureaucrat’s fault”, which we hear every day.

This is a case where the member has admitted to intentionally misleading the House. He never observed such a thing.

And so, it is a matter of a much higher order, I would argue. Therefore, our motion is appropriate, and the amendment. I think the public should be able to observe.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments made by my colleague, an eminent jurist.

In the same vein, what concerns me about the current turn of events is that on the government benches, the members seem to dismiss out of hand such an important matter as the protection of our privileges. I refer to protection for the fact that we have the right to speak in the House, but we must tell the truth.

How many of us—myself first of all—have been scolded, or worse, by the Speaker of the House as a result of complaints from the people opposite for using language deemed unparliamentary?

In this case, we have a serious violation of what is called our privilege. We take it for granted that when someone stands up and proclaims something, they are telling us the truth. We are not allowed to call someone a liar in the House. The opposition is being accused of wasting our time with this debate. I find that thoroughly unseemly, because it goes to the heart of what our privilege entails.

I am curious to know what my colleague thinks about this.

[*English*]

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, it reminds me of the early days when a number of us were first elected, in the 2008 election. My colleague from Halifax stood in this place and gave her inaugural speech. I remember it hit a lot of us very profoundly because she realized, halfway through the speech, and she said one could hear a pin drop, it suddenly occurred to her that she had the opportunity to stand up on behalf of her constituents and tell the truth, simply tell the truth, and that the truth would be heard in this place and by all Canadians.

That goes to the essence of what should be important in this place.

So, when any of us not only do not provide appropriate information but mislead the House, I think that is a significant matter and merits the attention we are calling to it.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

March 4, 2014

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that Mr. Stephen Wallace, Secretary to the Governor General, in his capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 4th day of March, 2014, at 15:59.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Jaton

Deputy Secretary

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-16, An Act to give effect to the Governance Agreement with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

\* \* \*

•(1730)

[*English*]

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on another item of business, yesterday I promised to return to the House with a new date for the opposition day. The allotted day was supposed to have been today. In order to get on with the government’s legislative program, I can inform the House that the sixth allotted day shall be tomorrow. Additionally, for the benefit of committees, the seventh and final allotted day of the supply period shall be Monday, March 24.

\* \* \*

**PRIVILEGE**

STATEMENTS BY THE MEMBER FOR MISSISSAUGA—STREETSVILLE—  
REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

*Privilege*

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I want to participate in this debate and address the motion proposed by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. The motion proposes that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs study the facts surrounding the statements made by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. I propose at the outset that we already know the facts. The question is what we do about it.

A study by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs would be redundant and a waste of time, in my submission. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is one of the busiest committees, producing more reports than any other standing committee. The committee already has numerous projects on the go, including studies arising from private members' business and a question of privilege related to Elections Canada. The committee is examining changes to the Standing Orders and is currently studying Bill C-23, the fair elections act.

At the present time, the committee is under siege by an NDP filibuster aimed at delaying the fair elections act, Bill C-23. This is unfortunate because Bill C-23 is a very important piece of legislation. This bill would protect voters from rogue calls and impersonation with a mandatory public registry for mass calling, prison time for impersonating elections officials, and increased penalties for deceiving people out of their votes. It would allow the commissioner to seek tougher penalties for existing offences and empower the commissioner with new offences to combat big money, rogue calls, and fraudulent voting. It would crack down on voter fraud, make rules easier to follow, allow for small donations in and big money out, respect democratic election results, uphold free speech, and provide better customer service for voters.

Getting back to the motion before the House, I would like to draw everyone's attention to a quick review of the facts that led to this question of privilege. On February 6, during debate on Bill C-23, the fair elections act, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville made a statement in the House about voter identification cards. He rose in the House on February 24 and corrected the record. The next day he added, "...I recognized that this was an error on my part". He then sincerely apologized to all Canadians and all members of the House for the statement he made. He added that it was never his intention in any way to mislead the House, for which he has the greatest amount of respect.

As we know, it is a long-standing tradition in the House to accept the word of a member and to accept his or her apology. Notwithstanding that tradition, on February 25, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley rose in the House on a question of privilege charging the member for Mississauga—Streetsville with contempt; this, of course, after the member for Mississauga—Streetsville had delivered his apology to Canadians and all members in the House.

The government House leader responded by making the following point. He stated:

...the presumption in this House is that we are all taken at our word, that the statements we make are truthful and correct. That we are given the benefit of that doubt brings with it a strong obligation on us, in the cases where a member misspeaks, to correct the record so that nobody is left with inaccurate perceptions.

In this particular instance, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, has done exactly that. Having misspoken in this House and having realized his comments were in error, he has come to this House and corrected the record.

That is the obligation that exists upon members. That is an obligation to ensure that nobody is left under false impressions. That is an obligation he has discharged. That is the obligation upon all members here, and for that reason I think that alone is sufficient to rebut any concern that there has been a contempt.

● (1735)

I will end the government House leader's quote there.

Also in that debate, the member for Kingston and the Islands recognized that the only reason the House was engaged in the debate on the matter was the fact that it had been raised by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, who took his duty and obligation to correct the record seriously.

Instead of accepting the apology from the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, the NDP House leader chose to raise the matter as a question of privilege, putting the onus on the Speaker to rule.

When the Speaker finds that there is a prima facie question of privilege, the task of formulating the question to the House falls to the member who raised the issue. In this case, it was the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. As we all know, his privilege motion sets aside all business of the House. I believe he could have found another way to express his displeasure, without engaging all of us in the process, debate, and drama of a question of privilege.

The debate on his motion does not only use up the precious time of this House, but it proposes to use up a great deal of the precious time of a committee. This exercise is wasteful and unnecessary.

I will be encouraging members to vote against the proposal from the NDP for three reasons. One, the member who made the misleading statements apologized and voluntarily corrected the record. That is a very important point for all of us to realize. He apologized and voluntarily corrected the record.

Two, there is no merit in a committee study since all of the facts are known. He made a statement and he apologized for it. The real and only question left for the House to decide is how it wants to move forward on this issue considering the facts before it.

This brings me to the third reason to oppose the motion. The one outcome we want to avoid is to create an environment where MPs are punished for doing the right thing. The right thing for this House to do is to accept the member's apology and move on.

However, I am afraid it is too late for the high road at this point. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has the entire House going down his road.

What does the NDP want to accomplish with a committee study? I looked at the procedural references the NDP House leader cited in his presentation to his question of privilege. In his intervention, he cited a reference from page 115 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition.



His citation references a case from December 6, 1978, where Speaker Jerome ruled that a government official deliberately misled a minister and that constituted a *prima facie* question of privilege. The member for Northumberland—Durham, who raised the question of privilege was invited to propose his motion to the House. The motion was defeated, and the matter was not sent to committee.

The NDP House leader also referenced a ruling from October 19, 2000, regarding misleading statements made in the House. Speaker Parent stated that he could find no support for a claim that the privileges of the House had been breached; so no committee study resulted from that.

He included a ruling of our current Speaker from May 7, 2012. The Speaker did not arrive at a finding of a *prima facie* question of privilege there either.

There was, however, a committee study that resulted from a ruling he referenced from February 1, 2002, regarding two statements made by the then minister of defence. In that ruling, Speaker Milliken noted the need for clarity in House proceedings and the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House. He also stated that integrity of information was of paramount importance since it directly concerned the rules of engagement for Canadian troops involved in the conflict in Afghanistan, a principle that goes to the very heart of Canada's participation in the war against terrorism.

• (1740)

A motion was moved referring the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and almost a week later, on Thursday, February 7, 2002, it was adopted.

The committee heard from a number of witnesses in that case. It heard from the member who raised the matter, Mr. Brian Pallister. It heard from the Clerk of the House of Commons, and the law clerk and parliamentary counsel of the House of Commons. It heard from the hon. Art Eggleton, the former minister of national defence; the deputy chief of the defence staff; the deputy minister of the department of national defence; the chief of the defence staff; the deputy clerk of the Privy Council, counsel and security and intelligence co-ordinator; the clerk of the Privy Council and secretary to the cabinet; the assistant deputy minister, global and security policy, department of foreign affairs and international trade; and J.P. Joseph Maingot, former law clerk and parliamentary counsel, House of Commons, and author of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*.

In addition, members of the committee were invited to submit questions in writing for Commodore Jean-Pierre Thiffault, commander of the Canadian joint task force in southwest Asia.

That is an impressive list of witnesses. Obviously, there are some similarities between this question of privilege and the question of privilege in 2002, but I believe members would recognize the many significant differences. There might have been more meat on the bone in the 2002 case than the straightforward facts of this case.

Also, I think it is worth mentioning that the status of the two members involved is significantly different. The 2002 case involved a minister of the Crown. A minister enjoys a special role in providing information to the House.

### *Privilege*

That said, and despite all that was involved in the 2002 study, and all that was at stake, the committee had to focus on the task at hand, the issue of two contradictory statements made in the House.

The report back from the procedure and House affairs committee stated:

We are not concerned here with the Minister's performance as a minister, nor with the chain of command or lines of communication in the military, the Department of National Defence, or the Government.

The committee also felt it was necessary to point out the following:

Parliamentary committees charged with examining questions of privilege must exercise caution and act responsibly in drawing conclusions. They must guard against allowing partisanship to colour their judgement. The power to punish for contempt must not be exercised lightly. It exists for those rare occasions when Parliament's ability to function is impeded or compromised.

One could, in the case before us today, connect some dots and come to the conclusion that this is not about statements made by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. Other agendas are at play here, agendas that are clouding the judgment of the NDP. I am certain that most reasonable people would agree that the case before us is of a different scale in importance than that in 2002. Even still, the conclusion of the committee in 2002 was simple and to the point. It stated:

After a thorough review of all the circumstances, the Committee has come to the conclusion that the Minister made a mistake....

It concluded that no contempt of the House was committed.

What are the facts surrounding the statements made by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville? He made a mistake. He rose in the House and said, "I recognized that this was an error on my part". He followed that recognition of fault with an apology to the House and to all Canadians. He made it clear that he did not intend to mislead the House.

• (1745)

I submit that a committee study of this case is not necessary. It only makes sense in the mind of the New Democrats, who fervently obstruct anything constructive that comes on the floor of the House and to our committees. I understand that the role of the opposition is to oppose, but in this case, it has crossed the line.

As the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs warned, in 2002, we in the House must also guard against allowing partisanship to colour our judgment in the matter of privilege. We must not execute our power lightly.

The NDP should refrain from using this question of privilege to fight its battle against the fair elections act. It only exposes its fiend, outrage, and phoney crusade in its opposition to legislation that will put everyday Canadians, not big union bosses, in charge of their democracy.

I have a number of quotations from people across the country. I have documentation from Elections Canada, in cases where it has found fraud in past elections in this country.

As well, I hear the words of my constituents, who speak on a daily basis. I can tell members that they do not want election fraud any more than anybody else in this House. Supporting the fair elections act would go a long way to giving back fair elections to Canadians.

*Privilege*

We all know that things happen during elections that should not happen. That is what the legislation, Bill C-23, would address.

With respect to the question before us, I encourage all members of the House to see past the partisan colours of their party. Let the House get back to business, and let the committees get on with their agendas. There is no place in committee for this matter. It has been settled. The member stood up and he apologized.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments, even though we have fundamentally different views.

We believe that what happened is much more serious and that a committee should examine the issue in order to shed light on what really happened. How can an honourable colleague say that he saw people doing something with his own eyes, and then 18 days later, say that he is sorry but that he actually did not see anything.

Can my hon. colleague try to explain to us, without telling us again that the member has apologized, that we should forget about this and that the case is closed, how someone can be an eyewitness to an event one day and then, 18 days later, claim that he did not see anything?

[*English*]

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Speaker, I see that the opposition is drawing a line in the sand. It does not want to see the light for what it is.

The member of Parliament for Mississauga—Streetsville made a mistake. He stood up in the House and he apologized. He apologized to Canadians. He apologized to all members of the House.

At this point, to behave in the manner that the NDP has decided to behave on this issue is, without being disrespectful, quite shameful.

• (1750)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that my friend across the way finds that discussing a member being potentially held in contempt is shameful, but the act of misleading the House about our elections law is fine. That does not seem to be a problem.

The Speaker's ruling said:

...the fact remains that the House continues to be seized of completely contradictory statements. This is a difficult position in which to leave members, who must be able to depend on the integrity of the information with which they are provided to perform their parliamentary duties.

Let us be clear as to what actually happened. By the way, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville has completely avoided the opportunity that has been afforded to him over these many hours, as the Conservatives claim, to come into the House and tell us what happened. We still do not know. We believe we should find out because there may be motivations; there may be something interesting. He said he witnessed electoral fraud, then he said he did not witness electoral fraud. He saw a crime, and then he did not see a crime. He had two weeks to decide whether he saw it and what the truth was.

Here is the point. There are three conditions that had to be met in order for us to even be having this debate. It had to be proven that

the statement was misleading. He did that. It must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that it was not correct. That was also true. Finally, in making the statement, it must be established that the member intended to mislead the House. That is also by the Speaker's reference, not by my opinion. I hope my friend would at least take the advice of the Speaker. All of those merits were met.

The hon. member condones that activity, and in fact applauds the member, for once having been caught misleading the House, he had to come back and apologize for it. I do not understand how he balances these things.

He will vote later tonight against understanding what actually happened because the member for Mississauga—Streetsville will not come into this place to defend himself.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Speaker, I will quote the apology to the House by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville on February 25 this year. This is what he said:

I would like to sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House for the statement that I made. It was never my intention, in any way, to mislead the House, for which I have the greatest amount of respect.

I would submit to my friend opposite that he is taking an ultra-partisan approach on this specific issue, tainting the reputation of a man who had the courage to stand up in this House and deliver this apology. Not once has he stood up to say that he and members of his party misquote things.

I will give an ongoing example of this. We have a bill before the House. It is called the fair elections act. New Democrats changed the name of the bill. That is not the bill being debated in the House. It is the fair elections act. They refer to it as the unfair elections act. I do not know what they are referring to. The name of the bill is fair elections. There is partisanship on display, big time, yet again.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I find this debate unfortunate. We are having a discussion, not because of the partisanship of the official opposition, but because the Speaker of this House has ruled that there is an issue that should come to the members in order to, quoting the words of a former Speaker, "clear the air".

An opportunity to clear the air has not been seized by the Conservative benches. I acknowledge that the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville did not need to apologize to the House. He could have perhaps pretended away the incident and never admitted to the incident that he claimed he saw, he had never seen.

I find the events that have taken place here extremely perplexing. As a member of Parliament, I will go back to my constituents and try to explain it. I will be unable to explain how it is that the member told us, two different times, that he saw voting cards being removed in order to stuff ballots by people who did not have a right to vote in those locations. I find that very troubling. I think we should be able to get to the bottom of it.

Calling Bill C-23 the unfair elections act is merely marketing; it is hardly misleading the House. Everyone knows that we are talking about Bill C-23. Some of us, myself included, Preston Manning included, find Bill C-23 going entirely in the wrong direction. We should try to make sure that people can vote, not remove their ability to vote.

My question to the hon. member is, would he not agree that we would have been much better served in this discussion, once the Speaker ruled, to get an explanation as to why these two very contradictory statements came before this House?

I will say that I appreciate the member for Mississauga—Streetsville apologizing. I will thank him for that, but I would like an explanation.

• (1755)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Speaker, I would agree that it is very disappointing that we are going through this process at this time, but for reasons somewhat different from those the hon. member just gave.

I do not know why the hon. member would have difficulty explaining it to her constituents. It is simple. If we want to talk about clearing the air, as the former speaker said, the member has cleared the air. He made one statement and he corrected it. I have a lot of difficulty understanding why the hon. member cannot tell her constituents that the member made a mistake and got up and apologized. It is as simple as that. It is not rocket science. It is very easy. He made a comment that he could not substantiate. He got up and he apologized. He said, "I would like to sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House".

I believe the constituents in her riding would understand that. It is human to make a mistake and it is human to stand up and say "I'm sorry".

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised to hear talk of partisanship when the Speaker himself gave the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley the opportunity to introduce a motion, because he had found that there had been a *prima facie* breach of privilege. There is no partisanship here. This is just regular procedure.

That raises another question that I would like to ask the Conservative member, namely, whether there will be any partisanship on his side during this evening's vote, and whether the vote will be a party vote or a whipped vote.

I wonder whether he can provide us with that information, and whether his party will require all its members to vote the same way this evening.

[English]

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Speaker, our party has demonstrated that we vote our conscience. We can point to many times when we have done that in the House. We can point to very few times when that has happened with the NDP over there.

I am very surprised that the hon. member does not see the partisanship involved in this. This is all it is. It is politics by the NDP. The NDP members are using an apology made in the House to try to

### Privilege

prolong and continue to filibuster one of the most important pieces of legislation that has been put before the House, Bill C-23, the fair elections act. We know what that is about, and Canadians know what that is about. We look forward to getting on with the job and getting it done.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the extraordinary member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. I would like to congratulate her. It is important that we listen to what she has to say. It will be very interesting, more interesting than what we just heard.

I would like to take a moment to quote the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. I think it will give us some insight into what the word "misspeak" means to the Conservatives, or what it means to them to have misspoken.

On February 6, the member in question said the following:

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about this vouching system again. I know the minister represents an urban city. I am from a semi-urban area of Mississauga, where there are many high-rise apartment buildings. On mail delivery day when the voter cards are delivered to community mailboxes in apartment buildings, many of them are discarded in the garbage can or the blue box. I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards, going to the campaign office [I suppose he is following them] of whatever candidate they support and handing out these voter cards to other individuals [he saw three things there], who then walk into voting stations with friends who vouch for them with no ID.

He personally saw at least four things happen. He witnessed them.

Later that same day, he said this:

Earlier this afternoon I asked the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification a question. I think my friend from York South—Weston will appreciate this because, just like the riding I represent, there are a lot of apartment buildings in his riding. I will relate to him something I have actually seen.

That same day, he repeated and reiterated his previous statement, and I quote:

On the mail delivery day when voter cards are put in mailboxes, residents come home, pick them out of their boxes, and throw them in the garbage can. I [first person singular] have seen campaign workers follow, pick up a dozen of them afterward, and walk out. Why are they doing that? They are doing it so they can hand those cards to other people, who will then be vouched for at a voting booth and vote illegally. That is going to stop.

Then, 18 days later, the member Mississauga—Streetsville had an epiphany. He suddenly realized that his story was completely fabricated and that he was gravely mistaken when he said that he had seen, with his own eyes, people using voter information cards to commit election fraud. It took him 18 days. I would like to know what went through his mind on February 6. Did he have a psychotic episode? Was he under the influence of drugs? Was he following instructions from his own party to make a dismal and fraudulent attempt to justify Bill C-23, which would prevent people from voting by using the voter information card they receive from Elections Canada and having someone vouch for their identity?

The Conservatives have a problem: they consistently give us public policies based on stuff they make up. Good public policy is usually based on good research and objectivity, on an analysis of a situation supported by facts to back up statements and proposals.

*Privilege*

Bill C-23, which would implement voter suppression tactics worthy of the Republican Party, challenges a fundamental right of Canadian citizens—exercising the right to vote—based on arguments that are basically tall tales that misled Parliament.

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

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** It is true, Mr. Speaker, my grandma would never have done that kind of thing. She had more intellectual honesty than that.

I am trying to understand what happened between February 6th and 24th.

• (1800)

If someone tells the House that he saw people commit illegal acts, why did it take him 18 days to realize he saw nothing of the kind?

No apology will erase the contempt of Parliament committed on February 6. What happened during those 18 days? How is it that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville appears to have suffered hallucinations on February 6 and suddenly had to set the record straight on February 24? We would like to understand.

Basically, this sham, this preposterous story, is supposed to justify the Conservative minister's electoral reform bill. Constructing public policy and major reforms on baseless statements, smoke and mirrors, is very serious and utterly unacceptable.

We in the official opposition act in a responsible and honest manner. We want to know exactly what happened. Was the member influenced in a way that made him make such statements? Was he subsequently influenced again when he said he had seen no one commit an illegal act? If that is true, how is it that he, as an honest politician, did not notify Elections Canada?

This has nothing at all to do with misspeaking. I might be mistaken about the name of a constituency or a person and then have to apologize, but that is not at all the case here. The member stated on two occasions that he had personally seen such actions.

This brings us back to all the defects in the electoral reform bill. We are told, in an entirely Orwellian tone, that this bill will protect us from the influence of big money, whereas maximum contributions are being raised from \$1,200 to \$1,500. How can anyone have these two ideas in mind at the same time? This is absolutely inconsistent.

If you want to reduce the influence of big money on elections and political parties, you increase public funding and cut individual contributions. However, the Conservatives are doing the opposite. They probably have more friends than we do who are able to write cheques for \$1,500. They are not being serious at all. They are cheating by creating a legal framework that will benefit them in the next election.

This is extremely serious in a representative democracy such as ours, in which people must be able to trust the laws that govern them. Not only do the Conservatives risk preventing tens of thousands of people from voting, but they are raising the limit on individual contributions to a political party to \$1,500 and preventing Elections Canada from investigating by stripping it of that power and conferring it on a third party.

What enrages me most about Bill C-23 is that the Conservatives want to prohibit Elections Canada from promoting the right to vote. This is quite disturbing when voter turnout has been declining for years now.

The main body that organizes elections in our country will not be able to tell people that it would be good for them to go and vote, that their votes count and that we need them. No, the only thing it will be able to tell them is the location of their polling station. Elections Canada will no longer be allowed to encourage people to exercise their right to vote and to have a voice in the representation and governance of their country. That must suit somebody. That must benefit people who are not counting on citizen engagement or people's desire for real change in this country.

It is particularly odious to make false statements in the House to justify an electoral reform bill that has undergone no public consultation, either with the opposition parties or with the Chief Electoral Officer, and even less with the people of our country.

• (1805)

For the NDP, that is unacceptable. We will stand against it.

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciated my colleague's speech.

We have talked a lot about the credibility of the Conservative member who made comments that we now know were not true and that, it has been acknowledged, constituted a prima facie breach of parliamentary privilege. Does that not speak volumes about the Conservatives? All day I have listened to these members dismiss this out of hand, when the very thing that should be sacred in the House is our word, what we say. What we say is not always great—and I include myself in that—but we are not supposed to lie or use unparliamentary language.

The vote that will be held in about two hours will say a lot about our colleagues across the way, who think that it is acceptable to mislead the House and the public and to breach the privilege of parliamentarians in the House, a fact that the Speaker acknowledged. Does that not have an impact on all Conservative members?

• (1810)

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Gatineau for her excellent question. Obviously, this says a lot about and is symptomatic of the Conservatives' attitude: they are entitled to their entitlements, they do not need to listen to anyone, anything goes, and the ends justify the means.

They have a bill that will change the Elections Act to their advantage. They are prepared to spout utter nonsense to justify it even if the facts are not on their side. Why? It is because the Conservatives are not usually interested in reality and facts. We have seen that in other sectors as well. Statistics Canada is now prohibited from using a mandatory long form census, which makes the data it collects inaccurate and hard to use. The fact that the government is muzzling scientists follows the same pattern and is part of the same arrogant attitude of a tired old government.

*Privilege*

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for my colleague. The Conservatives are now saying that there is no need to vote for this motion or for the recommendations made by the Speaker of the House with respect to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville because everything is clear now.

Over the course of the past two days, that member had umpteen hours and opportunities to explain what is going on. We only got 50 words out of him. He said that he had made a mistake. Indeed, he made a big mistake with respect to the election bill. Why? Is it that obvious? Does everyone understand what is happening and why?

[*English*]

The member said that he “misspoke”. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in the rules that guide us, we cannot accuse other members of Parliament of lying. This is one of the things that guides us, which is good because it tries to keep the conversation cooler than our yelling “liar” back and forth across the House.

So the member said that he misspoke and did not intentionally mislead the House. However, in the Speaker's ruling and in the presentation that we made, one of the conditions is that the Speaker has to believe that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House.

So who are we going to believe? Is it the 20 words spoken by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville who was caught completely falsifying his witnessing of a crime, or the Speaker of the House who witnessed the whole conversation and is yet to hear from the very member we are talking about over hours of debate?

I am curious as to why. Is the air clear? Does this satisfy the public that we actually know why the Conservative member conducted himself this way over such an important thing as our election act?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the opposition House leader for his question.

That question is the reason for the debate we have been having for two days. In fact, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville rose in the House and said:

I made a statement in the House during the debate that is not accurate. I just want to reflect the fact that I have not personally witnessed individuals retrieving voter notification cards from the garbage cans or from the mailbox areas...

Eighteen days earlier, he stated the opposite four times. We want to know what happened. Unfortunately, my Conservative colleague is not present. The Speaker of the House of Commons said that, with this contempt of Parliament, there was a clear intention to mislead the House of Commons.

At the very least, the member could be here to explain. If he cannot be here to explain and he insists on hiding, then a committee should look at this in order to determine exactly what happened.

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to take part in this debate. I believe that it will have a significant impact on the future of democracy in this country.

On February 6, during a speech he made in the House of Commons, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville stated that he had personally witnessed voter fraud. That is a serious accusation. He said the following:

I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards, going to the campaign office of whatever candidate they support and handing out these voter cards to other individuals, who then walk into voting stations with friends who vouch for them with no ID.

In my opinion, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville made a very serious accusation. A few weeks later, on February 24, the member came to and changed his story. He stated that, in fact, he had not personally seen what he had previously reported. He said that he heard such stories when working in the rental housing industry. That is why, on February 25, my colleague, the House Leader of the Official Opposition, raised a question of privilege, saying that the member had deliberately misled the House. I believe that that is exactly what the member did.

What are we to think of these contradictions uttered by a member of Parliament? As the representative of his constituents, he should ensure, more than anyone, that his words and actions meet the ethical standards that all Canadians are entitled to expect an elected member of Parliament to meet.

I would not like to be one of his staff right now. I have a duty to my constituents, whom I represent every day in the House. I am here to defend their ideals and values, to inform the House of their views. If I told false stories to the House of Commons, many people would probably call my office, send me emails or write to me on Facebook. It must be mind-boggling for his staff. The member decided that what he had told the House was no longer the truth. He made that decision two and a half weeks later.

I do not know what happened. The allegation was rather serious. He accused some people of election fraud. Perhaps he realized he had gone too far. However, for the past two days, our Conservative colleagues have been saying that it is no big deal. The member did not tell the truth, but because he apologized everything is swept under the rug, forgotten, and we should move on.

Indeed, I would like to talk about important issues, such as the situation in Ukraine and the economy. Yesterday, we were supposed to have a debate on food safety, which is a very important issue, but we now find ourselves talking about this matter. I too feel that we are talking about it a lot, but it is a very important issue. We are talking about our country's democracy and what is going on in the Canadian Parliament.

Yesterday, on March 3, the Speaker of the House ruled in favour of my NDP colleague. He clearly indicated that the member knowingly made false statements with the intention of misleading the House. The member deliberately told the House something that was false.

We must think before we speak. Earlier, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration said that if a member apologizes 18 days later, it is okay.

*Privilege*

I would like to share a story. A few weeks ago, I learned of an immigration case in my riding. The lady came from Russia. When she arrived in Canada, she was asked about her status. She was asked whether she was married, in a common-law relationship or single. The common-law relationship does not exist in every country of the world. Therefore, she said she was single. A week later, she realized she was in a common-law relationship. She wanted to correct her mistake but was not able to do so.

● (1815)

Thus, there are times when it is important to be aware of what we say and what we do. We are parliamentarians. We speak on behalf of Canadians. I do not understand why that woman was told that she could not change her status. It was a nightmare trying to change the form. Here we have a member who apologizes, says he did not act deliberately, says he is sorry for coming up with this story to help his party, but it is not true. He apologizes, saying “I misspoke”. The Conservatives want to move on.

I think and I hope that we are more serious than that. I think this is a farce, and it is important to talk about it. It is important to explore this in committee, to see why the member did that.

We have been talking about it since yesterday. The member was in the House yesterday. He never stood up to defend himself, to ask a question, to say that maybe we should investigate further. He did not say anything.

I would remind the House that three conditions must be met in order for someone to be accused of misleading the House. The member met all three conditions. The first is that the individual made a statement that was misleading. The second is that the individual knew at the time that the statement was incorrect. Since it was entirely fabricated, the member knew that it was false at the time. The third condition is that, in making the statement, the member intended to mislead the House. We have seen this in the past. The member rose here to say that it was not true, because he knew that he deliberately misled the House.

Therefore, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was in contempt since he said he personally saw what he described, when in fact he was fully aware that what he had just said did not reflect reality.

As was mentioned earlier, he did not say it just once. He said a second time that he had witnessed this fraud. Therefore, this member clearly intended to mislead the members of the House. This is an extremely serious matter that goes to the heart of our democracy and has to do with respect for our country's most important institutions.

The member deliberately chose to present as facts information that he knew was false, to justify the passage of a government bill that would deprive some Canadians of their right to vote.

We could talk about much more serious issues. I would much rather talk about the bill and its content, but that is what happened.

Moreover, the Conservatives are accusing us of wasting time. I am sorry, but it is not because of me that we are discussing this matter. It is because of one of their colleagues who rose in the House at the beginning of February and spouted nonsense. If I rose and began

talking nonsense, I hope my colleagues would call me to order and remind me that I represent people and must speak the truth.

The member presented information to justify the government's decision to introduce an electoral reform bill that ends the vouching system, which tens of thousands of Canadians use properly. He did that as a member of Parliament. Therefore, initially, we had no reason to think his statement was not true. In making this statement, the member was fully aware that, in the eyes of Canadians, his status as an elected representative in the Parliament of Canada guaranteed that he was telling the truth.

Why did he show such contempt for Canadians? I do not understand.

I think there is a simple reason. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville invented evidence to support the government's plan to use Bill C-23 to eliminate the vouching system. I think it is sad that the government would use such tactics to pass a bill.

I am sure many people have noticed that the Conservatives are prepared to do anything possible to take the next election. That is what is going on here.

The member spoke about one of the aspects of Bill C-23. He wanted to talk about a supposed flaw that was completely manufactured, in order to manipulate what members of Parliament and the Canadian public thought about the Conservatives' Bill C-23.

The member's only goal was to make the Conservatives' plan to abolish the vouching system more relevant. This system enabled more than 100,000 Canadians to vote in the 2011 election.

● (1820)

In conclusion I want to say that it is very important to send this issue to committee so that we can shed some light on this affair and find out what went on during those 18 days.

During the debate, some members argued that we must not create an environment in which members are afraid to rise and apologize. However, the member did not rise the next day. He rose 18 days later, which is the problem. Therefore, I think this issue should be studied in committee.

● (1825)

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to comment on a few points.

An apology is, in a way, a confession. When we defend ourselves or ask others to defend us, or if people rush to our defence, that is an admission of guilt.

As for where to draw the line, the question is not really a question because the line has already been drawn in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. Furthermore, the Speaker already said that the line had been crossed.

Today the Conservatives are asking us to entertain the possibility that, in the House, people can distort the truth or say things that are untrue to achieve a goal, then apologize and be done with it. That threatens democracy.

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Laurentides—Labelle for his question.

*Privilege*

It is not even a matter for debate because, yesterday, the Speaker himself said that the line had been crossed and the three conditions met. A committee should look at the situation to see what happened. Since yesterday, Conservative members have been telling us that the member apologized and all should be forgiven.

If someone comes to my house and steals something, then brings it back 18 days later, apologizes for stealing and says he should not have done it, that does not make it okay. We are giving carte blanche to a member who was fully aware that he was not telling the truth. That is the line. The member did not tell the truth, he apologized, and everyone wants us to say that there is no problem.

I think we need to go further than that.

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech. She raised a number of interesting points.

She identified a question that a number of people are asking. Is this a Conservative Party tactic? Why would the hon. member want to use such tactics for Bill C-23? What is in this bill that the Conservatives are so afraid of?

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question because, indeed, Bill C-23 contains many things. When the hon. member rose to speak to this bill, it was to talk about the vouching system. The Conservatives no longer want someone to be able to vouch for a voter's identity.

I have a little anecdote. I used the vouching system in 2008. I was a student in Sherbrooke at the time. I was living in an apartment with eight roommates. The hydro bill, the phone bill and the lease were not in my name. I moved around a lot, so the address on my driver's licence was my parents' address. I had to have someone vouch for me.

The Conservatives are telling students in this country that because they are students—students are more or less stable, their address is their parents'—they cannot vote. I am sorry, but in 2008, if I had not used the vouching system, I could not have voted. Voting is a fundamental right. It is important. The government keeps alarming everyone by saying that young people do not vote, but the vouching system was a good way to enable them to vote.

A member of Parliament makes up some story in the House because he wants to get rid of this option. I understand, the Conservatives do nothing for young people. If I were them, I would not want young people to vote either. In Canada, everyone has the right to vote at age 18. The Conservatives are trying to prevent that. That is what Bill C-23 proposes.

What we are talking about here is the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, who made up stories in the House. This case must be referred to committee because it makes no sense. If we let this go, there is no telling what this party will do.

• (1830)

[*English*]

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, usually I would rise and say that I am pleased to join the debate, but I have a sense of trepidation about doing this. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville is someone I have come to know and quite like, so it

becomes difficult when one has to stand and talk about his actions in the House.

My preference would have been for the government to simply allow this to go to committee, in which case the committee could have dealt with it a long time ago and dispensed with it. The committee could have ruled on it and brought back a recommendation. This way we would not be, as the government House leader has said, spending two days talking about this particular issue, which the member for Mississauga—Streetsville has ended up being the centre of.

Of course, this is public. It is televised. CPAC carries it. People can watch it on the Internet. Committees can be watched on the Internet, but they are less public than this forum.

Would it not have been collegial of the government, of which he is a member, to send it to committee to have it dispensed with? That is what the Speaker's ruling was intended to do. The Speaker believed that there was a case to have it resolved somewhere else and to have us look at it.

Here we are, looking at it here and throwing all the information out over and over again. It does not help the member for Mississauga—Streetsville to have it recast over and over again, but the government has given us no other opportunity. It has left us with this as the only outlet.

One of the government members said earlier that one may misspeak in the House. I started to think about when that happens. Has it happened to me as a member? It actually happened to me on Monday, during the debate on Bill C-18, the government's bill on agriculture.

It came to my attention in two ways. I did not actually know that I had misspoken. In relation to what is called UPOV '91, I actually talked about 1929, which is actually an international convention on plant protection. I interchanged 91 and 29.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, when questioning me during the debate, said that I had gotten it wrong and was talking about something that had happened a long time ago. It dawned on me that I had misspoken and that I had used the wrong date. That is misspeaking. That is how one actually misspeaks.

The staff at *Hansard* then emailed me. I have the email here. It said that they would like to clarify the text. The email said:

Can you please confirm whether [the member for Welland] was referring to the 1929 International Convention for the Protection of Plants (Rome), or if he meant to say otherwise (UPOV 91)? Can you advise...?

Clearly we were debating UPOV '91, which is from 1991, not the International Convention for the Protection of Plants of 1929. That was dispensed with long before we were born. We may think that we are long in the tooth sometimes, but we are certainly not that long in the tooth.

That was an example of someone getting a date wrong and misspeaking. There needed to be a correction but not an apology. It was simply the wrong date that needed to be corrected to reflect what we were actually discussing and what the debate was really about, which was Bill C-18, of which UPOV '91 was a part.

*Privilege*

Therefore, when the government rises to defend its colleague, which is admirable and I understand why it does that, to suggest that he misspoke, it makes it extremely difficult to comprehend. It stretches credibility, to be truthful.

Here is what the member actually said. I will quote it, because I have highlighted a couple of pieces that I want to put emphasis on to show how it could not have been someone misspeaking.

•(1835)

On February 6, 2014, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville stated, “Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about this vouching system again. I know the minister represents an urban city. I am from a semi-urban area of Mississauga”, and this is what I want to emphasize, “where there are many high-rise apartment buildings”.

He was adamant about it. He knew that he was from a place where there are lots of apartment buildings.

He further stated:

On mail delivery day when the voter cards are delivered to community mailboxes in apartment buildings, many of them are discarded in the garbage can or the blue box.

He knew it was one or the other. He went on to state:

I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards, going to the campaign office of whatever candidate they support and handing out these voter cards to other individuals, who then walk into voting stations with friends who vouch for them with no ID.

I want to highlight that he said that he witnessed it personally and knew that the cards went in either the garbage can or the grey box, because here in Ontario it is the grey box for paper. He said that he saw it at that level of detail and knew the people who took the cards out of the boxes. They were not strangers but campaign workers. I admit that he does not say if they were Conservative campaign workers, Liberal campaign workers, or other campaign workers. He just said “campaign workers”. We did not get any definitive information on that. The committee might be able to ask him who the campaign workers were and what he actually saw.

He then knew that these people went to the polling stations eventually. People vouched for those folks and they voted. He knew all of those things. That is hugely different from what I described earlier about my misspeaking in the debate on Bill C-18 when I got the date wrong. It is important to get the date right, but it was not misleading the House that the agreement actually happened in 1929 when it truly happened in 1991. The two situations are not even the same.

To bring the point home even more clearly, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville said it again. He said it slightly differently but basically with the same intent. He stated:

Earlier this afternoon I asked the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification a question. I think my friend from York South—Weston will appreciate this because, just like the riding I represent, there are a lot of apartment buildings in his riding.

I emphasize his next words:

I will relate to him something I have actually seen. On the mail delivery day when voter cards are put in mailboxes, residents come home, pick them out of their boxes, and throw them in the garbage can. I have seen campaign workers follow, pick up a dozen of them afterward, and walk out. Why are they doing that? They are doing it so they can hand those cards to other people, who will then be vouched for at a voting booth and vote illegally. That is going to stop.

That will be stopped based on Bill C-23. It would put an end to vouching and it would not happen again. People could pick up as many of those cards as they wanted, because it would not matter. They would not be able to vouch for people. We would get rid of the cards and it would not matter any more.

The story was not misspoken, in my view. It was made up, because the member subsequently decided that he should come back to the House and say that he never witnessed it and did not see it. He did not come back to the House to say that he misspoke and that it was not in the apartment building but somewhere else. That would be misspeaking. If he had said, “I didn't know they were campaign workers, but I saw it”, that would be misspeaking. If he had said, “I'm not sure if they were in the garbage can or the grey box, but they discarded them”, that would be misspeaking. He literally laid it out and itemized it. He highlighted that it was in apartment buildings at the mailboxes on mail day, and people discarded them.

•(1840)

The member said he witnessed it, actually saw it with his own eyes, and that means he was actually there. He had to physically be in that place on mail day to see those residents, which meant he had to spend some time there.

After the member said it the first time, one would have thought that if he had truly misspoken, he would have said to himself that it was not really, wholly accurate, so why would he do it again? Well, if he reinforced the story again by saying almost the same thing verbatim, there are only two things that could be.

One is to suggest that one has some sense of speaking notes, and this is not to suggest that one party over another does not do this. Lots of us have notes.

If the member was allowed to go to committee, one could ask if the speaking notes were given to him by someone in the PMO, who told him to relate the story as if it was his when it really was not. Perhaps the member then realized that he had told a story that was not really his, but it was in his speaking notes, and he later knew that he had to retract it because it was not his story. The member might have felt contrite thinking it was something he should not have done, and he decided to retract the story.

I think that is a valid question to ask the member. However, we are not going to get that opportunity because we are here debating it, and the government thinks this is enough.

This brings me to the position of the government House leader. He talked about how telling this story was not misleading in the sense that someone was not being deliberately misled, but it somehow came to that at the conclusion of the story.

It really boils down to what the government House leader said in the House. He said:

It is quite common for us to misspeak in the nature of conversation...



—and I think I have articulated that—

...and I can understand the error made by the hon. member on the question of voting cards, because I think there are probably very few members in this House who have not, at second- or third-hand, heard anecdotes exactly to that effect.

Here we have the government House leader saying that everybody has heard those anecdotal stories about these cards that someone picks up and takes. Everybody has heard it.

He goes on to say:

I personally

—meaning the minister, the government House leader—

...have heard anecdotes from others, not having witnessed it myself. It is different from having heard an anecdote, but having heard it quite regularly, it becomes part of the normal discourse that “this is what happens out there”.

So the fact that we have heard an anecdotal story over and over again now makes it true. It must be true, because we have heard it more than once. If only that were true, because then if my friends across the way said, “We know you are six feet tall. We know you are six feet tall”, then I could actually believe I am six feet tall.

Well, it is not true. The fact that it is an anecdote will not make it true no matter how many times it is said. To base legislation on anecdotes is the worst type of legislation one could craft, by pretending the anecdotes are true and that we must change the legislation because we know this is what happens because we were told a story. Someone told a story that this is what happens, so therefore we must ban that practice altogether because, Heaven knows, we were told a story.

It is quite beyond belief, to be truthful, that somehow the government would come forward with legislation based on anecdotal evidence and that somehow that evidence must be clear, concise, and true. This is a government that will quite often say to us, especially in the agricultural sector, that something is based on sound science. Now it will be based on sound anecdotes. Now, as long as it is a sound anecdote and as long as it is said often enough, it will be taken as a true story.

● (1845)

Aesop's fables, even if told over and over again, will always be fables. They will not be true. They will be fables. Myths, whether urban myths or old-time myths, are simply myths. No matter how many times we repeat the myth, whether it be an urban myth, whether it be another myth, it will be a myth; it will never be true.

As for the member apologizing, I must admit that I do congratulate him for apologizing, but that apology will not take away from the fact that he came in the House and literally laid out a case in detail of what he said he saw and personally witnessed, not once but twice. He stood by it. He did not retract it that day, did not say, “Oh, my goodness. I think I have actually told an anecdotal story here. I should go back to the House and say that it is not a true story. I actually did not see it. It is what I heard.”

He did much later. It is commendable that he did retract, but it does not negate what he did the first time.

Many of us are quite often sorry for actions we have taken, but if we take actions, there are consequences for our actions.

### *Privilege*

The government always says to us, when it comes to criminal legislation, that it is about people taking responsibility for their actions, and if their actions are such that people deserve some form of punishment, then that is what is deserved by those people. There are times when I have to nod in agreement, although not always, of course. Sometimes there are mitigating factors.

In this particular case, the member should appear before committee. It is what the Speaker expects us to do. It is what the Speaker suggested that we probably should do, in my humble opinion. I will not put words in the Speaker's mouth and would never do that, but in my humble opinion, that is what I think he was trying to say to us, because it is only about what we say to each other and what we say to Canadians.

It pains me to say this, but when professions are put on a scale, unfortunately we are not near the top with the Canadian public. Quite often, unfortunately, the reason we are not at the top is because of what we see here.

Some of it is question period. Quite often it is just question period. However, now it is about misleading the House, which we are now debating. How exactly does that affect those who are watching and those who are looking at it? They shrug their shoulders and say, “Well, what do you expect from them? That's what they do. They don't really tell you the truth anyway.”

Words are what we use. Those are the tools of our trade. The words that we give to one another and share with one another are the tools of our trade. There is only way this place can function, which is for the partisanship and the back-and-forth to be acceptable. That is why the Speaker is sitting in the chair, refereeing: to ensure we stay within those boundaries so that repartee back and forth is acceptable.

What is not acceptable is coming into the House and misleading it. That is why there are rules. They are there for good reason. They are there to ensure that we do not actually do that and have legislation come before us that is backed up by myths, mistruths, anecdotes, or stories of some description that do not exist in real life, stories that we just simply make up, and then say, “We must do this because this is the story”.

The government prides itself on saying it bases a lot of its policies upon sound science, which is evidence-based and all about truthfulness to the best of one's ability and measuring, quantifying, and qualifying. Unfortunately, when it came to qualifying the member for Mississauga—Streetsville's words, they came up short, and the Speaker was very clear about how short they came up.

Now it is incumbent upon us, as difficult and as unpleasant as it may be for our colleague and for us, to send it to committee, where our colleague will then have to face whatever repercussions and decisions are made based upon his, not our, conduct that started this process. Those repercussions and decisions will come back for ratification.

*Privilege*

We did not start this process. It is his words in this place that started us on this path, and the path can only come to its final destination, not its hoped-for destination, when indeed we go to committee, where he will have his opportunity to answer questions. From the committee will come some form of resolution. Only then, I think, can this be put to a final conclusion.

• (1850)

**Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend from Welland for his thoughtful remarks and for putting this controversy into the broader perspective and reminding Canadians why they sometimes do not have the highest regard for politicians who misspeak. I think “misspeak” is the word that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville used.

This member did a good job of explaining to Canadians the difference between, on the one hand, a member inadvertently saying something that was not 100% accurate, and on the other hand saying that he or she witnessed electoral fraud on one day, repeating that statement a few days later, and then, when caught out several weeks later, saying that it never happened. I thought that distinction was well brought to our attention by the member and put into a broader context.

My question to the member, who has been around this place much longer than a rookie member of Parliament such as myself, is this: what are the implications for allowing this conduct to stand without any retribution?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Victoria because I know his roots trace back to where I represent folks, back in the Niagara Peninsula. His roots actually come from back there, but we have allowed him to go to Victoria to represent the great folks out there. Let me say that he is a great member. I say to the folks of Victoria that they are lucky to have him and I want to thank him for that opportunity.

As to the question, if we allow the matter to stand, it clearly means that all of us can stand in our place, misspeak, and then come back tomorrow and say, “Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct my misstatement from yesterday. While I am here, I apologize to everyone in the House and to all Canadians. Thank you very much.” Then we would leave.

You, sir, would then say, “I guess that is what they want in the House, because that is how they dealt with it, so it doesn't matter what they say anymore.” Members could get up and say whatever they liked, whether truthful, anecdotal, or not truthful. No one would care, just as long as we came back within a reasonable amount of time, a couple of weeks or a month, and said, “Sorry, I did not mean it. I misspoke. I just misspoke. I really wanted not to misspeak, but somehow it happened to me. I got caught up in a long-winded conversation I was having and I misspoke.”

If we get to that place where we all just misspeak, which is what we have called it, and we can apologize the next day, I would never envy you, sir, sitting in the chair and trying to referee the issue of who has misspoken today and who has not. We would be lined up on a million points of order, saying to you, sir, “I would like to retract my misspoken words from two weeks ago.” The place would not function any more.

Only our words are our bond. When we give them across the way in the sense of saying what we believe and what we believe to be true, the other side must accept the fact that it is, and as soon as they cannot, there is no longer debate or dialogue in this House and the system does not function appropriately any more.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Welland for his speech, which was passionate as usual. He is always so convincing.

I have an anecdote for him. When you drive 130 kilometres per hour and are caught by police because they have radar, can you apologize to the police?

There is a culture of impunity, an attitude of “I can do anything I want”, “I can say anything I want”, and “all I have to do is apologize”.

I would like my colleague to explain this culture of impunity that exists among Conservative members. How does this manifest itself in other areas?

[*English*]

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I actually think he should apologize. If one does get caught, one apologizes. We instinctively do that as individuals. For example, I might have been going the wrong speed in the wrong place at the wrong time. Lights went on behind me and the officer came over. I said, “I missed a speed sign? Sorry”. However, I did not expect not to get a ticket. He wrote the ticket and I thanked him for that because he was doing what he should do. I was not obeying the rules.

There is a consequence for not obeying the rules. It does not mean to say he cannot apologize. That is part of it. Certainly, in my upbringing, in my household, that was how my father approached it. He expected me to apologize if I had bent a rule or broken a rule of the house, which my mother had decided would be the rule for the five of us children. However, there was also a consequence. There was not only an expectation that I would say, “Sorry about that; I didn't mean to do that, but I did”, then my father would have a consequence, like grounding me or those sorts of things. The worst thing, at 16, was that he would not give me the keys to the car for a couple weekends. That was always a really heavy consequence, because then I would have to get the bus. No offence to my friends who take urban transit, but when one lives in the country, buses do not come around. Therefore, that was a real consequence if he did not give me the keys to the car.

Clearly, there are consequences in this place as well. One cannot absolve oneself simply by saying, “*mea culpa*; I am sorry”. We have to face the consequences of our actions in this place. If the Speaker had simply gotten up and said the member has apologized and it is over, we would not be here. The Speaker ruled otherwise, and that is why we are here. The Speaker, in my view, was asking us to get it to a place, get it resolved for all of us, not just for the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, but all of us. That needs to happen.

I implore the government members to allow it to get to committee and let the work be done. They will get back to Bill C-23. They do not have to worry about it. They have the numbers in the House. One thing this little Scots guy can do is count. There are more on that side than on this side.

● (1855)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague just made me realize something.

First, I would like to apologize to the interpreters, because I am going to make them work hard. English is not my mother tongue, but I speak it pretty well. To misspeak is to use the wrong word. It is minor and we can apologize for it. To make up a story is to misbehave. That refers to misconduct.

When we break an established rule, one that requires us to behave in a certain way, we have to behave. When we make up a story, we misbehave. It is not the same as being mistaken or saying something stupid. Breaking the rules is quite a bit more serious, especially when the existing rules clearly establish, beyond a doubt, that person did so on purpose. That is when it becomes serious.

[English]

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. During my remarks I tried to articulate the difference between what I feel is how one might misspeak versus how one might mislead. Unfortunately, I have no other conclusion to come to.

I actually read through the two quotes and I certainly emphasized certain passages in the quotes. They were my emphasis and I actually said that. I could have not said they were my emphasis, and somehow that would be me misspeaking about the member for Mississauga—Streetsville to suggest that they were his emphasis. However, they were not, and I actually said they were my emphasis as I went through his words, because that is to be accurate.

Clearly, one needs to know the difference between whether one misspeaks or misleads. If the Speaker thought the member misspoke, we probably would not be having this discussion.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley moved a prima facie breach of contempt. The Speaker says, yes, let us send this to committee.

Then I listen to the debate and to the Conservatives, and it seems as if they are arguing against the Speaker. They are acting as if this is not contempt; no, it is misspeaking.

I do not know why they are doing this. In this day and age we get the news instantly and I am reading a *Globe and Mail* article and a spokeswoman for the Conservative whip says, “there is little to be gained by sending the issue to committee”.

The Conservative government House leader says, “The question you have to ask is if that is actually going to serve any utility? ... cannot picture anything that will come of greater utility from further discussion of the matter”.

This blows my mind, the fact that they may vote against a decision that the Speaker has made, saying this is worthy of exploration. The

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Speaker said there are “...completely contradictory statements. This is a difficult position in which to leave members, who must be able to depend on the integrity of the information...”.

I wonder if my colleague has any comment.

● (1900)

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, the member quoted the House leader's comments from *The Globe and Mail* that asked what utility it would serve, that he misspoke and whatever, and what would be the point of going to committee.

The point of going to committee is to actually establish the boundary lines in this place and to suggest to folks and others who may feel as if they want to do the same, that if they do, the consequences are such that they ought not to think about that.

If we do not lay down a consequence, then we will just all do it. Over time there will be one more and one more, and so on. We have to put an end to it. If we do not put an end to it with this one incident, it will simply creep, and the more it creeps, the worse this place will get and ultimately the broader public will look at us and say they cannot trust us.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here today to discuss this issue; two little Scotch guys in a row.

It is my pleasure to rise today to speak about how the debate before us relates to matters that come back to the subsequent discussion, which my colleague the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was engaged in when he was talking about the issues that started the debate today. He was speaking about a risk that flows from the use of voter notification cards at polling stations as evidence of a voter's identity.

Too often here in Ottawa there is a tendency to lose sight of the bigger picture. Canadians want us to remember that we were elected by them to make laws, so let us make sure we make good laws, because Canadians deserve no less.

We legislate to address known challenges and mischief. The challenge underlying the discussion today that led us here remains real and worthy of discussing. It is one we must not lose sight of when we engage in events like we are debating here tonight.

Let me speak about the issue of vouching. The pitfalls and dangers related to vouching in federal elections are real. We know they are real because of the evidence collected by the commissions initiated by Elections Canada.

According to the Neufeld report, commissioned by Elections Canada, relating to the administrative deficiencies at the polls in the 2011 election, vouching procedures are complex, and there were irregularities in 25% of the cases where vouching was used. That is one in four.

Even with increased quality assurance, the report indicates that the problem would not be remedied. Vouching is risky and subject to high levels of irregularities. This was identified in the Neufeld report, and I am going to quote from that section of the report:

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Identity vouching procedures are unquestionably the most complex “exception” process administered at polling stations. The level of irregularities for vouching averaged 25 percent. During two of these elections, quality assurance programs involving Onsite Conformity Advisors (OCAs) were applied. However, vouching irregularities still averaged 21 percent during the OCA monitored elections. This indicates that overly complex procedures cannot be remedied simply by improved quality assurance.

Even though there were people onsite who had been trained as conformity advisors monitoring the election, we still had irregularities of 21%.

Very clearly, the experts have identified a problem that, if left unchecked, threatens the very integrity of what we need to cherish dearly when we talk about democracy in Canada, the very purity of our election process.

My colleague the member for Mississauga—Streetsville has apologized and voluntarily corrected the record for the words he used when debating these issues, but that should not take away from the issues that he was trying to put forward, because those issues are paramount to the discussion we are having tonight. At the heart of his intervention was a sentiment related to what he viewed as a serious concern for the integrity of the voting process.

Former U.S. senator Hillary Clinton once said, “Voting is the most precious right of every citizen, and we have a moral obligation to ensure the integrity of our voting process”.

Regardless of one's political stripe or leaning, we all understand that the integrity of our voting process must relate to our ability to know that our votes as Canadians are counted, one vote each for each known and registered and verified voter.

If we have a system that is open to abuse, then our entire electoral process and our democracy is diluted and rendered less meaningful and less true. This is where Bill C-23, the fair elections act, comes in. It addresses this threat to the integrity of our system.

The fair elections act would end vouching altogether and require in law that Elections Canada communicate what forms of identification will be accepted at the polling station, so that voters will know before they head to the polls what they need to bring with them to cast their ballot.

The Neufeld report chronicles the sheer number of irregularities associated with the outdated process of vouching. However, we also know that these irregularities have led to outright court challenges and controversies, which only further undermine the confidence Canadians have in our democratic electoral system.

● (1905)

Voter information cards are similar to vouching, in that the pilot practice of using voter information cards as identification to vote is also open to potential abuse and a weakening of the integrity of the election process. This was at the heart of the concern raised by my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Other than as a pilot project in recent elections, Canadians have always voted without using a voter identification card as proof of identification and residency. The argument that we have heard that not using the voter identification card to allow someone to vote at the polls would somehow destabilize the democratic system is false. That would mean that all of the elections that had taken place in

Canadian history prior to the use of this card were somehow illegitimate, not fair and not true. I would argue that is a false statement.

However, media reports since 2011 have shown that the use of voter identification cards as ID presents proven risks of voter fraud. Illegal voting is not a laughing matter. Voter information cards are regularly sent to electors with inaccuracies that could allow those attempting to subvert election law to use them to vote more than once or in more than one riding.

The Elections Canada website defines the voter information card as a card with one's name and address. It shows that someone is on the voters' list and tells someone where and when to vote. In a Canadian federal election, the returning officer in each riding mails one of these cards to each elector whose name appears on the preliminary voters' list.

This comes back to a serious flaw that my colleague, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, was seeking to bring to our attention. This is why we need the fair elections act, because it would prohibit the use of voter information cards as a form of acceptable identification and would require in law that Elections Canada communicate what forms of ID would be accepted at polling stations so that voters would know before they headed to the polls what they needed to bring with them.

Even with this change, Canadians would continue to have some 39 other pieces of identification to choose from when they go to vote. The options for voters in presenting identifying documents are wide-ranging, and my colleague, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, was well aware of that when he made his statement.

However, I want to make sure that people at home understand the broad range of ID they would be able to use when they go to vote, and that everyone would have the opportunity to cast their vote fairly and legitimately. Therefore, I will list some of the types of ID one could use, including a driver's licence; health card; Canadian passport; certification of Canadian citizenship; citizenship card; birth certificate; certificate of Indian status card; social insurance number card; old age security card; student ID card; provincial or territorial identification card; liquor identification card; hospital/medical clinic card; credit or debit card; employee card; public transportation card; library card; Canadian Forces identification card; Veterans Affairs Canada health card; Canadian Blood Services card; CNIB ID card; firearm possession and acquisition licence or possession-only licence; fishing, trapping, or hunting licence; outdoors or wildlife card or licence; hospital bracelets worn by residents of long-term care facilities; parolee identification card; utility bills, such as telephone, TV, public utilities commission, hydro, gas or water bills; bank card or credit card statement; or vehicle ownership.

I think members are getting the picture that in the next election, after the fair elections act is put in place, people would have a big variety of types of identification they could use. No one would be turned away at the polls, because we would make sure, and Elections Canada would be tasked to make sure, that people would know what types of identification they have to bring to the polls in order to vote.

There would be accurate pieces of identification so that we could be sure that we have verified voters who actually live at the residence they say they do when they go to the polls, and so that we can be sure across this country that we have a fair election where actual citizens of this country vote properly and with proper ID. I think Canadians deserve no less.

• (1910)

[Translation]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I found the speech given by my colleague across the aisle interesting. However, it felt more like a speech on Bill C-23 itself, rather than on the question that is before the House and on which the Conservatives will be asked to vote very shortly.

The Speaker of the House had to rule on some very specific points. In order to justify Bill C-23, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville said on two separate occasions that he personally saw an offence being committed. The Speaker of the House stated:

[English]

...one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that, in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House.

It was deemed *prima facie* that the three elements were proven.

Therefore, what does the hon. member think about what his colleague did? Does it fit those three criteria, or one out of three or two out of three? We heard everything he said, but it is all about Bill C-23 and never about the subject of the debate today.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** Mr. Speaker, the point I was trying to make in my speech is that I believe that we need to focus on what is really important, on the fact that we have brought forward a bill that would create a fair election process across this country, in which Canadians could be confident that when they go to vote the people standing in line before and after them are legitimate voters, and they can know that their vote is accurate because it will count as much as the votes of people next to them, who are there legitimately. That is the purpose and the reason that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was making such an impassioned argument for this bill.

He has apologized for some of the inaccurate statements he made. I take him at his word that he did not intend to use these statements to try to mislead us and to fool people. That was not his intent. He may have gone a bit too far in his argument, but the purpose of his argument and the underlying principles beneath that argument, I believe, are very sound.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley just made a comment about what is really important, and claimed that it was about this bill and the voting cards. I would contend that what is really important is that Canadians can trust that members of Parliament in the House will not knowingly mislead other members for some ulterior purpose, that they will in fact tell the truth and that when they fail to tell the truth, they will apologize.

The member has claimed that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville apologized. Does he consider an apology to be a statement that does not contain the words “apology” or “apologize” or “I am sorry”. I would like to read for the record the statement

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made by the member of Parliament for Mississauga—Streetsville on February 24, when he rose in this House. He said:

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to debate that took place on February 6 in this House regarding the fair elections act.

I made a statement in the House during the debate that is not accurate. I just want to reflect the fact that I have not personally witnessed individuals retrieving voter notification cards from the garbage cans or from the mailbox areas of apartment buildings. I have not personally witnessed that activity and want the record to properly show that.

I ask the member this: where in that statement is there an apology? And would he like to correct the record where he asserts that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville apologized, because otherwise he himself is showing a challenged relationship with the truth.

• (1915)

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** Mr. Speaker, to listen to the exact quote that the member just read, it is easy to see that the member stood up and showed remorse that he had given the House inaccurate information. I take him at his word and I take that as an apology. That is how I would interpret it.

What we have never really heard a sound apology for or reconciliation of is the sponsorship scandal that the member's party perpetrated upon the taxpayers of this country, and \$40 million that was taken and spread out to Liberal ad agencies across Quebec. We have never had an active reconciliation of that from that party. I wonder if that member will stand and say that her party is going to return that \$40 million to the Canadian people.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we carry on, I would remind all hon. members that characterizations of other members as being strangers to the truth or perhaps not being truthful, if these are in any way imputing the motives of another hon. member, are generally seen as unparliamentary. I just caution hon. members to avoid that type of characterization or expression, perhaps, in the course of their remarks.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Victoria.

**Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the answer by the parliamentary secretary he appears to have avoided the question before us, the issue of privilege, and spoke instead about vouching. I would like to speak to that and ask his views on it, and then ask his views on the merit of the substance of what we are here to talk about.

Apparently some 800,000 Canadians use voter cards and vouching, particularly 70,000 aboriginal people, because the kinds of identification he listed are often not available to some of the poorest of our fellow citizens and seniors, who do not have them at hand and the like.

That strikes me as a very weak defence, but that is not what we are here to talk about. I simply want to respond and ask him this, the question I asked of my hon. friend from Welland: if a member stands before us and apparently is making a point based on evidence, a factual assertion that he saw a particular form of voter fraud, which he then later retracts and says in fact did not happen, that it was simply an anecdote or a made-up story, to use words that I think I am allowed to use, does that not have an impact on the fundamental nature of parliamentary debate?

*Privilege*

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is right that Canadians would expect that when someone is elected and stands in the House of Commons and makes an argument for something, they are doing that with truth in their hearts.

I believe that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was making a strong point about a change that we must make to protect the very integrity of our election voting system in this country.

When he made this statement, as he mentioned here, he gave some inaccurate information, but that is not reason to question the motives and the underlying principles of the message he was trying to send, which is the fact that we have to make these changes to restore integrity to our democratic system, to our elections system, so that the people who do rise here and speak are dutifully elected by people who actually have the right to vote.

• (1920)

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to stand again to respond to the member's justification of his colleague's inaccurate comments on the basis that they were to make restore integrity to our system, when in fact we know that this is the very kind of act that undermines our system.

I would like to go back to my previous question. When the word "apology" is missing, when the words "I am sorry" are missing, when there is no indication of remorse of any kind, no indication of the kind of harm that this may have done to the integrity of the House, when it is basically just a declaration that he had not personally witnessed that activity, does the member actually consider that an apology?

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** Mr. Speaker, as I said when I answered the question previously, we take the member at his word. He said he made inaccurate statements. He corrected those statements, but the underlying principle of the issue that he was talking about was the very fabric of our electoral or democratic system.

He was very passionate about that and was making a strong point about the fact that vouching and voter identification cards are both open to irregularities and abuse. That is what is really important. That is why the fair elections act has been brought forward, and that is why we need to pass the bill. We need to have the filibuster stop in committee and to deal with these serious issues.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third little spot in a row to stand up and talk about this point does not exactly scream diversity, does it?

Earlier, I asked my colleague from Welland a question. As I mentioned, I hoped that I would have a longer period of time because I want to get this out. I want to air this.

What we are talking about here, is my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley moved that there be a prima facie finding of contempt. The Speaker found that the matter merited further consideration by the appropriate committee. We have a motion. We have a decision. The Speaker then invited the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to move the traditional motion. That is what happened. The Speaker is referring this issue to committee.

I have found it very curious, over the past day and a half, that Conservative members have stood up in the House and by the way they are arguing and presenting the "facts", which I will put in scare

quotes, it sounds like they are disagreeing with the Speaker. They are saying that it is not contempt. It was not to mislead. I just heard the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley say that he believed the member meant this, and that he believed that the member did not mean that.

It sounds to me like they are disagreeing with the ruling of the Speaker to send this to committee. I have not understood this argument. I have not understood how or why they would bring this forward.

However, now it is starting to become clear. Procedurally, I did not understand that it was possible to vote against the Speaker's ruling, but I now understand that this is exactly what we have here.

We live in a day and age where communication is instant. I can read media reports well before the newspapers are printed the next day. I will read from a *Globe and Mail* article by Josh Wingrove. The first paragraph says:

The Conservative government is signaling it will vote down a motion to study whether one of its MPs misled the House of Commons, rejecting a finding by the Speaker that the issue deserves a closer look if only to "clear the air."

That was my "ahah" moment. Maybe I am slower to get to it than others, but the Conservative government is going to vote against this. That is unbelievable to me.

We have a spokeswoman from the whip's office saying that all of the facts are known on the issue, so there is nothing for a committee to study, and there is little to be gained by sending the issue to committee. There is also a quote from the government House leader, who said:

The question you have to ask is if that is actually going to serve any utility? There's really no dispute...Certainly, one cannot picture anything that will come of great utility from further discussion of the matter.

They are going to vote against this. I find that pretty unbelievable.

First of all, I heard my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley say he believed that this is what the member meant and he believed that the member did not mean to mislead us. If he believes it, how about we have it aired out? How about we actually talk about it and figure out what is going on? Why did he make these statements? What was the intention here?

Let us go back to what the Speaker said:

...the fact remains that the House continues to be seized of completely contradictory statements. This is a difficult position in which to leave members who must be able to depend on the integrity of the information with which they are provided to perform their parliamentary duties.

Those are not very many words. They are two sentences, but those two sentences have a lot of weight. Members "must be able to depend on the integrity of the information with which they are provided to perform their parliamentary duties". Parliamentary duties. *Parlement*. We are here. This is a place where we use words, where we talk, and where we have debate. It is a place of words.

I know that in the U.K., where our parliamentary tradition comes from, there is no paper. It is all in the spoken word. We are nothing but our words. We are nothing but our integrity and our words. *Parlement*.

We have a situation here where someone has diminished not only their own integrity but also the integrity of *Parlement*, of Parliament, and the ability for us to rely on our words, put weight on them, and believe in them.

• (1925)

I think that the Speaker made the right ruling and I do not know how the vote is going to turn out. Maybe there will be some rogue MPs on the Conservative side, but it looks like they are going to vote it down, and I find that truly outrageous.

There is another thing that I find truly outrageous. I am at what I perceive to be the end of the debate. I was here yesterday at the beginning of the debate. I heard the Speaker's ruling and then the response from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. If the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is speaking, I would take that to be the words of government. That is not an individual private member speaking on a private member's motion; that is the word of government.

I was sitting in this very chair and I could barely stand to listen to the argument put forward. I have a lot of respect for the parliamentary secretary, I think he is a good guy, but the arguments he was putting forward were really sending me pretty close to the edge. There was one point in the debate where, I do not know if you noticed, Mr. Speaker, I actually threw up my arms and screamed. I do not see it recorded in *Hansard*, but it happened, because I was overcome with how preposterous the argument was that the parliamentary secretary was putting forward.

Now I have the opportunity to dissect the argument he was putting forward and I have been looking forward to this. He started by saying the following:

A few things have been said this afternoon that I think have not been accurate, and I want to try to set the record straight.

That is a good goal, but did he actually set the record straight? I do not think so, because he went on to say:

The other thing I want to point out, and I do not think it really needs to be pointed out to members, particularly any member who has been here for any length of time... there are opportunities when all members, and I emphasize all members, tend to torque their language a bit, perhaps to embellish or to exaggerate. Is that something we should encourage? Certainly not. Does it happen regularly? Yes, it does.

He talked about torquing language, embellishing, exaggerating, and asked whether it is something we should encourage, "I have exaggerated, I will stand here in the House of Commons and admit that I have exaggerated", but let us look at what the member for Mississauga—Streetsville said:

I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards, going to the campaign office of whatever candidate they support and handing out these voter cards to other individuals, who then—

Maybe he can see through walls:

—walk into voting stations with friends who vouch for them with no ID.

He states again, referring to the minister:

I will relate to him something I have actually seen.

This is not exaggeration, this is not torquing, this is not embellishing. This is saying something that did not actually happen.

### *Privilege*

I will go back to the parliamentary secretary's speech. He went on to state:

I am suggesting that this happens perhaps all too routinely in this place, but should it then be considered contempt? My friend opposite continues to make the point that it was contempt. Again, that is simply not accurate. The Speaker has merely referred this to committee for an examination.

I am going to go back to what the Speaker said. He stated:

...the fact remains that the House continues to be seized of completely contradictory statements. This is a difficult position in which to leave members, who must be able to depend on the integrity of the information with which they are provided to perform their parliamentary duties.

Members should get ready because I am going to be going back to these two quotes a lot. The parliamentary secretary continued:

The problem we now have before us is that because the member for Mississauga—Streetsville came back to this place and corrected the record, he is now facing possible sanction

That is not the problem we have here. The problem is not that this guy might get his wrist slapped. The problem is that he stood up in the House, not once but twice, and said, "I have actually witnessed people doing these actions". It is unbelievable.

The parliamentary secretary went on to state:

What the consequence or the net result of this may be is that the truth begins to be pushed underground.

What? How is the truth being pushed underground when the statements were not based on truth?

• (1930)

If somebody comes in and says "I did not actually see that", how are we pushing truth underground by actually exposing it to light? How would we be pushing truth underground by actually referring this to committee and saying "Hey, member for Mississauga—Streetsville, what happened here? Why don't you tell us in your own words? Were you all excited about things? Did you want to contribute to the debate? Did you want to catch the eye of the Prime Minister?"

We actually have to have this discussion at committee. I do not think the truth is being pushed underground at all.

The parliamentary secretary then goes on, but there is so much material to work with that I am going to go to a point further on in his debate.

He says:

Since the Chair has not found the member to have lied, even though my colleagues opposite keep trying to tell that tale, they perhaps should stand up and set the record straight, because the Chair did not find the member for Mississauga—Streetsville to have deliberately misled this House

In other words, he did not find that he had lied, merely that the committee should take an examination and try to clarify the comments surrounding the member's statements of February 6.

I will go back to the piece of paper in my hand. The Speaker found that there were contradictory statements, and I do not think we can put enough emphasis on the fact that we have nothing but our integrity and the words that we say in this House. Our laws are created based on Parliament, on the fact that we get to stand here and speak and use our words and tell our stories from our ridings. One would hope that those stories were actually true.

*Privilege*

The parliamentary secretary then went on to say:

While I know the opposition wants to convince Canadians that there is some nefarious reason behind the comments of my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville, I would purport to you and everyone else in this place that he merely did what so many of us have done previously: in the heat of debate, he had simply gone overboard.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard me admit to exaggeration. I am sure that, under duress maybe, most of us in this House would admit to exaggeration, but we are not talking about being in the heat of debate and simply going overboard. This is not the heat of debate. I am looking at the quotes from the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. This is not a vigorous back-and-forth. This is not a moment in which all of a sudden someone says, “Oops, I didn’t mean to say it that way.” This is two interventions, and I will repeat the words.

I have actually witnessed other people....

It was not even something like “This could happen, and, like, I have seen some folks picking up the cards, and maybe this happened.” He said, “I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards”. He said, “I will relate to him something I have actually seen.” This is not the heat of debate. This is not a bit of an exaggeration. This is saying something that was not based on fact.

The member admitted it was untrue. I cannot get over the arguments put forward by government that this is just about a bit of torquing, a bit of exaggeration. The Conservative members are saying that if they exaggerate, they should not be punished for exaggeration.

First of all, it is not an exaggeration. Second, we are not actually talking about punishment. I do not believe that the Speaker, and I have his words here, said “And therefore, we send this man to committee to be punished”. No, not at all. He said we actually have to send this to committee. What we are doing is we are sending it to committee.

The Speaker does have a line in there about at least clearing the air. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville stands up, he says that he did not mean to say what he said, he wanted to set the record straight, and then nothing more. There is no more.

This is what we do. We get to the bottom of things. We air things out at committee. Sometimes we travel. Sometimes we hear from Canadians. Sometimes we hear from expert witnesses. In this case, we have to hear from the person himself who actually said these statements. We need to know why, what was going through his mind, and what was happening here.

●(1935)

The line that made me throw up my hands in exasperation was, “Would I like to see everything said in this place said in a reasoned, sensible manner, devoid of the partisanship that we see all too often?”.

I am going to skip to a little later to where the partisan piece came up in his speech again:

Opposition parties are trying to score some political points here, and I do not begrudge them that. It is what opposition parties do. They opposed Bill C-23, the fair elections act. We understand that. We understand that they are trying to do everything in their power to delay, obstruct, or perhaps even kill that piece of legislation. I get that. However, that is what I believe is truly behind the motion we are debating today.

Really? Then I think the Speaker would have probably seen through that. If the Speaker thought that this was just to delay, I hardly think he would have found this to be a prima facie case.

I want to go back to the scoring of political points, that we would like to see things devoid of the partisanship that we see all too often. The opposite is true here. If we look at the statements that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville made, that is the example of what the parliamentary secretary is talking about. Those statements are an example of someone trying to score political points. Those statements are an example of the partisanship that we see all too often.

The member was trying to score political points, saying things that were not true to support a position after the fact. If we want to talk partisanship, if we want to talk political points, I think we should go back to these statements: “I have actually witnessed other people picking up the voter cards..”.

Why would he say that? Was it being said to cause mischief, to validate the Conservatives' points after the fact, instead of having a hearing on whether we need changes to the Elections Act?

I will finish with the parliamentary secretary saying the following:

In conclusion, I agree, and I believe my colleague the member for Mississauga—Streetsville would also agree, that if one does not speak accurately in this place, records should be corrected. If one does not speak with accuracy on any point, whether it be legislation or during debate, it should not be tolerated. However, when is it right to punish someone for correcting the record? When does one become a victim for speaking what one needed to say, which was to correct the record?

Oh, so the member for Mississauga—Streetsville is a victim here. Right. The big, bad opposition is ganging up and punishing him. Give me a break. That is the wickedest twisting of words that I have seen in some time.

I believe that the Speaker was right in his ruling. I think we need to have an airing out of this. We need to understand what the member was doing. I do not think he was a victim. I do not think we are trying to punish. I think we are trying to get to the bottom of something in Parliament, where we use our words to talk about these issues, to debate these issues, and to represent Canadians.

●(1940)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague for her brilliant speech.

She talked about Parliament being a place of words. She talked about integrity and trust. If we want to have debates that are healthy and remain healthy, we need to be sure that our colleagues are always telling the truth and always saying things that are accurate.

What risk do we run if people assume that they can do terrible things and then simply apologize to make everything right? Would that not undermine our mutual trust?



*Privilege*

[English]

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his thoughtful question because it is about trust. He was talking about the trust that our constituents put in us. I know they put their trust in us, and then they have another chance to express that trust, or not, in four years. There is this idea that we are here for four years, and if they do not like us they can vote us out in four years. I do not see those two points as being the only points of entry for our constituents or the public to be engaged with us as parliamentarians. If we are going to have an engaged citizenry, we have to maintain that trust between those two election points. We have to be here and speak the truth.

The truth can be our truth. My truth is a social democratic truth. I believe that the government is here to support our communities and support people to be the best that they can be. That is different from a traditional Conservative truth about government getting in the way of us being the best that we can be. Those are two different ideologies. We can have debates, again, with our language, our words, in the House, based on those ideologies. That is fair and legitimate. However, we have to be truthful. We cannot descend into saying whatever we think will help us to win. We have to be more convincing and compelling. We owe that to our constituents.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Halifax for her comments in her speech.

I find it curious. The government interrupted the debate earlier today, for some number of hours. However, we had some debate on this yesterday; we are debating it for a number of hours today. Yet, with all that opportunity, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, who is at the heart of this conversation and took only 30 seconds or so some days ago to issue his version of events, has failed to appear.

Now the Conservatives are talking about voting against this ruling to pass this on to the committee so we can understand what happened. Why did the events change? Why did he make something up and two weeks later say it did not happen? Is Elections Canada involved, et cetera? He has chosen not to make his case.

Conservatives are saying they have heard everything that they need to hear. It was a 30-second half apology from the member. The Speaker qualified in his ruling that in making the statement he did that the member intended to mislead the House. That is the qualification for why we are having this debate. That is serious. In defending his reputation, the Conservatives are pretending that somehow he is a victim and that his reputation is being besmirched. I would have thought that the next logical step, then, would have been for the member to appear and correct the—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please.

Members may recall that in the course of debate, it is not appropriate to refer to the presence or absence of members in the House.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I was not referring to his presence here in this moment. I was referring to the fact that he has not chosen to take any of the many speaking spots that were

available to defend his honour. Excuse me, but I was not referring to the instance that we are in right now.

The fact is this, and it is an important fact. The government House leader, the deputy, a bunch of Conservatives, time and time again, have said that he said in his apology that he did not intend to mislead the House. Yet, we have the ruling from the Speaker saying the exact opposite. Therefore, Canadians are left wondering who to believe: the impartiality of the Speaker, who is meant to provide the rules and govern this place, or the person who is in the conflict itself, having been caught in a misrepresentation of fact over a government bill that is going to change election laws in Canada.

To my hon. friend from Halifax, is this as simple as the Conservatives say it is? He is an honourable guy who made a mistake and he should be thanked and congratulated for having knowingly misled the House, or having knowingly issued something he knew to be untrue and misleading. Or, is this a moment where we need to take this a little more seriously than the Conservatives are currently doing, and certainly the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, who has again chosen not to defend himself or to provide any explanation to Canadians or the House of Commons?

• (1945)

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and for raising this issue in Parliament to begin with.

We would be in a very different position, if yesterday we stood in the House, and in response the member for Mississauga—Streetsville took the floor and answered the questions we had. We might have taken the floor again and asked more questions, and who knows, pointed more fingers. He might have stood up and said “I accept what you’re saying to me, and here’s my explanation”.

If his voice had been here to explain, I do not think we would be where we are today. Instead, we do not have that voice. We have members on the other side saying, “I believe this is what he meant. I believe that he didn’t mean to mislead us”.

It does not matter what they believe. How about that we actually find out? That is the whole point that the Speaker is making here. If only to air out the facts, we need to bring this to committee. We need to find out what happened because our entire parliamentary system and how we engage in debate could be undermined. I am not saying it is, but it could be. That is why we need to go to committee. Again, if the member’s voice had been added to this debate, we would not be here.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since I came to the House in 2011, the government has consistently increased sentences for offenders and introduced minimum sentences. Offenders are sorry for what they did. A driver who hits an elderly woman is sorry for what he did. Thieves are sorry. However, what is done is done. We cannot erase the past.

*Privilege*

Things were done in this case, and I think that credibility, ethics and truth are on the line here. People must have confidence in their MP.

Can the member tell us what she thinks about this system, where there is one set of rules for MPs who apologize and another set of rules for the public, who keep seeing longer prison sentences?

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. The analogy with our criminal justice system is very interesting.

[*English*]

I think about the fact that we rely on rehabilitation. If someone does something wrong, we get them to realize what they have done wrong, and then hopefully there is rehabilitation. How do we have rehabilitation? In Nova Scotia, if one is a youth engaged in the criminal justice system, we have a restorative justice program. When one is involved with the criminal justice system, at any point along the line one can sit down and maybe talk to the victim and the people involved in one's community and neighbourhood, to find out how it has impacted people. That is part of the rehabilitation process.

If we are to make that comparison here, which is interesting, there is no rehabilitation because we are not discussing what happened. We are not saying that this was in the heat of debate. "It was the heat of debate, and I went into crazy town". The member just stood up, said he was sorry, and it was over. Where is the point at which we get to fix that system? Where is the point at which we get to say, "Here is a better way that Parliament could work. In these situations, we could maybe handle them differently".

It is not all about the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. Rather, it is about Parliament. That is an interesting comparison that my colleague made on the justice system, and I wonder where we do have rehabilitation in this case.

● (1950)

**Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I sat in the House all day today and had the opportunity to hear members' views on both sides of the House. As I listened to them speak, a couple of premises came through. I have heard members opposite say that this is not about the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, then I have heard some pretty uncharitable comments about the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. I have heard others say that he apologized deeply for what he did, then I heard others say that it was not a good enough apology or that it was not an apology at all.

In fact, I recall the member for Vancouver Quadra, just a few moments ago, saying that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville did not apologize at all. I found that very interesting.

I would like to read if I may, the apology, to ensure that it is put on the record. I have found that we are imperfect beings trying to do perfect jobs, or at least as perfect as we can. I think my colleague opposite, who just made some comments about how we do what we do, said in some of her earlier comments that we do not always get it right. That is true.

In any event, let me, if I may, address what the member for Mississauga—Streetsville actually did say. He said:

I would like to sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House for the statement that I made. It was never my intention, in any way, to mislead this House, for which I have the greatest amount of respect.

I might end my comments this evening with that quote again, just to make the point of what he said.

Am I here to challenge his motives? My goodness, in all the years I have been a member of Parliament, I have seen and heard members on both sides that have frankly given rise to shameful conduct in this House. The Speaker has had to sort out a person for over-speaking or calling people names or attributing titles to them that, quite frankly, were not deserved. It is the lowest of parliamentary conduct for all of us in this House when we resort to that level of name-calling, and frankly, babbling.

My Cape Breton mother once said to me, and she said it very sincerely, "Ed, you have two things in your life. You have your name and you have your integrity, and you don't mess up one without messing up the other".

I think of the member for Mississauga—Streetsville and I think about the circumstances he has found himself in. Here is what has happened. He over-spoke, misspoke, call it as one might, then too late for some, he withdrew the comment. After he withdrew the comment, he apologized, and he apologized, I thought, with a sincerity that frankly this House could benefit from if we listened.

By the way, am I here to canonize the original comments or the member for doing that? I do not think so. Do we not think that this member, by having to go in front of the House, as he has had to do, and saying what he has had to say, was correct to do that? Frankly, he had no choice. He had to do it. Was it the right thing? It was absolutely the right thing to do.

Let us be measured, colleagues, by always doing the right thing, even if sometimes it takes a little longer.

The other point is that the whole country, at least some of those who watch CPAC, and I hope every Canadian does, would be aware that this member of whom we are speaking, our colleague, had to stand in front of this House and sincerely apologize in front of this House, in front of all of us, and in front of Canadians. For those who say that this is not about him, that is not what it has sounded like to me.

● (1955)

If members do not think that is paying a price for doing something, I can assure them that it absolutely is, whether or not he stood up after that and made representations about why he might have done what he did. Frankly, we are all here as members of the House of Commons to ensure that we protect the integrity of this House and represent Canadians the best way we can.

Was that Canada's finest moment or this House's finest moment? I would suggest not. However, what cheek to say what is in his heart or what he meant by that? I am prepared to accept it at face value when someone says to me, "I deeply apologize". I want to come back to the words, "...sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House...".

I am prepared to accept that member's statement at face value. I am not sure why others would not. If I said that to members, I would hope that my colleagues would accept it with the same spirit and intention as I meant it.

Here is what is troubling. In response, here is what a few folks have said. I mentioned that the member for Vancouver Quadra said that there was not an apology made. I heard the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley say, "Let us take the words directly from the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. He said in his alleged apology..."

For shame. By what right would any member imagine that it was an alleged apology, unless we were trying to play politics? I am sure that is not the intent of members opposite and not the intent of members on this side either.

The member for Toronto—Danforth said, "The second thing is the retraction. I am not going to call it an apology because that is not the way it was phrased".

I am going to go back to the phrase "I would like to sincerely apologize". I am not going to second-guess our colleague.

By the way, our colleague happens to be a Conservative, but he is our colleague. I am not going to impugn his motive when he gave an apology. I am not sure why we would want to do that unless there was some kind of gain. I wondered about that, because I have heard comments back and forth. A lot of what I heard today did not refer so much to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville as to the issues surrounding the fair elections act. I respect that members on the other side of the House may not necessarily agree with our position on that, and that is fair. However, it feels to me like this situation is being used as a whipping post to make a different point at the expense of a member. How low does that go? That is just not right. When individuals give us their word, we accept that word. We have an obligation to do that.

I know that the thought was to take this to committee to see how much more we could get out of it. When the member stands up and says that he made an error and then says that he withdraws that comment and after that apologizes, is there more that would come from committee than has been explored in this House?

The Speaker referred it originally to this House to review. We are kind of like a court. I am not sure if I would call it a tribunal or a preliminary court. When that happens, we actually get to hear the evidence. We have what the individual said on record, not only the misstatement but the apology. When we get both of those sides, we as members of the House can evaluate whether we accept it. However, to impugn motive, when we do not know what it was, is the part I have the most difficulty with. Could it have been exaggeration and excitement or whatever? I am prepared to say to any member of the House that if he or she has anything to tell us and comes back and says "I sincerely apologize", I would accept that.

● (2000)

We all know that, when someone withdraws a comment, sometimes at the urging of the Speaker, sometimes not, or apologizes for over-speaking, we all applaud that individual. We thank that person for showing class and dignity for doing that. It begs the

### *Privilege*

question why we are not prepared to offer that same class and dignity.

I said in an earlier question that to err is human and to forgive is divine, something my Cape Breton mom taught me. Why can all of us not just do that? When somebody deeply apologizes, why can we not accept that at face value, unless there is another motive behind it? It would not be proper for me to assign any motivation behind that.

Ironically, we might not have heard about the member's comment except he stood up and said "oops". I am not trying to make an oops sound casual here. What I am saying is that, if the member had never stood up and said he made a mistake, apologized, and withdrawn his comment, we might not ever have known. However at least he had the class to do that.

We could show more class ourselves by taking him at face value. That is an obligation of every member of Parliament. Any of us could find ourselves in that position. If we find ourselves in that position, would it not be nice to see a bit of charity from the other side? Would it not be nice for members on the other side to say they understand that might happen and accept at face value that the statement is being withdrawn and the individual is apologizing?

I imagine being in this place and in that position. Would I want members to condemn me for the rest of my life, saying I lied, that I misled the House, that I did inappropriate things? That would not be fair or proper. That would not show any charity at all. It would not show what we as members of the House of Commons should be doing, which is getting on with the business of the House and never letting anything slide that should not slide.

We should acknowledge the fact that the member stood up and retracted his comment and apologized. I would challenge any member to do that if found in that position. Would a member not want me to forgive him or her? I would ask a member to forgive me if I over-spoke. I would hope to have the support of the House were I to make that mistake. Not being perfect, I may well make many mistakes. I have been here long enough to have made a few, and I am sure a few more will happen.

I would like to remind my colleagues that the member has been humbled in the House. I want to repeat his apology just so it is crystal clear. I want to read his apology, so no one in the House can say he did not apologize. It is important that it be re-read for the record. As I read it, I would ask all members to listen to it one more time, because if any of us were in the same situation, we would expect that same sense of charity that I would expect we would offer to him or to any member of the House if found in that circumstance. Here is his apology:

I would like to sincerely apologize to all Canadians and to all members of the House for the statement that I made. It was never my intention, in any way, to mislead the House, for which I have the greatest amount of respect.

I have the deepest respect for the House of Commons and all members within it. I am proud to call them all colleagues, whether they are in my party or another party. I would ask that the same sense of spirit go forward as we make every effort to clear this issue and get on with the business of the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 8:05 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

*Privilege*

[Translation]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** In my opinion, the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Call in the members.

• (2045)

[English]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 74)

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Weland)	Andrews
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Goodale	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)

Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclét
Perreault	Pilon
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sitsabaiesan	
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Toone
Tremblay	Turnel
Valeriote— 111	

## NAYS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenny (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea

ShIPLEY  
SMITH  
Sorenson  
Strahl  
Tilson  
Trost  
Truppe  
Valcourt  
Van Loan  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wilks  
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Shory  
Sopuck  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Toet  
Trottier  
Uppal  
Van Kesteren  
Wallace  
Watson  
Williamson  
Woodworth  
Young (Vancouver South)

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment defeated.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** The next question is on the main motion.

[English]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

• (2050)

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

(Division No. 75)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)  
Ashton  
Aubin  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Blanchette-Lamothe  
Boulerice  
Brahmi  
Byrne  
Casey  
Chisholm  
Christopherson  
Côté  
Cuzner  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Dewar  
Donnelly  
Dubé  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
Easter  
Fortin  
Garrison

Andrews  
Atamanenko  
Ayala  
Benskin  
Blanchette  
Boivin  
Boutin-Sweet  
Brousseau  
Caron  
Chicoine  
Choquette  
Cleary  
Cullen  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
Day  
Dionne Labelle  
Doré Lefebvre  
Dubourg  
Dusseau  
Eyking  
Freeman  
Genest

Genest-Jourdain  
Goodale  
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
Hsu  
Jacob  
Karygiannis  
Lamoureux  
Larose  
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
Leslie  
MacAulay  
Marston  
Masse  
May  
McGuinty  
Michaud  
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
Mulcair  
Nantel  
Nicholls  
Pacetti  
Péclet  
Pilon  
Rankin  
Raynault  
Rousseau  
Scarpaleggia  
Sellah  
sor)  
Sitsabaiesan  
Stewart  
Toone  
Turnel

Privilege

Giguère  
Groguhé  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hughes  
Julian  
Kellway  
Lapointe  
Latendresse  
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
Liu  
Mai  
Martin  
Mathysen  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagog)  
Murray  
Nash  
Nunez-Melo  
Papillon  
Perreault  
Rafferty  
Ravignat  
Regan  
Sandhu  
Scott  
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
  
St-Denis  
Sullivan  
Tremblay  
Valeriote— 110

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy  
Aglukkaq  
Albrecht  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anders  
Armstrong  
Aspin  
Bateman  
Bernier  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chisu  
Clarke  
Crockatt  
Davidson  
Dreeshen  
Dykstra  
Fantino  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Flaherty  
Galipeau  
Gill  
Goguen  
Goodyear  
Gourde  
Harper  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
Hyer  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Leaf  
Lemieux  
Lizon  
Lukiwski

Adler  
Albas  
Alexander  
Allison  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Benoit  
Bezan  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Falk  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goldring  
Gosal  
Grewal  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hayes  
Hillyer  
Holder  
James  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Leitch  
Leung  
Lobb  
Lunney

*Privilege*

MacKay (Central Nova)  
 Maguire  
 McColeman  
 Menegakis  
 Miller  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Norlock  
 O'Connor  
 Opitz  
 Paradis  
 Poilievre  
 Raitt  
 Reid  
 Richards  
 Ritz  
 Schellenberger  
 Shea  
 Shory  
 Sopuck  
 Storseth  
 Sweet  
 Toet

MacKenzie  
 Mayes  
 McLeod  
 Merrifield  
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Nicholson  
 Obhrai  
 O'Neill Gordon  
 O'Toole  
 Payne  
 Preston  
 Rajotte  
 Rempel  
 Rickford  
 Saxton  
 Seeback  
 Shipley  
 Smith  
 Sorenson  
 Strahl  
 Tilson  
 Trost

Trottier  
 Uppal  
 Van Kesteren  
 Wallace  
 Watson  
 Sky Country)  
 Weston (Saint John)  
 Williamson  
 Woodworth  
 Young (Vancouver South)

Truppe  
 Valcourt  
 Van Loan  
 Warkentin  
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to  
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**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

It being 8:49 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:54 p.m.)







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