



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, October 9, 2014**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 9, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)  
[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP)** moved that the second report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, presented on Thursday, November 28, 2013, be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Question.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** On division.

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

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### PETITIONS

#### IMPAIRED DRIVING

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by citizens of Canada who want to see tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

They also want the Criminal Code of Canada to be changed to redefine the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition from over 1,600

residents of the riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands. The petitioners are calling upon the government to ensure that Saanich Inlet be designated as an area in which boaters and any other vessels are not permitted to discharge raw sewage. They are calling on the House of Commons to work with the Province of British Columbia to protect Saanich Inlet by immediately adding it to the list of designated zones where such discharge is not allowed.

#### MANDATORY LABELLING OF PRODUCTS

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands who are concerned about their right to know what is in the products they buy. They are calling on the House of Commons to put in force mandatory labelling of products containing genetically modified materials.

#### PROSTITUTION

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have close to 2,000 signatures that continue to come in to ask Parliament to decriminalize the selling of sexual services and criminalize the purchasing of sexual services. This is from all provinces across Canada.

#### FALUN GONG

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have another petition calling on Parliament to pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs and to amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting.

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### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 646, 647, and 648.

[Text]

Question No. 646—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the province of Prince Edward Island, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality and the federal electoral district, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, owing to the large volume of information involved, the government's long-standing practice with regard to questions relating to total grants and contributions is to provide an answer for one federal electoral district per question. The government invites the member to specify for which individual riding she would like the requested information and to ask the corresponding question.

**Question No. 647—Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the province of Manitoba, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality and the federal electoral district, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, owing to the large volume of information involved, the government's long-standing practice with regard to questions relating to total grants and contributions is to provide an answer for one federal electoral district per question. The government invites the member to specify for which individual riding she would like the requested information and to ask the corresponding question.

**Question No. 648—Mr. David McGuinty:**

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the province of Saskatchewan, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality and the federal electoral district, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, owing to the large volume of information involved, the government's long-standing practice with regard to questions relating to total grants and contributions is to provide an answer for one federal electoral district per question. The government invites the member to specify for which individual riding he would like the requested information and to ask the corresponding question.

[English]

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—GROS-CACOUNA OIL TERMINAL

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the proposed Port of Gros-Cacouna oil terminal, which will be used for the sole purpose of exporting unprocessed Canadian oil, will have a negative impact on the Canadian economy through the loss of well-paid jobs, will constitute an unacceptable environmental threat to the St. Lawrence ecosystem, including the beluga whale population, and therefore, is not consistent with the principle of sustainable development, and must be rejected.

He said: Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would like to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, who will be giving an excellent speech once I have finished.

This debate and this motion are very important. They will showcase the foundation of the NDP's sustainable development plan when it forms the government in 2015. It is very important that we get back to basics and define sustainable development. It is built on three pillars. The first is economic. Of course, development is first economic. We need to determine how a project can benefit the Canadian economy. The Port of Gros-Cacouna project is not economically beneficial. In fact, the economy in this region already relies on ecotourism, fishing and marine resources. An oil spill would be catastrophic for all of those jobs. In addition, this project focuses solely on exporting. There is no opportunity to process the raw material; therefore, there is no possibility to add value or create jobs. That is why this project makes no sense economically.

The second pillar is environmental. The beluga whale, a symbol of Quebec, lives there. The beluga is a symbol not just of Quebec, but of Canada. The beluga is also a threatened species. In 2010, there were about 1,000 belugas, but the latest figures show that in 2012, there were only 880. Protecting the ecosystem and the environment is a very important aspect of sustainable development, but that protection will be impossible in this case.

The third pillar is social acceptance. I will explain why later, but I travelled around the Lower St. Lawrence and across Quebec twice, and there is no social acceptance.

The Conservatives have made a real mess of this file, and my colleagues who have been working on it can talk about that later on. For one thing, the Maurice Lamontagne Institute is in the region, and in 2012, the Conservatives made draconian cuts there. Some two-thirds of the scientists who worked at the institute, in fields such as ecotoxicology, lost their jobs. Environmental science was absolutely eviscerated there.

In addition, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act has been completely watered down. It has been hacked to bits. Right now, this act is a problem because environmental assessments and public consultations are no longer reliable.

*Business of Supply*

That is what prompted my colleagues and me to move motions in committee. We have been concerned about belugas for a long time. As I said, belugas are a threatened species. They fall under the federal government's Species at Risk Act. That means the federal government is required, under its own act, to protect this species and come up with a recovery strategy, but that has not happened. The species is not recovering. On the contrary, from 2010 to 2012, the number of belugas dropped. As we approach 2015, the species is probably even more threatened. In the past few years, many young belugas have washed up on the beach and died. Protecting young belugas is critically important to the recovery of this species.

That is why, in June, I moved a motion in the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and my colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup moved a motion in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. We were very concerned about the work that was going on then and we wanted to know if the seismic survey and exploratory drilling work was happening with no regard for species like the beluga and the ecosystem in general off the coast of Cacouna.

• (1010)

We moved this motion in our respective committees. Unfortunately, the Conservatives decided to proceed in camera. I therefore cannot tell you what was discussed during those in camera meetings, but I can tell you that the motions are no longer on the order paper. Members can figure out what happened.

Then, there was a request to conduct exploratory drilling. I went to the Quebec Superior Court to hear the injunction application filed by the Centre québécois du droit de l'environnement and other environmentalists who are very concerned about the environment in that area. I listened to the arguments made by the lawyers for the Centre québécois de droit de l'environnement. The Conservatives' actions on this issue are truly shameful.

First, the Government of Quebec asked for clarification so that it could respond to the concerns about the protection of the ecosystem raised in response to TransCanada's request for authorization to conduct exploratory drilling off the coast of Gros-Cacouna. The Conservatives did not bother to respond through Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Then, rather than answering the questions they were asked, they said that they would send a letter. They did not send a scientific opinion. In the letter, they said that everything was going well, that people should trust them and that the project could go forward. We know what happened next: the Quebec Superior Court granted the injunction. Right now, no exploratory drilling can be done because of the injunction. TransCanada can no longer move forward with that request.

The Liberal leader visited the Lower St. Lawrence region and said that drilling and seismic testing could be done and that he supported the oil port project in Gros-Cacouna, without knowing what was happening and that the project was not backed by scientific evidence.

**An hon. member:** He did not know that?

**Mr. François Choquette:** No, Mr. Speaker, he did not. It is truly shameful.

The member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville even told him that he was disappointed that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was refusing to share scientific information. That came from the September 29, 2014, Hansard. The Liberals do not seem to be on the same page. In fact, it seems that the Liberal leader is not familiar with the basic principles of sustainable development. The member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville had to set him straight.

I hope that the Liberals will set the Liberal leader straight, explain the basic principles of sustainable development to him and vote in favour of our motion since it is based on those basic principles, namely, environmentally sustainable economic development and the social acceptance of the surrounding community.

We moved this motion for all of these reasons, and we are asking the Conservatives to stand with us. They need to understand that they cannot build an oil port in that location without going against their own species at risk legislation, and the project is not good for the economy either.

I hope the government will one day realize that the words “environment” and “economic development” are not mutually exclusive.

This proves that the Conservatives do not take environmental protection seriously. They do not understand what sustainable development is.

When the NDP forms the government, we will ensure that Canada has not only a sustainable development strategy but also legislation in this area. In fact, my hon. colleague from Brome—Missisquoi has introduced a bill on sustainable development, and we will continue in that direction.

The principle of protecting sustainable development—in other words, the right to clean air, clean water and clean soil—will be written into the charter. We will fulfill these promises once the NDP forms the government.

I would also like to draw attention to what the Liberals are doing in this area. The NDP is the only party that has a clear position on sustainable development and the Port of Gros-Cacouna.

• (1015)

[*English*]

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech. I will have a chance to respond in my own speech, to provide a little more accurate background. However, I do have a couple of questions.

I want to be very clear that he understands that the work that has gone on so far is only exploratory work and that there would in fact be a comprehensive proposal submitted to the National Energy Board that would include a comprehensive environmental assessment. My first question is to ask if he understands that, because the motion does not sound very clear on that point to me.

The second question is this. We have been led to believe that the west-to-east pipeline, energy east, is the centrepiece of NDP energy policy. This exploration is with respect to that, so I would like to know if he still agrees with his leader on that point.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. François Choquette:** Mr. Speaker, I know very well that we are talking about exploratory drilling. Now, does he know that his own department was asked for scientific advice on this exploratory drilling, and instead of sending the proper documentation to the Government of Quebec, his department simply sent a letter saying everything was fine, without doing a proper scientific study? This is outrageous.

When we asked for studies in committee, they were done in camera. When we asked the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to hold an emergency meeting, that was also held in camera. The Conservatives cannot say that they support environmental protection and then do everything behind closed doors, without any scientific advice.

As for the member's other question, it is important to understand that this part of the Gros-Cacouna oil terminal is used for export only, so there is nothing here to create jobs or protect our fishery resources.

• (1020)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member brings up a very important issue for us to discuss today. I for one am very fond of the beluga. It is a wonderful whale and contributes immensely to Churchill, to tourism, and so forth.

Having said that, I have a question in regard to his own leader. I am sure he is familiar with the fact that his leader used to be the environment minister under the Liberal government in the province of Quebec. When the leader of the New Democratic Party was the minister of environment in Quebec, he had an opportunity to do a lot of things the member referenced.

Why does he believe his leader today seemed to ignore the issue back then when he was the minister of environment?

[Translation]

**Mr. François Choquette:** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our leader's record as Quebec's environment minister. He is the father of Quebec's sustainable development legislation. He is the one who added the right to clear air, water and soil to the charter. That is what we are going to do when we form the government in 2015. It is not over.

I have a big problem with the position of my colleague's party across the way. This summer, I went to the Lower St. Lawrence twice. When the leader of the Liberal Party strolled around there, he said the Port of Gros-Cacouna oil terminal was a good thing. He was not even aware that the decisions were not backed by science. Even his member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville had to set him straight. The other Liberal members will have to set their leader straight to get him to make sound decisions.

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am impressed with my esteemed colleague's speech. He provided us with some very interesting details.

When it comes to endangered species as interesting and invaluable as belugas, we have to do scientific research before we proceed. My

colleague's speech made me realize that there is no indication that any scientific research was done.

Why?

**Mr. François Choquette:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague very much for the question.

This is a prime example of the Conservatives muzzling scientists and showing an utter lack of transparency. The Conservatives requested in camera meetings at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development three times instead of listening to the advice of the scientists at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. If they have nothing to hide, then why request in camera meetings and why muzzle the scientists? Never before had public servants, scientists, demonstrated in front of the House of Commons. This was unprecedented. Frankly, the Conservatives have to take responsibility for protecting sustainable development. The basic principles of sustainable development are good for the environment and for the economy.

When the NDP forms the government, it will respect the principles of sustainable development.

[English]

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and privilege to engage in this debate. I thank my colleague, the member for Drummond, for his remarks on our motion regarding the proposed Port of Gros-Cacouna oil terminal. It is something about which we are very troubled on this side.

Let me first acknowledge my colleagues, the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, the member for Drummond, and the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, for the incredible work they have been doing on this issue.

The Port of Gros-Cacouna and the St. Lawrence are extremely sensitive ecosystems, not to mention the extraordinary danger we would be putting the beluga whale under, a mammal that is covered under the Species at Risk Act.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about why it is we are so concerned about what the government is doing. Just this week the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development released a report that confirmed our fears, which have been increasing over the past 3.5 years, that the Conservative government only seems interested in minimalizing the federal government's involvement in environmental assessments. Time after time, it is doing everything it can to ensure that proper assessments are not being done, assessments in terms of the environment, whether it be for the transportation of oil or other forms of development. The government is neglecting its responsibility and trying to turn over responsibility to the proponents in many cases. What it fails to realize is that, by conducting proper environmental assessments, not only would it protect the environment but it would also be good for the economy.

*Business of Supply*

Surely, in this day and age, we have to recognize that we must commit to ensuring that we deal with the environment. We must begin to address the question of climate change that is right there in front of all of us in real terms. It needs to be addressed. If we do not deal with these issues, then we are turning our backs on the economy; we are turning our backs on the sustainability of our country and, frankly, of our world.

In that respect, on this side the New Democrats believe in two particular principles. One is that proper community consultations need to be done so that not only do the communities on the ground get involved and understand what the impacts are but also the government authorities understand how the communities feel, how the people in those communities that would be most directly affected feel. Also, environmental assessments are the bedrock of sustainable development.

The government has told us not to worry: it is not that far along, and there is no need to be concerned. Let me remind members that it was just in March of this year that TransCanada submitted a project description to the National Energy Board for the energy east pipeline, which includes the proposal to export unprocessed oil at the Port of Gros-Cacouna. We know that an official application for the entire project is expected in the coming weeks.

• (1025)

Our concern stems from what we learned time and again, whether it is from the commissioner of the environment or whether it is with respect to coast guard capacity to deal with problems that may arise: the government is just simply not ready.

A decision was reached recently in this regard by the court. In September 2014, a decision forced TransCanada to stop all work in Cacouna because it was revealed that the Conservative government had shunned all collaboration with the Government of Quebec. Maybe the parliamentary secretary would explain that. The judge in this case was concerned about the fact that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans had refused for some reason to share with its provincial counterparts the results of studies it had conducted. Quebec asked to see the scientific advice on several occasions, but the Conservatives failed to make this information available.

The Conservatives refused to hear what specialized marine mammal scientists have had to say. They refused to hold special fisheries and oceans committee meetings to discuss the issue. My colleagues mentioned earlier that there were special motions brought before the fisheries and oceans committee and the environment committee to try to deal with this issue. We understood that the Government of Quebec was not able to get at this information, but its members thought, as responsible members of Parliament for this particular area of Quebec, they could perhaps use their role as members of Parliament with participation on the various standing committees to try to bring officials before our committee to ask them those questions, try to get at that information.

Those motions went into private, in-camera meetings. We do not know what was discussed in those in-camera meetings, except to say that no information has been shared with members of this House on this particular matter, and the issue has disappeared from the agendas of those particular committees.

I also cite the issue of marine protected areas. The government signed on to a UN commitment to achieve 10% protection of our coastline by the year 2020. Here we are in 2014 and we are at less than 1%. That is important in this regard because of the marine protected area initiative safeguarding the area around the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park. The government has failed to move forward on that.

This particular initiative aimed, first and foremost, to protect the St. Lawrence belugas' full range of habitat, but we found out that the Canada-Quebec committee looking into the establishment of this marine park area has never even met. How can the Conservatives claim to be protecting beluga whale habitat when they are clearly, at every opportunity, torpedoing the area's marine conservation projects?

The Conservatives are not up to the task. They are not doing what needs to be done to protect our environment, to ensure that the species at risk that are covered by legislation are in fact protected. They are not doing the work that ensures a principle in which we believe is maintained and strengthened, and that is the principle of sustainable development.

At every opportunity, the Conservatives have been passing up on opportunities to protect our environment, as they are hell-bent to develop our natural resources in a way that, frankly, puts our ecosystem at risk.

• (1030)

That is why my colleagues and I will be standing in the House to debate this issue throughout the day: because we believe it is another example of how the government has fallen short, another example of why we need to elect a party to form a government that is actually committed to sustainable development.

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a question for the member while it is early in the discussion.

I listened to the member's speech, which was very clear, but one area that I still do not quite understand is the NDP's biggest concern. Is it the pipeline, or is it the oil tanker traffic, or is it both?

I wonder if the member could clarify that so that as we begin this discussion, we know what footing New Democrats are on.

• (1035)

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, which is a good one, and I will be clear: New Democrats are concerned on a number of levels.

With respect to the St. Lawrence ecosystem, we are concerned about endangered wildlife species such as the beluga. The government is failing to put in place the necessary protections and has failed to disclose information that would help local communities understand what the impacts are. It is failing to address the concerns being brought forward to the point where the Quebec court finally had to issue an injunction to stop it and ordered the release of this information.

*Business of Supply*

Let me be clear. New Democrats think that bitumen should be upgraded in Canada, that jobs should be created in this country, that it should not be exported offshore. The work should be done here. However, all this particular project is proposing to do is to ship more —

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member pointed out, the way this motion was written covers up the problem. In other words, this government has not disclosed all the scientific facts known to the minister's office or to marine mammal experts.

Why does the motion not explicitly mention this problem which, to my way of thinking, is this government's main problem regarding this issue?

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, the motion clearly spells out the concerns we have with the proposal to develop a crude oil exporting port at the Port of Gros-Cacouna.

Now it is time for that member, as New Democrats will, to explain the issues at the heart of this situation and why we are so concerned. He raised the point that the federal government has failed to release information. That failure is a very key ingredient, and one that I hope we will hear him expound on some more.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I think we need to look more broadly at the Gulf of St. Lawrence. At this point, the Green Party is the only party calling for a full moratorium on oil and gas exploration and development in this very sensitive ecosystem, although I know that historically there has been quite a bit of interest from New Democrats, and I hope they will come out in favour of a full moratorium.

My question for the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour is this: is it his understanding that what will be shipped to this port is going to be bitumen mixed with diluent—in other words, not even at the level of synthetic crude, not upgraded, but bitumen mixed with diluent? That is my understanding, but I would like that point to be confirmed.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, what is going to be shipped is part of the issue. We do not know, and we do not know what the ramifications will be, but we do know that this proposal has been presented. We have been demanding, and continue to demand on behalf of the citizens of that region, this country, and Quebec, that the government understand the potential impact on the ecosystem and on the beluga, the species at risk, and that it be much more demanding in terms of what information is required. Then the government must ensure that the information is provided to Canadians.

• (1040)

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate today. I hope we will get some clarity as we go throughout the rest of the day.

Let me begin with a summary of my thoughts.

Our government is committed to responsible resource development. DFO's mandate is to ensure that when proponents want to implement projects, specific criteria for the protection and recovery of species at risk, such as the beluga whale, are respected. I can assure everyone in the House that our government remains committed to the protection of species at risk and that DFO takes this responsibility seriously.

In addition to the measures under the Species at Risk Act, commercial, recreational, and aboriginal fisheries are protected under the Fisheries Act. This means that areas that support such fisheries are protected against serious harm, which includes protection of habitat and protection against the death of fish.

TransCanada Pipeline's proposed energy east project includes the construction and operation of a shipping terminal near the port of Gros-Cacouna, Quebec. The project involves the conversion of an existing pipeline and the construction of new pipeline sections to transport oil from Alberta and Saskatchewan to eastern Canada. The project includes the construction and operation of two shipping terminals, one in Cacouna, Quebec, and the other in Saint John, New Brunswick.

It is well known that the area around Cacouna is at certain times of the year inhabited by beluga whales.

I should mention at this time that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margaret's.

The project application has not yet been filed with the National Energy Board. TransCanada has not submitted a proposal for review, contrary to what my NDP colleagues have said. Therefore, complete details of the proposed development at Cacouna are not available.

Although the National Energy Board will be responsible for conducting the environmental assessment, DFO will intervene in the National Energy Board hearing process and will review the project and provide advice with respect to our mandate in accordance with well-established processes that rely on scientific information. In conducting the review, DFO will assess the project under both the Fisheries Act and the Species at Risk Act.

Under the Fisheries Act, experts will assess whether the project is likely to result in harm to fish and subsequently determine if potential harm can be alleviated with appropriate avoidance, mitigation, or offsetting measures. This is a robust process to ensure the ongoing productivity and sustainability of Canada's commercial, recreational, and aboriginal fisheries.

Under the Species at Risk Act, DFO will assess whether, first, all reasonable alternatives to the activity that would reduce the impact on the species have been considered and the best solution has been adopted; second, whether all feasible measures will be taken to minimize the impact of the activity on a species or its critical habitat; and third, whether the activity will not jeopardize the survival or recovery of the species.

As we are all aware, and as I have already said, the St. Lawrence estuary beluga whale is a species at risk, and all efforts should be made to avoid impacts on the species.

*Business of Supply*

It is for this reason that DFO has been actively engaged since the early stages of this project. DFO has provided information with respect to the requirements of the Fisheries Act and the Species at Risk Act to the proponent and has shared existing scientific reports and analyses with the Province of Quebec.

The proposed TransCanada energy east project is currently in the exploratory phase. In preparation for the proposed terminal at Cacouna, TransCanada submitted a proposal to Fisheries and Oceans Canada to conduct seismic testing and exploration drilling in order to define the geological structure of the proposed terminal site.

The department reviewed the proposal to determine whether it would adversely impact listed aquatic species at risk and whether it was likely to cause serious harm to fish, which is prohibited under the Fisheries Act. Again, the proposal was reviewed in accordance with well-established science-based processes.

Following the review, a Species at Risk Act permit was issued for the seismic survey project, but the survey was limited to a less sensitive time when beluga whales were less likely to be present. The permit required that the seismic testing be completed by April 30 of this year, which has been done.

• (1045)

Following the review of the proposed exploratory drilling project, DFO officials provided a letter back to TransCanada that included measures to avoid potential impacts on the St. Lawrence beluga. Measures included the presence of a marine mammal observer, ongoing monitoring of beluga presence, and the creation of a protection zone around the work site such that if belugas were observed within 500 metres of the work, then work would stop.

DFO advised the proponent that provided these mitigation measures were incorporated into TransCanada's plans, DFO was of the view that the exploratory drilling would not result in serious harm to fish, nor would it contravene the Species at Risk Act. This determination was based on a wealth of existing knowledge and scientific information.

The project proponent committed to avoiding impacts to the species by undertaking activities during less sensitive periods as well as by implementing mitigation measures during drilling to ensure that the St. Lawrence beluga whale is protected.

The Province of Quebec issued two authorizations for the exploratory drilling. In reaching its decision, the province relied on the same scientific information used by DFO.

As an example, on September 17, as per the protocol, drilling operations were shut down because of beluga presence in the area. In fact, this was exactly how it was supposed to work.

Since that time, on September 23 the Superior Court of Quebec issued an interlocutory injunction halting the drilling until October 15, 2014. However, let me be clear that the impact of that decision would not change anything concerning DFO's advice. This decision was entirely related to Quebec provincial laws and a provincial review and authorization process. I remain confident in the expertise of DFO staff and the review process that was followed at the federal level.

Throughout the upcoming review process, DFO will continue to be actively engaged in the environmental assessment to ensure the protection of the St. Lawrence beluga whale.

To demonstrate the thoroughness of our project reviews, I will highlight some of the steps implemented by DFO.

Upon receiving a project for review, DFO officials review the project in accordance with the requirements of the Fisheries Act and the Species At Risk Act. These reviews rely on the best available scientific information.

Officials review the information provided to determine whether additional information is needed to make a determination on whether serious harm to fish is likely and whether there are potential impacts to species at risk that must be considered. To ensure a complete analysis, consultation with other experts in the department, including our scientists, is performed.

If it is determined that the project is not likely to result in serious harm or to require a Species at Risk Act permit, the biologist notifies the proponent through a letter of advice, which may include measures to mitigate potential impacts to fish and fish habitat, including species at risk. If this determination cannot immediately be made, the biologist has discussions with the proponent on appropriate mitigation and offsetting to determine whether an authorization can in fact be issued.

For the review of the energy east project, including the proposed project activities at Cacouna, the National Energy Board review process will involve a hearing. DFO will have intervenor status at the hearing and will provide expertise to the process related to the department's mandate. This includes expertise with respect to marine mammals such as the St. Lawrence beluga.

Let me conclude by saying again that projects do not move forward unless they are safe for the environment and safe for Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's commendable speech. He said that everything will be done so that this is safe for the environment. However, there has been an initiative to protect marine areas around the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park for 15 years now. There is also a committee of people from Canada and Quebec.

What did we learn this year? We learned that, as long as the committee has been around, it has never met. Never.

How does he explain the fact that he wants to protect the belugas and that the recovery plan recommends creating a marine protected area, but that the committee has never met?

• (1050)

[English]

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Mr. Speaker, let me just repeat what I said in my speech. The activities that have taken place are exploratory activities in preparation for TransCanada PipeLines potentially submitting a proposal to the National Energy Board. The National Energy Board approval process will be a very rigorous, robust process in which DFO will participate.

*Business of Supply*

In terms of the exploratory activities, DFO has carefully followed its normal processes in terms of consulting scientists and the scientific information that is available, and in doing due diligence in this case.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech, but does he realize that he is contradicted by the Superior Court of Quebec ruling that shows very clearly that DFO did not communicate to the Quebec department the information that the scientists at DFO were not favourable toward drilling during the fall? It did not share this information. How did the minister do that? That is bad federalism, it is bad for the protection of species, and it is bad for the project.

Can we have an answer to this very simple question?

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Mr. Speaker, let me provide a simple answer. The Province of Quebec had its own obligation to conduct its own review in order to provide its authorization. I cannot speak to the work it did.

However, I know that on August 8, in response to a letter from the Quebec ministry, DFO sent the ministry both documents it produced on the geotechnical work and all the supporting documents used to produce its analysis and make a decision about the project. I could provide the list. I will not bore the member with that list of documents, but I can tell him that this is exactly what happened.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for his great intervention.

Members may know that I have the honour of chairing the environment committee, but the environment committee is called the environment committee and sustainable development committee. It has both of those obligations.

Yesterday officials from Environment Canada came before our committee. I was really encouraged to hear about the great work our government is doing on the environment. For example, our greenhouse emissions between 2005 and 2012 decreased by over 5%, while the economy grew by 10%. In fact, our per capita greenhouse emissions are lower than at any point since records have been kept, so Canada is certainly doing its job.

However, as I mentioned, the committee is called the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

We all know that the NDP sometimes uses the acronym for the “no development party”, but just recently, in a 2012 speech at the Canadian Club of Toronto, the Leader of the Opposition called the shipment of western oil to eastern Canada a pro-business, common sense solution. Maybe there is hope.

However, I want to ask my colleague why the NDP is putting this motion before us to reject this project before it has even been submitted to the National Energy Board.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague raises a very good question. I am not sure I know the answer to it.

I was actually quite puzzled by the motion, at least the wording of the motion, because it would seem to me that we could read this motion as not supporting the notion of an energy east pipeline. In particular, it is weighing in on this before a proposal has been

submitted to the National Energy Board and submitted to that rigorous process. It is mind-boggling to me.

● (1055)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to rise in debate on this motion today.

It is very clear that Canada is blessed to be home to an abundant array of natural resources. Without question, our government is committed to protecting Canada's diverse marine ecosystems and to the conservation of the species contained in those ecosystems.

I want to talk about that further, because one level of government cannot do that alone. We have to collaborate with other levels of government, with all three levels of government in this great country, quite frankly. There is no good in the opposition getting up to make wild accusations that somehow one project that has been very closely monitored is going to destroy an entire species or an entire ecosystem.

I would just like to bring up the fact that some 3,000 ships pass through this ecosystem every year. I would suspect that if the NDP were to get its way, it would want to shut down all that shipping, every last ship that goes through the belugas' ecosystem, which is a large and substantial ecosystem.

Let us talk about reasonable and responsible development and how we go about that.

We are honoured, as the government, to have the responsibility to be stewards of these resources, to protect them, to enjoy them, and to benefit from them. The Species at Risk Act, SARA, is a key component, given the many variables to consider in effectively protecting aquatic species in our waters and in helping them to recover.

The Species at Risk Act is one of the federal government's key conservation tools. Given the variety and the geographic distribution of protected species, the Species at Risk Act has the potential to involve many Canadians, from commercial fishers and the aquaculture industry to recreational fishers and individuals.

The act supports biodiversity and the long-term sustainability of Canada's aquatic species and fisheries: commercial, aboriginal, and recreational. We know that healthy fish stocks and aquatic systems are the key to stable and prosperous fisheries.

The purpose of the act is to prevent threatened wildlife from becoming extinct and to provide for their recovery. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, along with Environment Canada and Parks Canada, are responsible for the implementation of the Species at Risk Act. The Minister of the Environment has primary responsibility for its administration and is the responsible minister for all species on federal lands as well as migratory birds. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is the minister responsible for aquatic species other than those found in areas administered by Parks Canada.

The Species at Risk Act establishes a process for conducting scientific assessments of the status of individual wildlife and aquatic species.

*Business of Supply*

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, COSEWIC, is a non-government committee of scientific experts that identifies and assesses wildlife and aquatic species at risk in Canada. The committee undertakes assessments of wildlife and aquatic species on an annual basis.

On receiving these assessments, the Governor in Council must make a decision as to whether a species will be included on schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act. When it is decided to list a species under the Species at Risk Act as extirpated, endangered, or threatened, recovery strategies and action plans are prepared. Recovery strategies identify threats to the species and its habitat. These strategies also identify critical habitat to the extent possible and set population and distribution objectives for the species.

I say that to let all Canadians know that there is a process, and the process is adhered to and followed by every department of the government.

Action plans outline the steps to be taken to meet the objectives in any recovery strategy. For species listed as a special concern, the act requires the preparation of a management plan, including measures to be taken for the species' conservation.

These are just some of the steps DFO takes to protect these species. On top of that, they have a duty to consult with various stakeholders on designated species, to provide advice to the Minister of the Environment on whether the species should be listed for legal protection under SARA, and to work with affected stakeholders to develop recovery strategies and action plans for species protected under SARA.

• (1100)

On top of that, they have a responsibility to conduct additional scientific research on the impact of fisheries and other activities on listed species and their habitat; to update fisheries management plans, where applicable, to include new conservation measures; and to develop a compliance plan. When they develop a compliance plan, they base that on sound scientific research and stakeholder conversations.

The Species at Risk Act emphasizes, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, co-operation and stewardship of the species at risk. No single government or entity can recover species at risk by itself. In particular, co-operation between the federal departments and agencies is required. The Species at Risk Act also emphasizes co-operation with the provincial and territorial partners, aboriginal organizations, landowners, resource users, and Canadians in general.

From our perspective, there can be no success without the work of everyone involved. The scope, scale, and importance of this process demands a collaborate effort. A key component in the government's collaboration and consultation with Canadians is the SARA public registry. The public registry is a key source of news, information, and documents related to species at risk in Canada.

What this does not mean is that we stop all development in this country every single time there is an issue. I have just explained that there is a very thorough process. We allow the process to take place, listen to the scientific advice that is given by all the stakeholders, and then make a decision based on science. That is exactly what the

Government of Canada, with the advice of the Department of the Environment and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, does.

We recognize the importance of shared stewardship and taking action at a local level to recover species. Our investments ensure that Canadians can take steps to protect the habitats of species at risk.

With respect to the St. Lawrence beluga whale, this government has been active in support of the recovery of this species. In March 2012, a recovery strategy for the species was finalized. The recovery strategy was developed in close collaboration with our partners, which included marine mammal experts, representatives of the Government of Quebec, Parks Canada, and other interested stakeholders.

We realize that aquatic ecosystems need a wide variety of species to remain robust and productive and to provide economic benefits to Canadians. The greater the variety of species within an ecosystem, the more able it is to withstand threats and pressures. The more simple an ecosystem is, the more vulnerable it will be to degradation, loss of species, and loss of productivity.

Species such the beluga whale are essential components of the aquatic ecosystem and provide significant benefits to coastal communities and to Canadians. Recovery efforts can take time, but significant progress is being made, and species are being recovered. The Pacific humpback whale is a recent example of this. Its status has improved from "threatened" to "special concern". We are confident that more success is forthcoming in the future.

In closing, I again ask for continued collaboration across all levels of government and with all Canadians. Our government will continue to provide leadership in the conservation and protection of Canada's aquatic systems and in the recovery of aquatic species at risk.

Finally, we have a motion here. The motion was brought in good faith, but we have to listen to what the proponent of the motion is actually saying. What I am hearing is that there should be no development, no interaction, in this area whatsoever. We have very clear guidelines and limitations on what industry and ship traffic can do in the area. Those are sound, reasonable, and responsible regulations that control shipping traffic in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The alternative the member seems to be proposing is simply to stop all traffic and all development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and to simply do nothing.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my honourable colleague for speaking about this very important and very worrisome issue of sustainable development in general, and the Gros-Cacouna oil terminal in particular.

*Business of Supply*

He mentioned several times that he believed in science, among other things. This is funny, though, because the Quebec Superior Court just mentioned that it had to respond to an injunction that there was no scientific basis for allowing drilling off the coast of Cacouna.

Where are these scientific opinions that the hon. member is claiming to have and to be submitting? Why did the Quebec Superior Court grant a request for an injunction if there was scientific evidence? I just do not get it. Perhaps the hon. member could clarify things for me.

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. As my hon. colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has already said, the injunction only came after all activities had already stopped. There was collaboration between the federal government, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Province of Quebec on this issue.

As to the drilling activity in the seabed, that was looked at early on. There was no scientific evidence to put any mitigation measures beyond what were put in place to begin with to limit that drilling. There were very clear parameters of what they could and could not do, all of them falling within the regulatory regime and all of them not being harmful to the belugas.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is contradicted by the court ruling. He contends that there was co-operation between governments, but I want my colleague to listen to paragraph 88 of the ruling in French:

[Translation]

...[the Department of Fisheries and Oceans] is withholding the requested scientific information. It did not respond to the two questions asked by the [Quebec ministry]...It simply reiterated information that the Quebec minister already had and that was cause for concern, but provided no additional explanation.

[English]

This is why an injunction has been made: because the federal minister did not communicate the scientific information to the provincial minister. This is a court ruling. How can he explain this mess?

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, I have to respectfully disagree with my hon. colleague's interpretation of what actually happened. On August 8, DFO sent to Quebec both documents it produced on the geotechnical work and all supporting documents that were used to produce its analysis and make a decision on this project. It is very clear that the information was shared and it was shared in great detail.

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue's explanation about the process that is followed is very helpful. He has been here longer than most of us, so I would like to ask him, based on his experience and I know he is well informed on fisheries issues having been the chair of that committee in the past, if it seems strange to him for a motion to be brought before the House for the House to pronounce on the outcome of a proposal that has not yet been submitted to the National Energy Board.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, it is not just strange, it is bizarre. It truly is. I understand that the member for Drummond

brought this motion mostly in good faith, but one has to extrapolate what we are actually talking about here. This is the thin edge of the wedge from the NDP, shutting down all traffic in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. I say again that 3,000 ships pass through this habitat every single year, so all the rest of these ships, I assume, are a risk to the habitat as well.

Again, I go back to the question from my Liberal colleague. There was collaboration between the Government of Canada and the Province of Quebec.

What we need here is a clear debate on a real issue, but let us be clear that there is no application at this point.

• (1110)

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the motion moved by our NDP colleague, the hon. member for Drummond, calls on this House to speak out against the Gros-Cacouna oil terminal project. This motion is premature since a comprehensive environmental assessment of the project has not been done yet.

However, what is troubling is that the Conservative government is not showing any signs that it is interested in moving ahead with a comprehensive environmental assessment. That is unacceptable and must be condemned. That is what I hope to do on behalf of the Liberal caucus in the 20 minutes I have been given. First, what is this project?

[English]

TransCanada's energy east pipeline project is a planned 4,600-kilometre crude oil pipeline, which would run west to east from Alberta to existing refineries in new terminals in Quebec and New Brunswick. The marine terminals would be used to export oil to international markets. The Cacouna terminal area near Rivière-du-Loup on the St. Lawrence River is one of the project's potential marine terminals.

TransCanada has not yet submitted the energy east project to the National Energy Board for review and approval, and thus the project has yet to receive an environmental assessment. That is why we cannot rule on this project now. We do not yet have the environmental assessment.

However, as part of an eventual National Energy Board application, TransCanada is conducting exploratory work around the feasibility of developing a port in Cacouna. To do this, TransCanada filed an application with the federal government and with the Quebec environment ministry, which issued a permit allowing the company to drill into the seabed in order to decide where to place the terminal.

On September 23, 2014, Quebec's Superior Court granted a temporary injunction to stop seismic surveys in Cacouna until October 15. The court found that the province never had the information required to assess whether or not the belugas would be put at risk, because the environmental science division of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans withheld scientific information.

Those are the facts.

*Business of Supply*

The first observation is that Canada needs new infrastructure to move our energy resources to domestic and global markets. The second observation is that these projects must earn the trust of local communities and cannot ignore the implications for coastal economies and for the environment.

That is why we Liberals are deeply concerned that the Conservative government deliberately withheld the information needed to assess the impact of the explorations being conducted at Cacouna. This is yet another example of the Conservative government preventing scientists and evidence from informing decision-making on project development.

[*Translation*]

In that respect, the Quebec Superior Court ruling is damning for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I want to share with you the main thrust of the Quebec Superior Court ruling. Last spring, TransCanada began conducting geophysical surveys in Cacouna. Before the permit was granted, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans consulted with its beluga experts, including Ms. Lesage, Mr. Hammil, Mr. Cyr, Mr. Gosselin, Mr. McQuinn and Mr. Simard. There were at least six experts.

• (1115)

Their verdict was that the work could not be carried out after the spring, because summer and fall are critical to the birth and nursing of belugas. However, in May and July, Fisheries and Oceans Canada issued an opinion and a permit without consulting the previously mentioned scientists regarding the second phase of work, the drilling that was supposed to take place in the summer and fall during the critical period for the birth and nursing of belugas.

Why are they no longer experts all of a sudden? They are experts in the spring, but not in the summer and fall. No, the minister no longer consults with these experts. Perhaps she was afraid of their recommendations. Instead, the minister is satisfied to issue an opinion in favour of summer and fall drilling, drafted by Alain Kemp, who is not an expert on belugas. That is the sad truth. That is what is happening in the department, and we must denounce it today.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans then sent a letter in favour of drilling to the Quebec ministry of sustainable development, the environment and the fight against climate change. This letter was not signed by an expert, but by the director of sciences, Yves de Lafontaine, an administrator who knows nothing about belugas.

However, Robert Michaud, an independent scientist—and unquestionably one of the best experts on the St. Lawrence belugas in Canada, if not in the world—prepared an affidavit basically saying that the opinion of Fisheries and Oceans Canada does not meet the legislative requirements in terms of having the best scientific information available, and that the operations will certainly harm the belugas.

Has the minister seen the affidavit of one of our best experts, Robert Michaud? Has my colleague seen it? Why did he not talk about it in his speech?

Ms. Jean, who was responsible for the file at the Quebec ministry of sustainable development, the environment and the fight against climate change, was faced with conflicting advice. Knowing that

under Quebec and Canadian law a permit can be issued only on the basis of the best scientific advice, she asked, virtually begged, for a scientific opinion from Fisheries and Oceans Canada several times. She has been unfairly judged in the last little while. However, this was not her fault as she did everything she could.

She was not satisfied with the advice from Mr. Kemp or the letter from Mr. Yves de Lafontaine, and rightly so, because he is not a beluga expert but an administrator. Ms. Jean never got what she asked for from the department. Why did the minister not facilitate the exchange of scientific information between governments, which is a good practice of federalism essential to the common good?

I will quote article 88 of the Quebec Superior Court ruling:

[The Department of Fisheries and Oceans] is withholding the requested scientific information.

Let us be honest, no scientific advice was provided. The ruling then says:

It did not respond to...questions asked by the [Quebec ministry]...It simply reiterated information that the [Quebec] minister already had and that was cause for concern, but provided no additional explanation.

Quebec already had the bundle of documents my colleague mentioned, and that was not what it was asking. The Fisheries and Oceans experts had the information, but the minister refused to let them talk. She muzzled them and did not consult them.

Too bad for the belugas and too bad for the project. That is how the Conservatives do things, and that is why we have to be very worried about their approach. That is not good federalism, good environmental policy or good economic policy.

In a last-ditch attempt, Ms. Jean called Dr. Véronique Lesage, an expert on marine mammals at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, directly and more than once. The record of their conversation is in the court documents. It shows that Ms. Lesage was not consulted by her department, even though she is an expert. It also shows that she referred Ms. Jean to her superiors and she said that Mr. Michaud's affidavit was accurate. In other words, the best scientific information was consistent with Mr. Michaud's opinion, which contradicted the opinion of Fisheries and Oceans Canada drafted by Mr. Kemp, who is not an expert on belugas. This opinion supported drilling in the fall.

• (1120)

Quebec then issued a permit, which the judge suspended by means of an injunction. The judge was of the opinion that the process was dubious, since Fisheries and Oceans Canada had not issued any scientific advice from which to proceed.

None of this would have happened if the federal minister had listened to her scientists and shared that information, in the spirit of federalism, with the Government of Quebec.

By doing what she did, she hurt the environment and showed how little she cares about the survival of the iconic beluga. The minister weakened the credibility of the assessment and consultation process, which is essential to moving forward with the project.

*Business of Supply*

Does the minister at least realize that the St. Lawrence beluga has been a threatened species for more than 20 years, pursuant to the Species at Risk Act? According to this act, a scientific committee must be formed and a recovery strategy must be drafted. This strategy must identify the critical habitat to be fully protected.

Does the minister realize that all of this was done and that the revised strategy was completed nearly three years ago? The sector in which TransCanada/energy east wants to build its port is in a critical habitat, deemed to be essential to the survival of the beluga species.

For the recovery strategy and critical habitat to work, the Minister of the Environment has to acknowledge receipt of the strategy, recognize it and recognize the critical habitat defined in the strategy. For the past three years, however, the Minister of the Environment has not acknowledged receipt of a single document concerning any marine mammal species at risk in Canada forwarded by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Why?

Why has she not acknowledged receipt and recognized the importance of protecting belugas off the coast of Cacouna? What is going on? What is the government trying to protect at the expense of sustainable development here? Why all the secrets? Why refuse to take action? Why the lack of transparency that is having such a detrimental effect on sustainable development? Why refuse to listen to scientists?

It is not surprising that in her latest report released this week, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development concluded that under the Conservatives, environmental assessments have lacked clarity and transparency.

[English]

To conclude, the Liberals have been consistent in calling for stronger environmental protections and in pushing for a more substantive project review process. That is what our leader, the MP for Papineau, is determined to deliver for the sake of our environment and our economy: sound, sustainable development for all Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. His analysis of the lamentable situation at Fisheries and Oceans is bang on.

However, there is a huge problem within the Liberal Party. Many members knew that none of the scientific opinions deserved to be called that in this government's process. While many of the MPs on our side criticized what was going on and called for a moratorium on drilling, his leader came to eastern Quebec, to Rimouski, the moment the injunction was called for, to tell people that it was a wonderful project that should go ahead right away.

While we were fighting for justice in the case of Fisheries and Oceans Canada experts who were muzzled, his leader was in my region telling people there was no problem. That is the problem with the Liberals.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, if we are to have sustainable development, we need a process and it must be followed.

Asking the House to vote against a project before we have any environmental assessments is like saying that we do not care about the process let alone following it. Our leader is not against this project, but he cannot say he supports it until he sees the environmental assessments, and this is what we are asking for.

Today, we must denounce the government's refusal to work transparently or in partnership with the Government of Quebec and its refusal to rely on scientific advice. That is the issue here.

• (1125)

[English]

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past 10 years, I have been surprised when people in this place, who have no background or training on fisheries issues, make decisions and disagree with trained scientists in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. These scientists have done due diligence on an issue.

Let me make a comment and then ask a quick question.

The member needs to understand that there were two proposals. One was to do seismic testing. In fact, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans knows less about the impacts of seismic testing on beluga whales. That is why it conducted a very robust scientific research project to get that information. At the end of that process, it decided it had the potential of causing harm and that a permit was required under the Species at Risk Act, and that was done.

The other option was drilling. In fact, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has much more expertise and experience with the impacts on aquatic habitat. It determined that it did not require a permit and gave that advice to the proponent.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** We have run out of time. We have a 10-minute spot, but we have to move along.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, I guess there will be another opportunity to hear the question.

The problem is that I did not receive answers to my questions. Does my colleague think that the proper process is being followed? Does he agree that he is contradicting the Superior Court ruling that made the case? I read it, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada never provided the scientific information that was requested by the Quebec government. The scientists in his department have that information. They were willing to provide it, but they were not asked by the minister to do so. That is what happened.

I do not have the time to read the two questions, but they are at the core of whether the project is dangerous for beluga. It is awful and should be condemned by everyone in the House.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Laurent—Cartierville for laying the case out very clearly that the government has withheld crucial information. The whole idea is whether the public can accept that sustainable development can occur under the Conservative government. If the government hides crucial scientific information, how can the public ever have confidence that sustainable development will occur with this project?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is so right. It is a matter of trust. If we think the government is hiding something, then the process will become very cumbersome and difficult and, at the end of the day, cannot succeed, not in Canada. That is what is happening under the Conservatives, not only at the expense of the environment but also the economy.

Projects are blocked everywhere because the confidence in the government does not exist when we see it tries to muzzle its scientists and it does not consult them when it fears their recommendations will not be what it wants to hear. The Prime Minister is responsible for that pattern.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I found one remark made by my colleague at the beginning of his speech a little strange. He said that the motion was somewhat premature. As my hon. colleague mentioned a little earlier, the leader of the Liberal Party outlined his position on the project a month ago. He did not say he was not against it; he said we should go ahead with it. That was very clear.

I have to wonder about the Liberals' real position. I hope my colleague from Saint-Laurent—Cartierville will be able to convince his leader that he has some work to do to clarify his position.

Aside from that, I want to come back to another point. In British Columbia in October 2012, the leader of the Liberal Party spoke out against the Enbridge pipeline. He talked about the precautionary principle and lamented the fact that the pipeline was to go through one of the most vulnerable and most beautiful ecosystems in the world.

Does he not think that the same is true of the Gulf of St. Lawrence? This is a rich resource that belongs to all Quebeckers. It belongs to all of us. I do not understand why the Liberals are so reluctant when it comes time to stand up in the House and defend this project.

• (1130)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague.

The answer is that we need to move forward with a science-based approach and a very rigorous auditing process, with ministers who want to work together.

The federal minister refused to co-operate with the provincial minister, and a Quebec public servant is being blamed. I find that entirely unfair. The guilty person in this process, the one who should be condemned by all of Canada is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. The court's ruling makes this very clear. I invite my colleague and everyone else to read it. That is what we are talking about today. We must move forward, but not using the approach that the minister imposed on Canadians, an approach that is anti-environment, anti-economy, anti-belugas, anti-people and anti-everyone.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville for his speech. I have a clear and simple question for him.

[*English*]

I will put it in English to make it easier.

In Bill C-38, at section 165, and I think most members of the House did not notice it, that administration put the National Energy Board in charge of endangered species if they happened to be in the way of a pipeline. In other words, it has put the mandate for bitumen and diluent as a higher priority over endangered species, taken protection of species in the case of a pipeline, trumped the Species at Risk Act, and handed it to the National Energy Board.

That makes everything else we see in this one instance entirely consistent with a policy that puts bitumen first and belugas last.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, I share all the concerns my colleague has mentioned. What the Conservative government has done over the years to environmental assessment in Canada is a mess.

We have seen the report of the commissioner this week. It is awful, not only for the environment but for the economy. It is why all these projects go nowhere in Canada.

The Conservatives have tried to get rid of the environmental process and, at the end of the day, they cannot go ahead and build the trust they need to be sure that our economy will be able to export our resources around the world. That is bad for the environment and bad for the economy.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will share my time with my colleague from Halifax.

I have the honour to rise in the House to speak to the motion I put forward today. We are all very concerned—I say “we” because Cacouna is in the riding I have the honour to represent—because this problematic Cacouna oil terminal initiative is taking place in our community. I am doubly concerned about the issue because I am on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, where we tried to act in response to the Conservative government's behaviour. I will talk about that later.

I will quickly read the motion before us because I will organize my next five or six minutes around the main points of the motion.

That, in the opinion of the House, the proposed Port of Gros-Cacouna oil terminal, which will be used for the sole purpose of exporting unprocessed Canadian oil, will have a negative impact on the Canadian economy through the loss of well-paid jobs, will constitute an unacceptable environmental threat to the St. Lawrence ecosystem, including the beluga whale population, and therefore, is not consistent with the principle of sustainable development, and must be rejected.

The first thing that is mentioned in the motion is the notion of an “oil terminal”. What exactly does the oil terminal planned for Cacouna consist of?

The oil terminal is a facility that will have the ability to dock two Suezmax tankers at the same time and load them with oil. That will not happen right in the port. There are plans to build a jetty about 500, 700 or 800 metres out into the river. A sort of second dock will be built there, almost in the middle of the river, where these huge oil tankers with the capacity to carry over 700,00 barrels in transshipments will be able to dock.

*Business of Supply*

The pipeline itself will be able to carry 1.1 million barrels. TransCanada therefore wants to build a port that can hold 75% of the pipeline's capacity, and that oil would be used exclusively for export.

That is why the motion indicates that this project could have a negative impact on the Canadian economy. The more oil sands crude that is not processed in the country, the more our economic activity is focused on the good of a single industry. That puts pressure on the Canadian dollar. Pressure on the Canadian dollar is bad for the manufacturing industry, particularly in Ontario and Quebec. Approximately 400,000 well-paid jobs have been lost in the manufacturing industry in less than six or seven years. The unemployment rate is still relatively decent, but many of those who lost their jobs found precarious part-time jobs and no longer have access to good jobs in the manufacturing industry. Building a pipeline only to export 75% of its contents from a single transit point, a single terminal, is not in keeping with the principles of sustainable development.

Another aspect of the motion deals with the threat to the ecosystem. One issue is the beluga whales. I will come back to that later when I talk about the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and everything that happened, particularly at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. However, what members need to know is that there are also four other types of endangered marine mammals that regularly visit that zone. This project therefore poses a rather serious threat.

Another very important aspect is that the Baie de l'Isle-Verte National Wildlife Area is just a few kilometres east of the project. Reliable experts, even the most pragmatic, who are not predicting that we will have one major tanker accident and oil spill every other week, say that eventually there will be at least a few minor spills during transshipments

The thing is, if there are even minor spills at low tide during the transshipments, as every study confirms, the Isle-Verte marsh, which is the last of the great saltwater marshes of the southern St. Lawrence, would be completely swamped by diesel, oil or whatever else might be lost during the oil transfer in a matter of two or three hours. That leaves less than three hours to respond.

• (1135)

This is a serious problem. What is more, we cannot bury our heads in the sand. There is no technique for responding in the event of a spill, minor or otherwise, on a frozen surface. The river is covered in six inches to two feet of ice during several months of the year. The oil will freeze in the ice. There is no technique for cleaning up the ice on the St. Lawrence. It is huge.

When the ice breaks up and melts, these large chunks of oil will stick to everything in the river all the way to the Magdalen Islands. There is no response technique to handle a spill on the ice. However, there is ice on our river. If we add on the wind and the current it becomes impossible to manage the slightest spill. Hon. members will agree that these are serious threats to our ecosystem.

Last of all, the motion states that the project is not consistent with the principle of sustainable development. It is estimated that the Port of Cacouna will create about 20 unskilled jobs. The proponent was

asked about this during a number of interviews and was unable to say otherwise.

However, the activities at this port would endanger several species of marine mammals. The presence of these marine mammals attracts tourists. Many Europeans and others come to observe them. The direct spinoffs for eastern Quebec amount to over \$160 million a year. Thus, we have to consider 20 or so unskilled jobs created for an activity that will threaten direct spinoffs of \$160 million in the medium and long term.

When discussing sustainable development, we should not be confronted with such scenarios. On the contrary, we are supposed to ensure that we create value-added jobs with minimal risk to the environment. We should be putting sustainable development first. In the case of the Port of Cacouna, the more we delve into the issue, the more difficult it is to conclude that this project will result in sustainable development.

I would like to talk about the Fisheries and Oceans Canada fiasco. I am a member of the committee, and starting last May, I could see that there was a certain tendency. We made a relatively simple request to meet the department's experts so they could explain to us how they were going to assess the preliminary work. However, we were never able to obtain a shred of evidence from a science branch expert. I told myself that something unacceptable was happening.

The Superior Court demonstrated that the provincial government's biologist repeatedly requested the opinions of experts in the science branch. Unfortunately, the Conservative administration prevented the real marine mammal experts from expressing their opinions on drilling. Instead, the government produced a sort of mathematical calculation in two days that only looks at the distance required to avoid killing the belugas.

The calculation on the habitat and how to ensure the survival of the species at risk was not included in what was sent. The document was not even signed by a marine mammal expert. Mr. Kemp has no specific knowledge in this area. It is absolutely absurd. A Superior Court judge upheld an injunction. Could there be any stronger demonstration?

Locally, this government's series of administrative boondoggles on the issue now stands at seven or eight. About a year ago, Transport Canada pressed to have the port transferred to TransCanada Pipelines right away and without consulting the major stakeholders. That has not happened yet, because many people back home questioned that action. Why did they want to do it all wrong and in 30 days? I thought it was another administrative boondoggle in the making. However, I do not blame the proponent as much as this government's administration, which is completely partisan and obsessed with the oil sector.

• (1140)

I previously talked about the refusals in committee. The muzzling of scientists is now demonstrated by the decision of the Quebec Superior Court. They decided to eliminate a proposed marine protected area, which had been 15 years in the making. What bad judgment. Coincidentally, this proposed protected area included Cacouna.

*Business of Supply*

The list of administrative boondoggles shows that by its very nature, the project cannot achieve sustainable development objectives. In addition, when the Conservatives are in charge, the situation takes on alarming proportions. We cannot let them do this.

[English]

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech. It exemplifies again the NDP's anti-development stance. The New Democrats would sooner never develop any of Canada's natural resources.

A report came out today in the press saying that the entire Canadian economy is largely dependent on the development of our natural resources. Why the NDP wants to make this a poorer country is beyond me.

The member used the phrase "sustainable development" and he clearly does not understand what the phrase means. It is a development concept, as enunciated by the Brundtland commission in 1986. We have not gotten our oil to tide water yet, and because we cannot export our oil, our Canadian economy loses \$27 billion a year because we cannot access the world price. How many social programs could we fund with that kind of money?

Almost every single environmental indicator has improved under the watch of our Conservative government.

Could the member explain to me why he is so anti resource development, anti the Canadian economy and anti jobs?

• (1145)

[Translation]

**Mr. François Lapointe:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to take a deep breath and imagine that I am speaking to my eight-year-old son.

We are not anti resource development. We want two fundamental things that have not been done. That is why major national projects will never move forward. They have no common sense.

First, we must ensure that we are getting the maximum value added. The economy must not be entirely focused on natural resources. Having all the eggs in one basket is not good for a modern economy. I hope that Canada's economy will remain modern. That will not be case the case if the Conservatives remain in power for another 10 years, but we will work hard to get rid of them as soon as possible. We need to do processing and to have value added. This means that we need to enforce the best environmental standards. This is the 21st century, and leading experts are predicting environmental crises. We need to do our job incredibly well. For the past seven years, the Conservatives have been doing the opposite of what I just said. It is not complicated.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows that I share his concerns, even though we do not agree about today's motion. We find the motion premature, since the full environmental assessment has not yet been completed.

One thing needs to be clear today. There was a bungling that led the Superior Court of Quebec to issue an injunction that blocked the project for a number of weeks. The main person responsible for the bungling is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. So far, she has come out of this relatively unscathed, because everyone focused on a

public official who appeared to have little experience. However, that is not what happened. That poor public servant did her job. She did everything in her power to request scientific expertise from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. However, the expertise was never sent.

Is my interpretation of the facts correct?

**Mr. François Lapointe:** Mr. Speaker, it is odd because I can tell that my colleague is sincere about environmental issues.

He has to hide behind the principle that people expect the process to move forward. In the early stages of drill testing, the process was completely muzzled by the current government. What more does he need in order to conclude that there will be no reliable process?

I know that my colleague was the champion of sustainable development when he was his party's leader. Sustainable development was the main focus of his platform.

I invite my colleague to speak to the press later and give two aspects of the Cacouna oil terminal initiative that would allow us to include it in a sustainable development policy. If he can do that, we will see if he can be consistent. I think it is impossible.

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleagues from Drummond and Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Can my colleague explain why people are again worrying about a derailment, like the one in Lac-Mégantic? The rail industry was deregulated and let loose. Rail safety has been seriously neglected. The government is about to make the same kind of analysis and agree to let a project go ahead. The Conservatives are even challenging Supreme Court rulings. It is clear that they are going to disregard the Quebec Superior Court.

Is the government not worried about another derailment?

**Mr. François Lapointe:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. Of course, if one were to read the ruling carefully—and I have also read everything that happened when the evidence was being presented before the Superior Court—it says in black and white that when the proponent was asked to return in a few weeks with a scientific opinion from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' science branch concerning exploratory work, it came back empty-handed. The proponent brought in its own experts, saying that it had an expert present and asking why it was necessary to have an expert opinion from someone at Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

When the province told the federal government what had happened, those people should have immediately turned to the science branch to prevent the industry's phantom self-assessment from becoming established from the very beginning of the project. It does not work, and it makes no sense.

• (1150)

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleagues, the hon. members for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and Drummond, for their hard work on this issue. It is a great example of the outstanding work accomplished by members who are engaged in and committed to real consultations in their communities. It is impressive, and I am proud to work with them.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

I will start by picking up on some of the criticism that we have heard from the Conservatives about our motion today. They are trying to tell us that two plus two equals zero, and that zero is zero environmental protection.

The NDP has been really clear. Our leader, who was minister of environment in Quebec, is a man with an incredible environmental record. He gets economy. He gets it full well. He has talked, and so have we all, very clearly about the fact that New Democrats are in favour of the movement of Canada's energy from west to east.

There are certain lenses that need to be applied there. Why would we be in favour of that? First of all, we are in favour of it for energy security. Let us look at this through the lens of energy security. Right now on the east coast, we are importing oil while we are exporting bitumen. It does not make sense that we are an importing and exporting nation of the same product. Let us look at it through the lens of domestic energy security needs.

Let us look at it through the concept of Canadian jobs. We will not support projects like Keystone XL that will export our jobs to the U.S. We would like to see value added happening here, creating jobs here in Canada. We have unmet refining capacity in Montreal and Saint John, for example. We have the ability to do upgrading here in Canada. Why would we not seize on those opportunities? That is the second lens, Canadian jobs.

The third lens is, of course, environmental protection, making sure we have robust environmental legislation for any big energy project, including pipelines, including terminals like this one. When we have that environmental protection in place, we know that any project is going to meet a certain standard. We can feel comfortable with that standard. We can know that this is a project that has met certain tests, stringent tests, and that can go forward.

Unfortunately, we do not have that sense anymore. We do not have that social licence when it comes to big energy projects, because we have seen a lot of our environmental regulations gutted and, in the case of the Environmental Assessment Act, actually repealed. It was not tinkered with; it was actually taken off the books, with a new and inadequate, I would argue, piece of legislation put in its place.

All of our thinking about west-east has to be with those lenses applied. Here we have a situation where we are not talking about that pipeline. We are talking about a terminal that fails every possible test.

If an energy company were thinking about creating a terminal for the export of raw bitumen—and, first of all, we would not have our value-added criterion met—where would it put it? It might think about putting it in a beluga nursery, possibly picking the worst spot in Canada.

The St. Lawrence River is a delicate ecosystem. It is an iconic river, but it is also one of the most biologically diverse marine environments in the country. In addition to it being biologically diverse, we see a species at risk. The beluga whales are there.

This is a nursery for the baby belugas. All of us in English Canada know that song by Raffi, *Baby Beluga*. This is where the baby

belugas are, baby belugas in the deep blue sea. This is where they are. This is where they are being calved and raised.

It is incredible to me that a company would think that this is an appropriate place to put an oil terminal that would export raw bitumen and not create those value-added jobs and not consider energy security for Canadians.

It fails on so many levels that there has actually been an injunction issued by the Superior Court of Quebec. It halted exploratory drilling, proving that the Conservatives have failed to provide scientific answers from Fisheries and Oceans Canada to the Quebec government.

● (1155)

When looking into the belugas and the impacts of not just drilling but a potential terminal here, I actually went to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans website and looked at what it is saying about belugas. It is a species at risk, but maybe I was missing something here. Maybe there is some kind of exception, to threaten them in some cases. I was looking for answers. This is from DFO's own website, and it talks about the threats to the beluga. It says:

Hunting is certainly the main cause of the dramatic declines in beluga populations. However, contributing factors could include alterations to habitats—such as damming of rivers—and possibly noise pollution caused by ships and pleasure craft. The boats might interfere with the belugas' echo-location method of hunting.

As well, dredging, shipping, industrial activity and environmental pollution have degraded the quality of the water in which the beluga lives. This could also lead to a decline in food supply.

Shipping, noise, industrial activity, and pollution are all potentials in this spot. It is mind-boggling that anybody thought this was a good idea.

Here is a really interesting part. DFO actually has a section titled “What can you do?” We realize it is not just about government; it is about each and every one of us taking responsibility and doing what we can to help. Listen to what our government department suggests that we do.

It says:

Beluga whales will get the protection they need only if all Canadians work together to reduce threats. Find out more about beluga whales and be aware of man-made threats. Do your best ....

I am laughing because I cannot even believe this is the advice, when we are looking at this terminal being built. It says:

Do your best to reduce these threats wherever possible to better protect the whales' critical habitat. Get involved with the habitat stewardship program for species at risk or another conservation organization.

We should take that advice, and that is why my colleagues from Drummond and Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup have come up with this opposition day motion. They have taken to heart the advice from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and they have put forward this motion.

*Business of Supply*

Where is the hook here for the federal government? What are we asking? Is this just a statement saying we would oppose this kind of terminal? There actually is a role for the federal government here because, once a species is listed under the Species at Risk Act, it becomes illegal to kill, harass, capture, or harm it in any way. Critical habitats are also protected from destruction. The act requires that recovery strategies, action plans, and management plans be developed for all species.

That is not happening here. Again I go back to the fact that the Conservatives need to take advice from DFO when it comes to this project. The federal government can step in if a province is failing to protect a species in its habitat, but it also has an obligation to act. Our federal government has been taken to court several times for failing to put in plans to protect species at risk; notably sage grouse in western Canada, where I think there are 12 sage grouse left in all of Alberta. The government has failed to protect species in the past, and it is failing now. The Conservatives need to take the advice of their own government department and they need to act.

It is not often that we get to quote Raffi Cavoukian, better known as Raffi. He is a singer-songwriter who focuses on social and environmental causes. My generation and folks younger than I grew up with Raffi, and he actually calls us “beluga grads”. That comes from his *Baby Beluga* song. He calls us “beluga grads”, and he wants us to change the world. Raffi is saying to us:

Baby Beluga in the deep blue sea  
Swim so wild and you swim so free  
Heaven above and the sea below  
And a little white whale on the go

As Raffi says, we need to act. We need to protect this endangered species and stop putting our blinders on when it comes to how environment and economy can work together.

• (1200)

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to one of the things the previous speaker said, when he insulted the natural resource economy and the workers in the natural resources economy. He said that we need to go beyond it, we need to go into the modern economy.

I represent a natural-resource-producing community, and those kinds of words and phrases I find extremely insulting. Given that the natural resource economy and the natural resource workers in this country—the farmers, the miners, the loggers, and the oil workers—are a major part of the Canadian economy, why that other side would insult these workers, industries, and communities is simply beyond me.

I would like to ask this for my hon. friend from Halifax. Why is the NDP so opposed to all resource development? Given that it is the basis of our Canadian economy, how would she ever expect Canada's social programs to be supported, although I am assuming that she does not really care?

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the member meant to say that last thing. We serve on the environment committee together, and I do not think he meant to say that I do not care. I do not think he believes it.

The one thing I would say back to him is, why is it that the Conservative government refuses to acknowledge jobs and other aspects of our energy sector?

Do members know that right now in the oil sands there are 22,340 direct jobs? Do members know that in the clean energy economy right now in Canada there are 23,700 jobs? Do members know that right now in the Gulf of St. Lawrence region there are thousands of jobs in ecotourism, whether they are in whale watching or kayaking? People go to this region to see the belugas. That is a legitimate part of our economy.

I would argue that the green energy economy is a legitimate part of our economy, but the government is so hyperfocused on only fossil fuels that it is refusing to even treat the green energy economy equally, never mind promote it. Oil and gas continues to get subsidized, while the green energy economy is left to fend for itself.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised that the NDP motion today asks the House to reject the process and not simply let the scientists speak and make an evaluation of whether this is a sustainable project or not. I believe that this NDP motion is really short-circuiting the process, which we certainly should be trying to make as rigorous as possible.

Taking into account the government, would my hon. colleague from Halifax agree that it is a double-edged sword to be saying that the House should be pronouncing on a project which is more properly considered in a process that is rigorous and that can and should be made more rigorous? Could the government not use this motion against the idea of sustainable development?

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is a thoughtful one, and one that we put some work into before we actually drafted this motion.

I go back to SARA, the Species at Risk Act, and the fact that under species at risk, the federal government has an obligation to identify habitats that are needed for these species for their survival and their recovery. The federal government has the ability to step in if a province is failing to protect a species and its habitat. I would say that if a province is about to build an oil terminal in the middle of a beluga nursery, it is probably failing to protect the habitat.

I see this as a good motion for us to say that, no, this is not an acceptable project, and in fact the government does need to take action here.

**Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette.

It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the motion put forward by my colleague across the floor.

In my comments today I want to focus on a particular part of the member's motion. The member talked about how the proposal will constitute an unacceptable environmental threat. I want to talk about what our government has done to mitigate any of the concerns that might come from the environmental threats that the member talked about.

*Business of Supply*

Our government, in support of a world-class tanker safety system, has announced \$31 million over five years for the Canadian Coast Guard to establish an incident command system, which is commonly referred to as an ICS, across the Canadian Coast Guard. This forms a crucial part of the world-class tanker safety system initiative by offering standardized on-scene, all-hazard management methodology, which is designed to ensure the effective command, control and coordination of response efforts to all maritime incidents.

Implementation of the incident command system will increase the Canadian Coast Guard's ability to work collaboratively with other emergency responders who currently use this system. Therefore, it will allow multiple stakeholders to participate in important decision-making processes simultaneously and also for effective planning and response initiatives in order to address all marine pollution and all hazard incidents in a predictable and structured fashion.

By 2018 the incident command system will be fully implemented, strengthening the existing response regime. Simply put, the Canadian Coast Guard and its partners will be better positioned to respond to oil spill events and other marine emergency incidents in co-operation with key partners and other departments and agencies in a timely and effective manner. The incident command system is another example of how Canada's world-class tanker safety system is being strengthened to protect Canadians and our environment.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada, including the Canadian Coast Guard, is pleased to have the opportunity to partner with Transport Canada, Environment Canada and Natural Resources Canada on a suite of important initiatives that are being implemented to support our world-class tanker safety system.

Under Canada's marine pollution preparedness and response regime, the polluter is responsible for cleaning up and paying for its own marine spills. Private sector response organizations play an important role by maintaining effective response plans and an inventory of equipment to respond to spills from ships in Canadian waters south of 60.

In May 2014 the government announced the implementation of area response planning, which will provide a new and improved method for preparing and responding to marine oil pollution incidents.

Area response planning is a new and dynamic risk-based model that allows for spill preparedness and responses to be tailored to the level and types of risk in a given region based on certain factors such as marine conditions, environmental sensitivities, tanker size, and traffic levels.

This new and improved response planning approach will replace the current regime where private sector response organizations are mandated to maintain the same response capacity across Canada. Our government is seizing an opportunity to ensure the appropriate frameworks and safeguards are in place and enhanced to protect our environment now and for generations to come.

This new area response planning process will be piloted in four initial areas: the southern portion of British Columbia; Saint John and the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick; Port Hawkesbury in Nova Scotia; and the St. Lawrence Seaway from Quebec City to Anticosti Island, Quebec.

As one can imagine, transitioning to an area response planning approach is a significant undertaking. This is why we are focusing significant effort on the planning process to ensure the pilot projects successfully demonstrate the future of our world-class tanker safety system.

The Canadian Coast Guard and our federal colleagues acknowledge that we cannot develop the area response plans alone. To this end, beginning in 2015, a series of engagement activities will be planned to ensure stakeholders' views are reflected in the process.

The Canadian Coast Guard is the lead federal agency in developing the local area response plans, using a collaborative approach to involve aboriginal communities, other levels of government, and a broad range of local stakeholders.

Safety is the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard. In fact, Canada has one of the most advanced and comprehensive search and rescue systems in the world and is regularly consulted by other countries seeking advice and training on how to establish and maintain a system as effective and efficient as ours. The Canadian system is made up of multiple layers that provide an effective response capacity to any search and rescue incident within Canada and our surrounding waters.

● (1205)

The Canadian Coast Guard and National Defence are the principal pillars of the federal system. They provide the primary response to aeronautical and maritime emergencies with specialized equipment and highly trained professionals who remain ready to respond to incidents 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

The Canadian Coast Guard continues to maintain a maritime rescue sub-centre in Quebec City which provides bilingual search and rescue coordination services for mariners in distress. The search and rescue system can be activated by the professional search and rescue coordinators at any of the three joint rescue coordination centres in Canada. These search and rescue coordinators are highly trained and can coordinate additional response capacity from other government resources, the highly committed volunteers of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, and commercial vessels and aircraft in the vicinity of mariners in distress.

*Business of Supply*

The final but no less important piece of the search and rescue system is the multitude of plans and exercises that ensure that all the layers of Canada's search and rescue regime are ready to respond effectively and efficiently to real-life distress situations. The federal government continues to invest in the assets and the modernizing of systems to ensure the ongoing high level of service that Canadians expect and deserve. Billions of dollars have been invested in new Coast Guard, naval, and air force assets that will not only ensure the present level of service but also improve our capacity and capabilities to respond to incidents anywhere in Canada well into the future.

Finally, the federal search and rescue system regularly reviews and re-evaluates Canada's capacity and capability in relation to the risk. This entails working closely with our provincial and private partners to ensure that our plans are up to date and as comprehensive as possible to serve and protect all mariners in Canadian waters.

In closing, the Government of Canada will continue to support the brave men and women of the Canadian Coast Guard by equipping them with the resources required to protect Canadians and our environment.

It is exactly because of initiatives like these that I cannot support the motion brought forward by my colleague today.

• (1210)

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about the capacity of the Canadian Coast Guard. On the west coast the Conservative government has shut down the Kitsilano station, which was the busiest station in the country. British Columbians were extremely angered about this decision. There was a huge outpouring of support for the station, yet it fell on deaf ears. As if that was not enough, the Conservative government has now also shut down five MCTS centres on the coast.

I agree with the member's comments about the Canadian Coast Guard's search and rescue capabilities. However, if it is stripped of the resources that are needed to do the job, how is it going to get the job done?

**Mr. Rodney Weston:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I have worked very closely over the years on the fisheries and oceans committee. I certainly enjoy working with him.

With regard to his question, I think I outlined it very specifically in my speech when I said that we have invested \$31 million over the next five years when it comes to world-class tanker safety systems. That is what we are committed to. We are committed to ensuring that the Coast Guard has the tools it needs to do the job that we ask of it. We would not ask it to do any more than it can do without having the proper tools in place. We are continuing to invest in that purpose.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for the mess that happened with the ruling of the court. I will again quote the ruling of the Superior Court of Quebec, which is very striking.

[*Translation*]

This is what paragraph 103 says:

The [Quebec] minister then decided that an opinion from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' science branch was required. That opinion was not obtained.

There it is, in black and white. Here is what paragraph 106 says:

...nobody from TransCanada or DFO's science branch answered the [Government of Quebec's] perfectly legitimate questions about whether carrying out the work on the dates proposed by the proponent could cause a significant disturbance or have a significant impact on marine mammals...

[*English*]

Is it good federalism to not work with their counterparts to know that what they would do would hurt the environment and the economy? This is the question. I hope I will have an answer before the end of the day.

**Mr. Rodney Weston:** Mr. Speaker, the member's question was very specifically related to the injunction brought forward by the Quebec Superior Court. I want to point out very clearly that this court case was in regard to provincial laws and provincial officials. It has nothing to do with DFO or DFO's process. We are confident that DFO's process is diligent, thorough, and based on the best available science.

• (1215)

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think what has been lost sight of in this motion is the human factor and the importance of the natural resource sector to our economy, especially in some of the areas in eastern Canada and the Maritimes.

Could my hon. friend talk about the positive economic benefits that would result if this project were to go ahead?

**Mr. Rodney Weston:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is no doubt aware, my area is very excited about the possibility of this energy east pipeline project. We are excited about the construction of a marine terminal in our area because we know the value of this industry. We know the value to the economy in our local area. We have seen it. We have the largest refinery in all of Canada in Saint John, New Brunswick. We have the Canaport marine shipping terminal, which brings oil into and out of the Bay of Fundy. Over 400 tankers a year have been traversing the Bay of Fundy for over 40 years now without incident, so we know how to get the job done. We know that those jobs bring real economic benefit to our region, and we are excited.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government relies on the scientific expertise of our fisheries biologists and researchers to ensure the effective management, sustainable development, and protection of our aquatic resources.

Our government has ensured that funding to science has remained consistent in recent years. DFO has made a number of important investments, such as refurbishment of over a dozen laboratories, construction of three science vessels for the Coast Guard, mapping of the continental shelf for Canada's UNCLOS submission, support to commercial fishing in the Arctic, research to support a sustainable aquaculture sector, and research on oil spill behaviour and effects.

*Business of Supply*

I would be remiss if I did not mention one of my favourite programs, the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program, which provides \$25 million to work with local communities to improve, protect, and enhance fisheries habitat. The funds will be expended on some 400 fisheries conservation projects across the country, surely a remarkable achievement.

Our government is committed to making sure this science is accessible to Canadians and that our record is solid. For example, over the past two years, DFO scientists participated in more than 600 media interviews in addition to approximately 1,000 science-based media inquiries in writing. That is some muzzling.

As well, DFO issues approximately 300 publications each year, documenting science advice and government research for the management of Canada's fisheries and oceans, and our government will continue to make decisions based on the best science available and ensure that it is accessible to Canadians.

A key component of DFO's science program is the peer review process. This is a fundamental principle that allows scientists to thoroughly challenge and validate scientific information and associated conclusions.

At DFO there is a rigorous peer review process in place. DFO's Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat coordinates the peer review of all scientific advice for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. This process is transparent, as all of DFO's science advice is published to its website and made publicly available to Canadians.

DFO is well aware of the importance of the St. Lawrence beluga, most notably for the tourism and whale-watching industries.

Belugas in Canadian waters have been grouped into seven populations, and six of them live in the Arctic. I should note that in my home province of Manitoba, every summer thousands of belugas gather in the Churchill River. I would recommend to members, if they have the opportunity, to go and see this remarkable natural sight. The remaining beluga population lives in the St. Lawrence Estuary.

The beluga is a typical cold-water marine mammal. It has a long life expectancy, bears young at an older age, and produces relatively few young. An adult beluga can weigh up to 1,900 kilograms and grow to between 2.5 and 4.5 metres in length.

The beluga whale is a predator. Its diet consists of many species of fish and invertebrates. In the St. Lawrence estuary, there are a number of key species available to it as prey, including Atlantic herring, sand lance, squid, capelin, Atlantic cod, hake, and redfish.

Our government has done and will continue to do considerable work on the beluga whale and on the St. Lawrence population in particular. For example, fisheries researchers do regular monitoring and assessment of this population. As recently as the fall of 2013, DFO scientists have been reviewing the status of the population. To continue work on studying this population, DFO conducted a population survey in the summer of 2014, and the results will be available in 2015. This information will allow DFO scientists to track any possible trends in population growth or decline.

When a population assessment is completed, DFO scientists also look at the various factors that may affect the population. These factors include food availability and environmental conditions.

This is clearly a complex ecosystem, which is why DFO scientists are working on important research questions to increase our knowledge of this species. DFO has also supported a long-term necropsy program for beluga whales conducted by the University of Montreal. This information will allow DFO to better understand the cause of any beluga mortality, and any results will be considered in future DFO science advice.

• (1220)

Conscious of the importance of achieving recovery objectives for the St. Lawrence beluga and conscious that a growing and healthy population is key to the species' recovery, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans initiated a research project to investigate the birth rate in wild female beluga. To support management decisions, DFO scientists analyze the most recent data available and, to the best of their ability, aim to provide the best available science advice, using their data and the data of others, while at the same time factoring in uncertainty.

Over the years, DFO scientists have produced dozens of scientific publications on the St. Lawrence beluga covering all aspects of its biology, such as its distribution, abundance, population trends, diet, key habitat use, cause of mortality, recovery potential, and many more. In addition, DFO scientists, as well as many researchers from other federal departments and academia, have added and continue to add to our knowledge of the St. Lawrence ecosystem and factors affecting it. This information is accessible and used by DFO when providing advice related to the beluga whale.

Our government is focused on taking real action to protect beluga whales. Last spring, based on DFO's expert advice, strict conditions and mitigation measures were given to TransCanada to adhere to in order to undertake exploratory drilling and seismic testing.

Such conditions included a requirement for an exclusion zone of 500 metres, meaning that all work was required to stop if a whale was observed in this area. Beyond 500 metres, the sound level is too low to cause harm to marine mammals.

Another important condition with regard to seismic work was to cease operations by April 30, before the whales return to the area.

We have been clear that we are focused on ensuring that projects are safe for Canadians and the environment. Based on the expert science advice available, our government set strict conditions for work and ensured they were followed. The science work done at DFO on the beluga whale is substantial, and our government is confident in the quality and value of this work. The work is transparent and available to all Canadians, either in publications and science journals or on the DFO website.

Today I have demonstrated the critical role that expert transparent advice has with our government when it comes to the management of fisheries. This expert science is the backbone of all management decisions taken. DFO will continue to add to Canada's understanding of the St. Lawrence beluga population and the factors affecting it in order to ensure that this species continues to thrive for the enjoyment of future generations of Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about an issue that is very important to me. I would like to know more about his thoughts on this issue. He talked about the beluga, a species found in several places in North America.

I would like to know if he is aware that, even though the beluga is present in other regions, over the years, the St. Lawrence beluga has become dependent on the habitat it currently occupies. Losing this species will mean a loss to the biodiversity and fisheries resources there. No other belugas will replace them. The St. Lawrence belugas do not have the same behaviours or appearance as other species of beluga elsewhere in North America.

• (1225)

[English]

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** Mr. Speaker, I am very well aware of the difference in beluga populations across Canada, having done fisheries and marine mammal work in the eastern Arctic myself over a number of years.

Of course species depend on their habitats. One of the key measures that we use is to ensure that any industrial activity is done under very strict guidelines, such as the 500-metre exclusion zone and those kinds of things.

For example, this summer I happened to be on Vancouver Island, on Georgia Strait. I saw whales, a lot of boating activity, and whale-watching tours, and they are all conducted under the same rules. The whales are fine, and the whale-watching industry is fine. It is all about applying and enforcing the right standards so that we ensure both sustained economic development and sound environmental protection.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in its decision to issue an injunction to stop the drilling off Cacouna, the Superior Court of Quebec has said that the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans refused to provide the evidence that was being asked for. In fact, it said that instead of answering the two questions posed by the Quebec government, all it did was return the same information the provincial department already had and did not give it the information it was looking for.

### *Business of Supply*

Why is it that the federal government has so desperately failed to do its part in environmental protection in this case?

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important to be precise about what information was provided to the Quebec court.

DFO informed the Government of Quebec that it considered this work and the proposed mitigation measures did not violate the federal Species at Risk Act or the Fisheries Act.

This is a list of the information provided in this case: analysis under the federal Species at Risk; impact of underwater noise generated by the geotechnical study of the Beluga in the area of the point of Gros-Cacouna project; analysis under the federal Species at Risk Act; analysis of the proposed project geotechnical investigation; results of all previous work; results of various previous studies on the impact of noise on aquatic environment; and scientific response 2014/020 impact of geophysics Cacouna Harbour on the St. Lawrence belugas.

If that is not enough information, I do not know what is.

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my well-informed colleague for the information he has provided, which is very helpful.

The motion says that in the opinion of the House, this terminal must be rejected. What does he think about a motion for the House to consider about a project proposal that has not yet been submitted to the National Energy Board?

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in the House today, this is a clear example of the NDP's anti-resource development bias. The New Democrats want every natural resource development project in the country stopped, and this one is no exception. They go on and on saying that they want this condition, that they want the environment protected. All those things will be considered in due course during the environmental assessment process. Then they say that they want the project rejected, even before the project has been proposed. It is clearly ridiculous.

[Translation]

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

I would like to begin by commenting on what our esteemed Conservative Party colleague, the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, said. Frankly, I do not think that he gets the NDP point of view at all.

He is trying to convince us that DFO is doing its job and being perfectly transparent about the situation. However, the recent ruling regarding the port of Cacouna gives us good reason to doubt that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is stepping up.

This is an excerpt from paragraph 106 of that ruling:

They completely hid the fact that nobody from TransCanada or DFO's science branch answered their perfectly legitimate questions about whether carrying out the work on the dates proposed by the proponent could cause a significant disturbance or have a significant impact on marine mammals, and if so, what additional mitigation measures would help to reduce the disturbance or limit the impact to acceptable levels.

*Business of Supply*

That is from the court's ruling, and I put a lot more faith in that than in the Conservative government.

Let us go on to paragraph 108:

On the contrary:

...the evidence shows that Mr. de Lafontaine's letter does not constitute scientific advice from DFO's science branch; even the Attorney General of Canada said so;

Their own lawyers are telling us that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans did not do its job.

I hope the Conservatives will begin to understand that transparency is needed, because we cannot live with a government as secretive as this one. They would have us believe that they will do everything, that everything will be fine and that there is nothing to worry about. They will hide the project and perhaps reveal it one day, much like they did with the text of the European free trade agreement. They want us to wait months and months, while they try to hide everything that could be done, and once they have their talking points ready, they present us with a project as a done deal.

I am sorry, but the laws of Canada require the right of oversight. According to Fisheries and Oceans Canada criteria, we must proceed based on the precautionary principle. That is not the case here. Once again, the government is going ahead at all costs, regardless of the consequences.

I would like to come back to something that is put very well in the motion, and that is that the Port of Gros-Cacouna project must be rejected. This is clear when we look at the court ruling and what the experts have said. Those experts unfortunately do not work for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans; the DFO experts were muzzled. Nevertheless, people find other ways to have their say.

I want to acknowledge the very fine work done by the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and his commitment. He worked tirelessly for months to highlight the bill's shortcomings and to find out what the people in his region were thinking. Consulting Canadians is absolutely crucial. We need to take the time to ensure that projects comply with the rules. That is not the case here.

Let us look at some figures to understand the scope of this project. At this time, in eastern Canada, approximately 585 million barrels of petroleum products are transported by sea on the Atlantic Ocean every year. For the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the St. Lawrence estuary, it is about 178 million barrels a year, and those numbers are from 2011. The Port of Gros-Cacouna project could easily add another one million barrels a day.

What is more, another project is being proposed for the Belledune region, not far from my riding. In that case, we are talking about another 400 million barrels a day. The amount of oil that will transit through the Gulf of St. Lawrence is expected to triple in the next three years, but no real studies have been done to determine whether this can be done without harming the environment and the existing natural resources.

In my region, the two major industries are fishing and tourism.

● (1230)

By all accounts, if ever there is a spill involving all these millions of barrels of oil in my region, we can forget about developing our natural resources.

I would like the Conservatives to understand that oil is not the only natural resource. Back home, we depend on the forestry industry and the fishery. I would also like to point out that even the belugas are a natural resource. Indeed, thanks to them, the tourism industry generates roughly \$160 million a year.

There are so many industries in the region that we must proceed with caution. I do not understand why the Conservatives fail to see that we must take this one step at a time and respect all the regions and all the industries.

People back home are very worried. They are talking about the oil that will be shipped by the seaway, which will jeopardize the fishery and tourism, and they are talking about the vast quantities of oil that will be shipped by railway. Unfortunately, the Conservatives do not want to invest in that railway, but that is another story.

If we talk about railways and rail safety, we should start by examining all exports flowing through eastern Canada, because the Conservatives want oil to flow through the Keystone XL pipeline.

The Keystone XL pipeline is a very important project that the Americans have very little appetite for, to the point that the U.S. president seems to want to block it. However, the energy east pipeline is even more important than Keystone XL. We must therefore take the time to get the facts right about all aspects of these projects. We should not accept the first proposed port, such as Cacouna. Why is an oil project of this magnitude not subject to a real study and real due diligence? That was not the case for the project proposed by the Conservatives, the project that TransCanada proposed. The time has come for the Conservatives to be more transparent.

The Conservatives say that we cannot debate today a project that has not been submitted to the National Energy Board. Quite frankly, they should perhaps equip themselves with better tools. Members will recall that, two years ago, with Bill C-38, the Conservatives thought it was a good idea to ignore many of the precautionary principles that apply to the fishing industry and the oil industry. We should have left the triggers in the law. Today, the Conservatives are saying that there was no trigger and the study was not carried out. Had Bill C-38 not changed environmental laws, I suspect that today there would have to be a study done by the appropriate bodies. Today, that is the responsibility of the National Energy Board. This is rather illogical given that this board is responsible for the smooth transportation of energy. On the one hand, it will promote energy transportation and, on the other, it is supposed to be our watchdog in that regard.

The Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board is very uncomfortable with this mandate, which consists of being both watchdog and proponent. It is very difficult to wear both hats at the same time.

*Business of Supply*

I hope the Conservatives will take the opportunity to examine Canada's energy industry as a whole to consider new ways of investing in other types of energy. It is about time they invested in green energy. I would like this government to study that option. In my region, we have invested a great deal in wind energy. It is very cost-effective and very green. It is a sustainable and renewable form of energy that contributes very little to greenhouse gas emissions.

I hope the Conservative government will take note of today's motion, take a step back and take the time to reflect on the kind of Canada we all want. Its proposal is not consistent with the Canada I want to live in.

• (1235)

[English]

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a quick comment on wind energy and its environmental soundness. I guess my friend has not heard about the thousands and thousands of bird strikes caused by wind turbines, which is a clear negative environmental impact.

I would like to focus on something the NDP leader said. As early as 2012, in a speech to the Canadian Club of Toronto, the Leader of the Opposition called the shipment of western oil to eastern Canada, a “pro-business, common sense solution”. I just saw a pig fly.

Just a few weeks ago, while attempting to clarify the NDP's position on energy east, the member for Terrebonne—Blainville said, “We simply haven't taken a position yet. We will wait for the project to be submitted to the National Energy Board to do the homework and properly study the file. Then we'll make our position clear”.

Why has the NDP put forward a motion to reject the project prior to its submission to the National Energy Board?

• (1240)

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, once again the government tries to hide all of its dirty activities when in fact it should be presenting its real thoughts and real proposals to the Canadian public. We have to go to the courts to force the government to be transparent. This is absurd.

This House of Commons is supposed to be the place where the government brings its plans forward to the Canadian public for an airing out. The government does not want to do this. It likes to do everything in the back rooms, hidden from public view. That is why we have to go to court. That is why so many people in this country have to continuously go to the courts to fight the government.

What I would like to know from that member is why the Conservatives do not support the natural resources in my riding. Why do they keep cutting back fisheries and oceans investments in my riding? Why do they not support the wharves in my riding that are falling to pieces, because they do not want to invest?

It is about time to see the Conservatives start to invest in natural resources so that businesses in my region can actually grow and prosper.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear my hon. colleague's and other members' speeches earlier today.

[Translation]

The New Democrats said that they are opposed to this project and they expressed their concerns about the belugas. I express the same concern.

However, I would like to know what their position is. I googled it and already found three instances where their leader said he was in favour of the project. He said so in September 2012, March 2013 and February 2014.

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Halifax West for his question. Of course, Canada's energy projects must benefit Canadians overall. Every project is unique. Projects must always be assessed on the basis of what they can offer. They must be assessed according to the applicable legislation.

The proposed Gros-Cacouna oil terminal does not meet the obligation of providing benefits to Canadians. That is why we are introducing a motion against this project today. We hope that the government will vote in favour of our motion.

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my friend talked about how some of these deals get put together and questioned the validity of some of the deals.

My understanding from people I have heard is that part of the reason for it being Gros-Cacouna was the fact that the company involved with moving the oil was concerned about dealing with the Irving family in New Brunswick.

That port is open all year round. It does not freeze over. There is not the risk of the tides that come into the Saint Lawrence.

Do you see that this played any part?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before I go to the member, I will remind this hon. member and others that you cannot refer directly to your colleagues. A device that is increasingly used in the chamber is for members to say, “Mr. Speaker, through you to my colleague, why are you doing this or why are you doing that?” That is not acceptable.

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, certainly all of the projects we have in front of us are for transporting bitumen outside of this country in its pure form.

[Translation]

We are talking about a raw product that should be processed in Canada. Being able to send the oil to processing plants or refineries would already make the project more appealing. The project in Cacouna is not a processing project. Clearly, the idea is to just export the crude oil. It offers no benefits to Canadians and we are opposed to it.

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this debate on the excellent motion moved by my colleague from Drummond. I want to thank him for making it possible for us to have this debate in the House. This is a very important debate, because the bill on the Gros-Cacouna oil terminal is a controversial one. Quebeckers and Canadians who have an interest in the project have a lot of questions and concerns.

*Business of Supply*

We have been trying to get answers from the government all along, without success, of course. The government refuses to share the scientific information and is desperately trying to hide the facts. Furthermore, we cannot even have a meaningful debate in this House.

For months, the NDP has been trying to get information and answers from the government about the potential environmental impact of the drilling and the geophysics work that was going on until the Superior Court of Quebec issued an injunction and put an end to that work.

My colleagues have asked a number of questions in the House, and motions were moved in the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development and in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, in order to force the government to consider the concerns of scientists and Quebecers.

However, we always get the same old rhetoric and never get a real answer. The government does not seem in any way concerned that scientists are being muzzled and that there is no good information out there that would give us a real idea of the impact this project would have.

Even after the Superior Court of Quebec issued an injunction, the Conservatives refused to admit that they had made a mistake by not sending the information requested by the Government of Quebec. Furthermore, they refuse to provide the information that was requested. The battle continues.

Frankly, I think this government's attitude is deplorable. It claims to want co-operative federalism and claims to want to work with provincial and territorial premiers. That is not what we are seeing here. Honestly, co-operation and collaboration are nowhere to be seen in most files managed by the government. In a democracy like ours, that is really unfortunate.

When it comes to developing our natural resources, we must always keep in mind that any development must be based on the principles of sustainable development. These basic principles should be applied to every natural resource project in the country. There again, this does not seem to be of any concern to the government, which is very unfortunate.

The Cacouna oil terminal project aims to export crude oil. We will be exporting our raw natural resources abroad so that other governments and people can benefit from them. There are no plans to process or refine those resources here at home. We are potentially exporting many value-added jobs while jeopardizing a significant part of the economy in and around Cacouna, including the tourism and fishing industries. All of that would be jeopardized simply to promote the interests of the oil industry, that great friend of the Conservatives.

I do not understand that attitude. The Conservatives constantly claim to be champions of the economy, but have they genuinely looked at the project before us and its implications? What are the real benefits for the Canadian economy? I do not see any and neither do my NDP colleagues. I would be very surprised if the Conservatives were able to present any relevant or worthwhile arguments proving the economic viability and necessity of this project.

The Port of Gros-Cacouna, where they plan to build the oil terminal, is one of the worst spots on the St. Lawrence to do it. The St. Lawrence River is teeming with marine biodiversity. There are all sorts of species of marine mammals. Many people talk about the beluga because it is a true emblem of the river. Unfortunately, the beluga's numbers are declining. The survival of this species is in jeopardy. That does not seem to affect the Conservatives, but Quebecers are very concerned about what will happen to this marine mammal. The animal is familiar to us all because each of us has had the opportunity to admire it at one time or another.

• (1245)

When I was younger, I had an opportunity to go and see the beluga whales in Tadoussac with my parents. This is a trip that many families in Quebec and elsewhere have probably taken to enjoy the natural resources the river has to offer.

Perhaps, quite simply, the Conservatives are ready to put all of this in danger because they are being pressured by their friends in the oil sector. There is no guarantee of any substantial benefits for the Canadian economy. People currently want to build an oil terminal in the very spot where female belugas give birth. There are only about 880 belugas left, and they want to make it even more difficult for the species to reproduce. The government does not care and continues to ignore the warnings from the experts we hear from regularly, the ones not connected with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, at least, who testify regularly to warn the government about the dangers of this initiative for a threatened species like the beluga whales.

Ten baby belugas have already been found dead this year. Unfortunately, their carcasses washed up on the banks. We know that the species is affected by noise. Developing the Cacouna oil terminal means years of drilling and dynamiting. We know that this will affect the beluga population. With that information in mind, I do not see how we can, in good conscience, move forward with a project like this. The government's attitude is completely unacceptable. It is closing its eyes and ignoring the scientific evidence that has been presented to it many times; it is even trying to hide that information from the Government of Quebec and Canadians.

I regularly hear the Conservatives criticize us for not attending the submission of the final project to the National Energy Board. Personally, I am wondering how a private company can get this government's approval for exploratory drilling before an environmental assessment worthy of its name could be completed or before the final project itself was submitted to the National Energy Board. I would like my Conservative colleagues to think about this. They have not considered all the data, either, or if they have, they quickly shelved it because it did not suit them.

I am especially disappointed in the Liberal Party's position on this. Just a month ago the Liberal Party leader said that we must move forward with the oil terminal project in Cacouna. Move forward. Earlier today, we heard the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville try to interpret the member for Papineau's comments and convince us that he did not really say what he said. Canadians are not fools. They know where they stand with the Liberal Party. They know full well that they cannot trust the Liberals to protect the St. Lawrence and the belugas. I think that is really too bad.

*Business of Supply*

However, I am very proud of the work that was accomplished by all my colleagues on the ground, the members of the region. I will not name their ridings, since the riding names in that region are rather long. A number of my colleagues met with various stakeholders and organized information sessions to ensure that municipal representatives and local residents could have good information that was neutral. They invited academics to inform the public about this issue. We can all agree that neither the government nor the company behind the project will try to provide neutral and objective information to Canadians.

Obviously, the proposal to set up an oil terminal in an ecosystem as fragile and invaluable as the St. Lawrence River, especially in an area that is so vital to marine mammals such as belugas, is totally unacceptable. The principles of sustainable development are being thrown out the window. The NDP simply cannot sign off on some project that includes plans to build an oil terminal in Cacouna. Protecting the environment and the interests of Quebecers is more important to us than anything else.

• (1250)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I already mentioned the fact that the leader of the NDP has expressed his support for this project on several occasions. Today, the comments made by the members of the NDP show that they are opposed to exporting any oil from Canada unless it has been refined in Canada. The problem is that the industry and even environmentalists have indicated that that will not work. Economically, it is not possible to do all of that in Canada.

In cases where this is possible, the Liberals are certainly in favour of building refineries and creating jobs in Canada. The problem is that a number of Canadian refineries have already closed because of economic problems. North America is one of the few continents where the demand for petroleum products is dropping.

Does the NDP believe that \$10 billion should be spent on building one or more refineries? What is the party's position?

• (1255)

**Ms. Éloise Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I find it rather unfortunate that I have to once again explain what the Leader of the Opposition said. He was very clear.

The NDP is in favour of shipping western Canadian oil to eastern Canada, where our refineries are located, in order to create jobs. That is the basic principle that we stand for. However, an oil port project such as the one in Gros-Cacouna threatens marine species that are already threatened and does not take into account the St. Lawrence River ecosystem.

We therefore cannot support such a project. That is the basis of our argument. Before we consider exporting value-added jobs and our natural resources, we need to take the time to develop projects that will benefit the Canadian economy.

That is not what we are seeing with the Gros-Cacouna oil port project.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I strongly agree with my Liberal colleague across the way. If refineries were to be expanded in Canada, they

already would have been built. Refining is a low-margin, highly expensive business. For my colleague to insist that we have to value add every export product we have, that is like saying we will not export wheat out of western Canada, only bread, which is clearly ridiculous.

In the member's comments about the natural resource industry and those big, evil energy companies and oil corporations, I hope she realizes that about 450,000 families from right across the country, some in her constituency, are supported by the Alberta oil sands industry. Why is she so against the workers who make their livelihoods in the natural resources and energy industries?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éloise Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I am astounded to hear such a thing from a Conservative government member who rises in the House day after day to attack the rights of workers. To be honest, I think it is shameful that this member is making such hypocritical comments.

The NDP is asking the government to create jobs so that families will have enough money to live on. We are not talking about creating part-time jobs, which is what the Conservatives have been doing from the outset.

Furthermore, they are attacking workers' rights and trying to destroy the labour movement here in Canada. Quite frankly, the Conservative government has nothing to teach us about how Canadian workers should be treated.

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP is fortunate to have quite a youthful caucus, and a lot of the people in my riding are under the age of 35.

My colleague is also very active in the youth caucus. The regional Conservatives launched a trial balloon in my riding because they really want to persuade people that, in the interest of the economy, it would be best, believe it or not, to get rid of "those damned belugas".

I hear her. Anyone who looks at me can see that I have quite a few grey hairs. I am no longer in the youth caucus. However, I would like to hear from my colleague who, unlike me, might have another 50 years to live.

How does she feel about living in a country where people say that kind of thing?

**Ms. Éloise Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing I want to say is that I sure hope I have more than 50 years to live.

Frankly, when I hear statements like that, I feel the way I feel every day about this government. I think their policies are discouraging.

I do not yet have children, but I hope to. It leaves me speechless to see the state the Conservatives want to leave this country in. It is horrifying to see them do these things, to see them gut all of the environmental protection provisions we had and undermine Canada's international reputation.

I could go on about this for hours. For my generation and new generations to come, this is just discouraging.

*Business of Supply*

• (1300)

[English]

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Wetaskiwin.

I appreciate this opportunity to provide the House with an overview of the role our government plays in ensuring the ongoing sustainability of our waterways and oceans, while facilitating the responsible resource development that is creating jobs in communities across this great country.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is committed to safeguarding Canada's healthy and productive aquatic ecosystems, which provide sustainable resources to Canadians. DFO's programs and policies contribute to the conservation, protection and sustainability of Canada's aquatic resources. DFO's efforts are guided by three important pieces of legislation, the Oceans Act, the Fisheries Act and the Species at Risk Act, which together give us the tools we need for effective management of our oceans and inland waters.

This effective stewardship is important to Canadians. Our country is blessed with an abundant supply of natural aquatic resources contributing to the social, environmental and economic well-being of Canadians. By sustaining productive ecosystems, our government is focused on supporting commercial, recreational and aboriginal fishing, thereby helping to maintain economic prosperity for current and future generations.

Under the Oceans Act, we manage Canada's three oceans and the largest coastline in the world. Under the act, we are protecting ecologically and biologically important resources through marine protected areas.

Working together with governments and stakeholders, Canada has adopted an integrated approach to managing ocean activities. Integrated oceans management is a modern approach to managing Canada's ocean resources. It is a collaborative way of making decisions on how Canada's marine resources can best be developed and protected. This approach manages activities to ensure a healthy marine environment and takes into account all ocean users.

In 2012, our government made important changes to the Fisheries Act to ensure the productivity and long-term sustainability of our fisheries, an industry that supports millions of jobs and contributed over \$10 billion to the Canadian economy in 2010. Today, this revised legislation is yielding real results. The fisheries protection provisions of the act provide new tools to better protect Canada's commercial, recreational and aboriginal fisheries and the ecosystem that supports them. These fisheries are the backbone of many rural and coastal communities.

Our changes make penalties tougher to punish those who actually break the law by causing serious harm to fisheries, and require individuals to report violations. In addition, we will now be able to identify ecologically significant areas that require additional protection.

In short, the fisheries protection program better positions Canada to regulate real threats to fish and the habitats that support Canada's recreational, commercial and aboriginal fisheries.

DFO continues to work with its provincial, municipal, industrial and various other stakeholder partners to do their part where it is best suited to do so. This approach is based on clear concepts that are well rooted in science. Our government is committed to focusing on protection of fisheries and their habitat, while managing routine, everyday activities that are known to affect the productivity of Canada's fisheries.

Under the third legislation, the Species at Risk Act, DFO works with partners to monitor the status of aquatic species at risk to prevent further declines in their numbers and set conservation objectives based on the best available science.

Given the variety and geographic distribution of protected species, the Species at Risk Act has the potential to involve many Canadians. Under SARA, Fisheries and Oceans Canada produces recovery strategies and action plans for aquatic species listed as "endangered" or "threatened".

These recovery strategies and action plans detail the specific steps that need to be taken to protect identified species. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is determined to work with the communities and people in these areas to ensure that strategies and plans are practical, effective and in keeping with the sound fisheries management approach.

• (1305)

DFO also works with provinces, territories and other partners to prevent aquatic invasive species from entering Canada's waterways, where they can cause harm to natural ecosystems in lakes, rivers and oceans and pose significant threats to Canadian fisheries. Invasive species can radically alter habitat, rendering it inhospitable for native species.

Canada has 20% of the world's fresh water and one of the longest coastlines, thereby placing it at high risk from invasive species. Our government committed to fighting the spread of invasive species and remediating the impact of the species already in Canada. Communities from coast to coast rely on fishing, which must be protected from invasive species.

Our government is working to prevent new introductions through research, monitoring and the development of regulations. The most effective approach to dealing with these invasive species involves managing the pathways through which invasive species enter and spread through Canadian waters. For aquatic species, these pathways are shipping, recreational and commercial boating, the use of live bait, unauthorized introductions, and canals and water diversions.

*Business of Supply*

DFO incorporates environmental, economic and social factors in decision making regarding invasive species. DFO is committed to working co-operatively with all stakeholders and using science-based techniques to assess and manage the risk of aquatic invasive species.

Prevention of harmful new invasions is a key priority as it is the most cost effective way to deal with the problem. Once species are established, the task becomes far more complex and costly.

Our government is taking action. For example, DFO works closely with the Province of Ontario and our American partners on the issue of Asian carp. Our government is investing \$17.5 million over five years on prevention, early warning, rapid response and management activities.

Just as our efforts to contain aquatic invasive species will rely on scientific research, strong fishery science remains the backbone of every fish management decision we make as a government. We will continue to protect our ecosystems and fisheries through modern and scientifically-based methods.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada conducts research to learn how to prevent, mitigate or adapt to a broad range of impacts on Canada's aquatic ecosystems. This research informs planning for activities such as shipping, energy development and mining projects in Canada's north. DFO's fishery officers monitor and enforce compliance with federal legislation and regulations designed to protect Canada's aquatic ecosystems and the fisheries they sustain, and the Coast Guard responds to all reports of marine pollution incidents in Canadian waters.

Our government's actions and decisions are based on sound science, research and engagement with stakeholders from across Canada to ensure long-term benefits for all Canadians.

Our government is focused on the responsible management of Canada's underwater resources and ecosystems. We have taken real action to protect the environment and create jobs in coastal communities, and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to comments made by my colleague, the member for Halifax, who spoke about value-added jobs, ecological integrity and at risk species like belugas. She also spoke about the importance of habitat impacts.

The Conservatives have done away with the Navigable Waters Protection Act, gutted the Fisheries Act, especially when it comes to habitat protection, and completely repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

My colleague across the way knows the importance of resource projects and she also knows they impact wildlife and wildlife habitat. I know she is concerned about that. I sat with her on fisheries committee and I heard her raise those issues.

If the government knows that a species at risk, a beluga nursery for example, is right where a terminal and pipeline project is proposed, why would it not put that terminal somewhere else?

• (1310)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague the member opposite and I sat together on the fisheries and oceans committee and

I enjoyed his input as we talked about the different issues that came before that committee.

When we are talking about critical habitat, we need to understand the definition of "critical habitat", which is the habitat that is necessary for the survival and recovery of a particular species. The critical habitat for the St. Lawrence belugas was identified when DFO produced the recovery strategy in 2012. There has been a tremendous amount of work done on this issue. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is currently completing the process to ensure the legal protection of this habitat; so that is happening. However, critical habitat for the belugas in the St. Lawrence is also time sensitive. It is from June to October when it is used by this species.

The designation of critical habitat does not result in the prohibition of any activity at all times. It is the destruction of critical habitat that is prohibited, not the activity. The effect of each activity is evaluated individually.

We do have protections in place for critical habitat. The belugas in the St. Lawrence fall under that. We do know that under the federal Species at Risk Act it is forbidden to kill, harm, or harass St. Lawrence belugas.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my hon. colleague's speech today. I would like to ask her about what was said by the Superior Court of Quebec in its decision to impose an injunction in this case, because it reminds me of what we heard a few days ago from the Commissioner of the Environment, who expressed deep concern about the muzzling of federal government scientists in many departments across the government. Then we have the decision of the Superior Court of Quebec. I do not know if the member has read it. The only copy I found so far was in French, and I am not sure if she reads French or not. However, I encourage her to obtain it or have it translated, because it makes it very clear that the provincial government in Quebec repeatedly asked the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for expert information, the kind of scientific opinion from real scientists who are experts on belugas, about this project and did not get it. It asked over and over and did not get it.

Why are the Conservatives muzzling their scientists?

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing we need to discuss is the fact that the Quebec Superior Court injunction was a court case regarding provincial laws and provincial officials and really has nothing to do with DFO or DFO processes. However, we firmly believe that DFO's process is diligent and thorough, and we know that it is based on the best available scientific knowledge.

*Business of Supply*

We also know that DFO informed the Government of Quebec that it considered that this work and the proposed mitigation measures do not violate the federal Species at Risk Act or the Fisheries Act. There was a letter sent on August 8. I think that has been referred to previously here today in these discussions. That letter went from DFO to the Quebec officials. There were several other documents that went as well. There was an analysis under the federal Species at Risk Act, there were results of previous studies on the impact of noise on aquatic environments, and there other issues. Therefore, there certainly was correspondence and discussion with the officials from Quebec.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to speak to this issue and set the record straight on a number of these issues.

I would like to thank my colleague the member for Sarnia—Lambton for her excellent speech and her excellent answers to the questions. Her riding of Sarnia—Lambton and my riding of Wetaskiwin share many commonalities, including great petrochemical refineries and those kinds of installations, as well as the oil and gas sector and all of the well-paying jobs that this part of the economy supports.

I am glad to be here to set the record straight on this important matter, raised by the member for Drummond. As most members know, Canada possesses one of the largest and most diverse energy supplies in the world. As an Albertan, I know this. Canada is the world's fifth-largest producer of natural gas, with technically recoverable resources estimated to be up to 1.5 trillion cubic feet. Canada is also punching above its weight when it comes to clean energy. It is the third-largest producer of hydroelectricity and the second-largest producer of uranium in the world.

However, of all our assets, perhaps none is more important to Canada than its vast oil reserves. Canada is the world's fifth-largest producer of oil, with the world's third-largest proven reserves. There are 173 billion barrels, of which 167 are in Alberta's oil sands. That is not the best news. As technology evolves, Canada's oil sands reserves could nearly double to over 300 billion barrels to become the largest oil reserve in the world.

As members know, natural resources are a huge part of Canada's economy. When we take direct and indirect impacts into account, the natural resource sector represents approximately 20% of Canada's gross domestic product, and energy resources are a huge part of that equation. Canada's oil sands are creating jobs and wealth right across the country. This strategic resource has attracted more than \$215 billion in capital investment and, of that, about \$175 billion is in the last 10 years alone.

While Canada's endowment of petroleum resources is immense, we have only one major customer, which is the United States. In fact, Canada currently exports nearly 100% of its natural gas and oil exports to our friends and neighbours south of the border.

The United States is now becoming awash in energy resources, and it is poised to become a net energy exporter itself. New energy discoveries have reshaped domestic production in the U.S., driving down the demands for Canadian energy resources. That is something that we just did not fathom here a few years ago.

While Canada will continue to be a key supplier to the U.S., there is a strategic imperative for our country to access new and growing markets. The growing demand for oil and gas and other resources in new markets such as China and India represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Canada.

The International Energy Agency now predicts that by the year 2035, the world will need a third more energy than is currently being consumed today. Non-OECD economies are forecast to account for over 90% of that energy demand growth, with China and India alone accounting for 49%. The world will need more oil and natural gas to drive global economic growth. It will raise living standards and lift millions out of poverty in these countries, and Canada is a safe and responsible supplier of energy.

Right now, the opportunities for growth are unlike anything we have seen in our history. According to analysis by Natural Resources Canada, there are hundreds of major resource projects currently under way or planned in Canada over the next 10 years. These projects represent a total investment of up to \$675 billion. Our government wants to ensure that every dollar of that potential is realized.

Expansion and diversification of our energy markets, both within Canada and globally, is a top priority for the Government of Canada. The Conservatives recognize that without the infrastructure needed to move our energy products to tidewater, our oil will be stranded. That is why we need to build pipelines going west, south, and east.

The numbers tell the story. In 2012, 82% of crude oil delivered to Atlantic Canada refineries and 93% of crude oil delivered to Quebec refineries was imported from countries like Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Angola. Our government welcomes, in principle, the prospect of transporting Canadian crude to consumers and refineries in eastern Canada and, ultimately, to new markets abroad. Perhaps most importantly, it would make our country less reliant on foreign oil.

Our government has been clear that projects can only proceed if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. That is precisely what responsible resource development is all about. It sends a clear signal that the Government of Canada is determined to protect public safety and the health of the environment based on sound science and world-class standards.

● (1315)

Looking at our record, we see we have instituted strict rules and regulations governing the development and shipment of products like oil and gas. All federal pipeline projects are subject to an independent and rigorous environmental assessment by the National Energy Board. We have also given the National Energy Board the necessary resources to increase annual inspections of pipelines by 50%. The board is also doubling the number of annual comprehensive safety audits to identify pipeline issues before incidents even occur.

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Equally important, the National Energy Board now has the authority to impose substantial financial penalties on companies that do not comply with safety and environmental regulations. It can levy fines of up to \$100,000 a day for as long as the infractions go unaddressed. However, we are not stopping there. We have announced plans to give the National Energy Board even greater authority, so we can strengthen incident prevention, preparedness, and response and liability and compensation.

Here is the bottom line. As I said, our government will only allow energy projects to proceed if they are proven safe for Canadians and for the environment. With our plan for responsible resource development, we have increased our protection of the environment and streamlined regulatory reviews. We have enhanced pipeline and tanker safety, and we are working to reach new markets for Canadian energy projects.

Therefore, subject to regulatory approval, our government supports energy infrastructure projects that will create jobs and generate economic growth in Canada now and for decades to come.

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I see what is going on in my own riding. The Conservatives have regularly sent up a trial balloon to advance a particular idea, that is, if there is no other way to eliminate the impediments to developing oil exports, then the belugas can die. If we add that to the many interventions by my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, which verge pretty close to this conclusion in public, it is clear that this trial balloon exists. There is development, we have a lot of oil, and if things have to go that way and some threatened species have to die, well, let them die.

I would like to know whether my colleague who has just spoken shares this opinion that, basically, if threatened species are preventing development, they should just die!

[*English*]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the member's comments about the member of Parliament for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, who I think is one of the most honourable, conscientious, conservation-minded, and environment-minded members that the House of Commons has ever seen. Any disparaging comments from the other side with regard to this individual will certainly not meet any good standing with me.

I have a zoology degree, and I have worked as a conservation officer and as a fisheries biologist in my home province of Alberta. I understand full well that one can have one's cake and eat it too when it comes to responsible resource development.

I enjoy the clean air, clean water, and clean land that I live on in my home province of Alberta, and I know full well that all the protections are given to species in Canada, whether it is through the Species at Risk Act, the Fisheries Act, or the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and that no project would go ahead, especially, when there are species and habitat that would be considered fragile or where there could be detrimental effects.

The problem with the entire motion we are discussing today, though, is that the NDP has already pre-positioned itself to oppose the project before the National Energy Board has even received an application, and that just underscores the complete ideological aversion it has to anything to do with oil and gas projects.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate a number of the comments the member has made, even though the overriding concern of Liberals is with regard to environmental issues. The beluga whale is of great concern. I come from the Prairies, and I know how important our resources are in terms of exports and how all of Canada benefits if we get this right.

For many people, whether they live inside or outside Quebec, there is an air of suspicion with regard to the government not basing decisions on science and fact. There is a genuine concern that the government is not doing its homework in ensuring that the environment is taken into consideration to the degree it should be.

I am wondering if the member would comment on what he believes his government is specifically doing to protect the interests, for example, of the beluga whale.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, the Species at Risk Act has a lot of provisions in it that would prevent the continuance of any activity that would threaten an endangered species or endangered population. This is common knowledge to members of Parliament here who choose to follow those things. Those kinds of protections are already in place.

We have invested in the National Energy Board. We have strengthened the provisions under the National Energy Board. There are many other things that we have done, whether it be tanker safety, double hulls, pipeline inspections, double wall pipelines when they go across areas where there are waterways. These are the kinds of things the government has done and has taken very seriously.

No member of Parliament wants to degrade the environment at the pure expense of growth. However, that does not mean we have to have the exact opposite ideology, which is what the NDP has and regrettably the leader of the Liberal Party has with his idea of a moratorium on tanker traffic on the west coast.

When we strand Canadian assets like oil and gas, it only serves the interests of those companies operating out of the Middle East, Venezuela, South America and the United States. It is about time members of Parliament served the interests of Canadians instead of these other countries.

● (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not say how pleased I am to speak on this issue, as I represent the beautiful riding of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, which is about 15 minutes up the road from Cacouna. The issue is therefore very important to me. I will be sharing my time with the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord.

*Business of Supply*

I would like to thank the member for Drummond, who introduced this motion, as well as the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, with whom I have had the pleasure of working on this issue, because it has been of great concern to our two ridings for a number of months already. We have worked diligently to find out what is involved in the project and learn about the economic and environmental issues associated with the Cacouna terminal.

All of this work has been carried out with the people of the area. We have communicated with the people, the media, the businesses concerned and environmental groups. Both of us have held eight information sessions on the energy east project, some of which dealt specifically with the Gros-Cacouna terminal.

The reason why I fully support the motion is that there will be environmental consequences that could be extremely serious, although I would not necessarily claim there will be extremely serious damage.

As everyone has been saying since this morning, the project is in an area that is a nursery for belugas in the St. Lawrence, a species that is at risk in this area. The work that has been done, beginning with the seismic surveys, has been subject to environmental assessments. Despite what government members are saying, there have been no proper studies or scientific opinions on the drilling activities. I will come back to this later.

Why do we believe the belugas' nursery and habitat are being unduly threatened? It is because we are well aware that the St. Lawrence Seaway is open to merchant shipping. Ships of this size, that will be travelling along a very tricky route through the Seaway, have drafts that have never before been seen in the St. Lawrence, particularly in this area.

For instance, Aframax tankers have a draft of 14 meters and the Suezmax vessels have a draft of 16 meters. Already, this should be ringing environmental alarm bells. Indeed, alarm bells have already been sounded by a number of beluga whale experts.

The issue of ballast waters must also be considered. These kinds of supertankers have to be empty when they enter the St. Lawrence to be able to take on cargo, so they fill their hulls with water at their point of departure. These ballast waters may be from southeast Asia or the Indian Ocean, we do not know. Ballast waters are used to weigh the ship down so it can sail more safely. Under Canadian law, these waters must be discharged before the ship enters the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the St. Lawrence estuary. However, for financial reasons, companies discharge ballast waters while continuing to sail and the ships can never fully get rid of the ballast.

That means that, year in and year out, a good 5,000 to 10,000 tonnes of the total of 60,000 tonnes of ballast water remain on these ships. The water is discharged at the port of arrival, along with any invasive species it may contain. The trip is repeated a number of times per week, per month and per year. There is a cumulative effect and it poses a threat to the St. Lawrence ecosystem.

I am going to talk about the possibility of an oil spill, not because I want to sound alarmist, but because it is a serious issue. Even in the case of small spills or leaks, our response capabilities are limited by

factors that are not so much human as natural. They include the strength of currents and tides, which reduce the timeframe within which effective action is possible. Furthermore, I am just talking about the summer and fall, when the weather is good.

• (1330)

In winter, the situation is worse. A number of scientists and experts on the St. Lawrence have estimated that, for technical reasons, our response capability would be virtually zero in the case of a spill or a leak in the St. Lawrence in the winter. For these reasons, the port of Cacouna is not the right port to choose for exporting crude bitumen. Ice cover forms quite early in the year in the St. Lawrence and it melts quite late the following year. For that reason, it is a very risky port. We opposed the Northern Gateway project because of the environmental risks, but also because of the geography of the area in question. The same thing applies here.

We probably would not be here if the government had done its science homework. I have heard a number of debates in the House about the muzzling of scientists and about the confusion spread by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and government members with regard to scientific opinions. What must be understood, and I mentioned it earlier, is that when it comes to the seismic surveys that were carried out last spring, the seismic surveys that did in fact have an impact on the beluga habitat, Fisheries and Oceans Canada did its work by asking the department's science branch to prepare a scientific opinion. The result was a 20-page scientific opinion drafted by six scientists who are experts on the beluga as an endangered species and on the St. Lawrence River. The work was carried out properly and the report indicated that there were risks but that they could be mitigated if certain conditions were met.

We are now in the drilling stage. Drilling was delayed because of the issue of the provincial permit. TransCanada made the decision following threats of an injunction. Then, exploratory drilling began in the fall. Obviously, Fisheries and Oceans Canada should have provided a scientific opinion for the drilling that would also take place, or was supposed to take place, during a period when belugas are found in that part of the river. However, instead of relying on the same approaches and the same scientists whose expertise it knew and who had provided entirely competent advice on seismic surveys, Fisheries and Oceans Canada decided to rely on a single biologist who was not from the department's science branch, who is not a beluga specialist, and who provided a scientific opinion that, instead of taking up 20 pages like the opinion for the seismic surveys, took up only two. Furthermore, this scientific opinion provided by a single biologist covered a period when drilling was not even going to take place. Drilling was supposed to occur this fall. The scientific opinion, or what the government likes to call a scientific opinion, covered the period from May 19 to August 21, 2014. It is outdated. However, that is what the department put forward as a scientific opinion. Contrary to what the government says and to what the various members say in their speeches or in answer to questions, the Superior Court decision regarding the injunction requested by the Quebec centre of environmental law focused on the government's refusal to provide a true scientific opinion.

*Business of Supply*

I do not want to spend all of my time on this point because I know I do not have much time left. However, paragraph 53 says the following:

...Mr. Kemp, contrary to the request regarding seismic work, did not see fit to forward the question to the science branch of his department.

That led the judge to note the following in paragraph 106 of her ruling—and this has already been quoted but the members of the government would do well to listen closely:

...the fact that nobody from TransCanada or DFO's science branch answered their perfectly legitimate questions about whether carrying out the work on the dates proposed by the proponent could cause a significant disturbance or have a significant impact on marine mammals...

Fisheries and Oceans Canada did not respond to this question. The department did not do its homework and is at the centre of this fiasco, which is embodied in the injunction granted by the Superior Court.

I will conclude by saying that, clearly, we are in favour of this motion. However, that does not mean that we are opposed to the project itself. The project could well continue without the Port of Gros-Cacouna. We will determine that once the project is tabled.

• (1335)

This is an extremely important issue for us. We did our homework; we did our research. We have looked at the economy and the environment. There is no doubt among those of us on this side of the House that the government is primarily responsible for this fiasco. We are also certain that we need to say no to making the port of Cacouna an oil terminal.

[*English*]

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was recently engaged in a by-election and was led to believe that the NDP policy on Canada east was that it supported it. It was not the candidate I was running against that delivered that information. It was the leader of the party, after meeting with the Premier of Saskatchewan.

Assuming that we are going to build and support Canada east, which still has to go through several regulatory processes, where would the NDP like that pipeline to land, and is it prepared to accept it being shipped from any shoreline in the Gulf of St. Lawrence?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

I think that he has misunderstood our leader's statement. Our leader mentioned that we were open to the possibility of a pipeline running from west to east. He never said yes to this specific project, just like he did not say yes to the Enbridge Line 9 project either. We are open to the idea, and we examine projects on a case-by-case basis.

In this case, we are examining the project, and we haven't made a decision on the pipeline itself, which should end at an unloading terminal in Saint John, New Brunswick. We will notify you when we see the project. However, in the case of the oil export terminal itself, since there will be no refinery in Cacouna, the NDP's response is no to a port in Cacouna. We will assess the rest of the project once we have had the chance to see it in its entirety.

[*English*]

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to follow up on a question asked by my colleague opposite. In his answer, the member said that the leader had said that he was open to a west-to-east pipeline. Is the leader open to any east-to-west pipeline?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, this is a strange question. I'm not sure I know where the hon. member is going.

What is clear is that, yes, we are open to assessing the merits of each situation, as in the case of international trade agreements, for example. Here, what is clear is that one of the elements that I haven't had the chance to mention is driving us to also oppose the Cacouna oil port project. We want these projects to yield benefits for Canada, not only for production purposes, but also for processing. In the case of the oil port in Cacouna, there is clearly no plan for a refinery. What motivates us to study the issue of the terminal in this project is the fact that there are processing possibilities at refineries in Saint John, New Brunswick. Accordingly, our position in that regard is completely consistent.

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for all the work he has done on this issue. We have done a lot of work on this together.

One particular time, he was in my riding when we requested a moratorium on drilling. Indeed, we were acutely aware that there were no scientific opinions. Later, we noted that the Superior Court had to agree with our reading of events: there was no scientific opinion. While we were doing the actual field work based on facts, the Liberal leader was in my colleague's riding saying that what was going on in Cacouna was perfect and that everything should move forward.

I would like to hear what my colleague thinks of the Liberal leader's position, at the worst possible time.

• (1340)

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party was in fact in my riding on September 3, and more specifically in Rimouski. He was asked about the project. I have a quotation from *Le Devoir* in which he said the following, after the first injunction: "I think that with the judgment of the Court [in favour of the drilling] and with the support of the provincial government, we should go ahead."

Shortly after that, during the interview, he was informed that there was controversy about the environmental aspect of the project. At that point, he changed his mind and said that a balance would have to be struck between the environment and the economy, that the transportation would have to be done responsibly, and that the Liberals were concerned about climate change. However, what he needed to understand was that there were serious problems relating to the environment and that there was a major controversy. For the moment, the statement by the leader of the Liberal Party is, as the title of the article says, that he "supports the Energy East pipeline project".

*Business of Supply*

In the midst of such a controversy, he should have been better informed, because the question was extremely important for the region and for our two ridings.

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, any development project must first meet the basic criteria of sustainable development. I find it very funny, very odd and pathetic, to hear the government and the Liberal Party members telling us that they do not understand the distinction between “being open to a project” and “being in favour of a project”. We are open to the project, provided that it meets the basic criteria of sustainable development. That is the question.

Today, I would like to speak to all Canadians, but mainly to the women and men in my riding who have approached me with concerns about the Cacouna oil port project. I am concerned to see that the federal government is refusing—yes, refusing—to face up to its responsibility to protect the complex ecosystem of the St. Lawrence River.

The riding of Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord has the enormous privilege of being adjacent to some of the most magnificent and most biologically diverse areas of the river that is a symbol of our nation.

As I said earlier in the House, whether we are talking about the Charlevoix World Biosphere Reserve, the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park or the Group for Research and Education on Marine Mammals, our region can pride itself on having world-renowned organizations that are associated with the wonders of the river.

Those institutions are not only a formidable asset to the environment and to our region, they are also an essential engine for the development of our tourism industry. That is why protecting this ecosystem is particularly important to me. Everyone who has grown up or who lives near the river cannot help but want it to be protected and conserved for future generations. Unfortunately, the Conservative government seems to be abdicating its responsibilities when it comes to the environment, and this leaves many people in our region with serious concerns and a number of unanswered questions.

**An hon. member:** Rightly so.

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, rightly so.

Recently, much ink has been spilled over the contentious and worrisome drilling activities in Cacouna that have nonetheless been authorized by the federal and provincial governments. I would like to go back a bit, to shed some light on the government’s inaction when it comes to the environment.

I recall, last fall, the closing of the key positions at the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, a research laboratory studying belugas. I also recall that the Minister of the Environment evaded questions, thus showing his intention of continuing his attacks on scientists, the very people who make it possible to monitor the situation of belugas and other marine mammals that are threatened.

We all understand that the government was laying the groundwork for going ahead with the Gros-Cacouna port project: less money for scientific research, less data about the marine mammal population and less data about the ecosystem, and so fewer obstacles along the way to carrying out the project.

We also asked the Minister of the Environment to stop playing hide and seek, and release the scientific opinions about offshore activities at Cacouna, which, I would recall, is not only the very centre of the beluga habitat, but also the breeding ground for that threatened species. That was refused. Although we did get an emergency meeting, the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans insisted that the meeting be held in camera. There is every reason to believe that the government is trying to hide something.

Moreover, it is inconceivable that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans would answer in the House that to obtain scientific data, we need only use Google. I am sincerely sorry for all Canadians that a minister would give this kind of answer in the House. Does that mean that the minister and her officials rely on Google to learn about this issue?

It is amusing to note that the scientific opinion we can find through a Google search is the same official scientific opinion as the one that was sent to the Quebec minister of the environment.

The title of an article in the *Journal de Québec* on October 1 speaks volumes: “A scientific opinion invented” by the department.

The article deals with the Quebec Superior Court decision about stopping the drilling until October 15.

It says that in the opinion of the Superior Court judge, the letter from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans—we are talking about a letter and not a scientific opinion—that was sent to the Government of Quebec on August 8 provides no scientific opinion.

● (1345)

If everything is on Google, as the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans claims, why hold all these meetings behind closed doors? Why hide something so important?

Unlike the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I strongly believe that it is our duty as elected members of Parliament to ensure that the government makes decisions in the best interests of the public. The response from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is further proof of the lack of transparency of this government. It is the government’s responsibility to protect belugas, a threatened species in the St. Lawrence. As responsible elected officials, it is our duty to protect this species.

This summer, Richard Nadeau, the regional director general of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, assured us in an article in *Le Devoir* on July 26 that the federal government planned on protecting the St. Lawrence estuary and that the mandate of the Canada-Quebec working group, created more than 15 years ago, had not been changed. The purpose of creating a marine protected area is to protect the habitat of marine mammals present in that area. You might say that is reassuring. I am not reassured.

A press release issued devastating news last week. On September 26, we learned that the Quebec chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society had submitted an access to information request for information on the work done by the Canada-Quebec working group I just mentioned, and was told that no documents existed.

The following is part of the minister’s response to the society:

No document was provided regarding the working group...This is a federal-provincial group that was recently reactivated after several years of inactivity. It has not yet examined the issue of the St. Lawrence Estuary area of interest.

This surprising answer means not only that the group did not conduct a study of the area to be protected, but also that the group does not even really exist. It exists, but it is an empty shell, as Patrick Nadeau, the administrative director of CPAWS Quebec, said. All I can figure is that this working group is a kind of phantom group that comes to haunt us for a few days around Halloween.

Despite all of these facts proving how irresponsible the government is when it comes to the environment, we still dared to hope that the Prime Minister might intervene, but no, he signed off on it anyway. This week he refused to meet with a special envoy from France to talk about the fight against climate change in preparation for the next major international climate change summit, further proof that the environment is simply not a priority for this government.

Everyone knows this; there is nothing new here. We all know that anything that has to do with the environment is not a priority for this government, except when the environment hurts fossil fuels, of course.

As a final point, I would like to commend the efforts of the community groups in my riding that have joined with me in calling on the government to put an end to these drilling activities for the sake of future generations.

I would also like to commend the efforts of the men and women of Cacouna who are watching this closely. Bravo. I am on their side. I also want to thank the people in my riding who shared their concerns with me regarding the Port of Gros-Cacouna oil project. I share their concerns.

That is why we put together a team of volunteers to circulate some petitions to stop this project. On October 18, we will be in Charlevoix and on the upper north shore, going door to door to collect signatures. All work on this project must stop.

I will be very proud to come back to the House with those petitions calling on the government to stop all work in Cacouna. In the meantime, I wish to thank the hon. member for Drummond, who, through his motion, has given me the opportunity to share my constituents' concerns. I would also like to thank the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who has been trying from the beginning to get some answers and get some studies done on the Gros-Cacouna project.

● (1350)

There is no doubt that the Port of Gros-Cacouna, which will be used for the sole purpose of exporting unprocessed Canadian oil, will have a negative impact on the Canadian economy through the loss of well-paid jobs. It will constitute an environmental threat to the St. Lawrence ecosystem, including the beluga whale population, and therefore it is not consistent with the principle of sustainable development and must be rejected.

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord for his speech. I know that what is happening right now with the Port of Gros-Cacouna is extremely important to

### *Business of Supply*

the people in his region. In Quebec, a lot of people are affected, and many people in my riding have talked to me about this oil project. They are proud that the NDP is the only party in the House of Commons to denounce these actions and the Gros-Cacouna oil port project.

I know that my colleague's region is a major tourist region. Thousands of jobs are connected to the St. Lawrence, and I would like to know what operators in his region think. What do small tourism businesses think of the oil project, and above all, how do they feel about the NDP's position on the project?

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alfred-Pellan for her question.

We are talking here about an economy that accounts for \$160 million annually for the area around the St. Lawrence estuary and the gulf. This injection of new money from abroad is linked solely to this fishery resource, to marine mammals. There are a lot of industries that offer whale watching on the St. Lawrence in inflatable boats, but there are also a lot of piers and locations where people can take advantage of the St. Lawrence estuary. Therefore, it goes without saying that all these operators are very worried about this project, which could endanger their businesses and livelihoods.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the motion which the New Democrats have put forward, they talk about the oil port. They refer to it being "for the sole purpose of exporting unprocessed Canadian oil" as one of the primary reasons they have the motion before us. I can appreciate the concern in that regard. However, are they saying that if there were some sort of refinement taking place there, they would be in favour of it? It seems to be partially implied within the motion.

The other thing is in regard to the importance of the environmental assessment, something on which we in the Liberal Party have placed a very high priority. That really needs to be emphasized in this debate. One of the things I have noticed is there is a difference in terms of ensuring that our environment is the first priority.

I wonder if that is the first priority, or if it is the issue of wanting to do more than just process it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Lapointe:** Mr. Speaker, I am tempted to tell the hon. member to go do his homework. The concept of sustainable development does not only concern the local economy; there are three criteria. We are speculating here about a refinery that would process oil heading toward Cacouna. However, there are also two other criteria to meet, and they are not being met at this time. Therefore, if this project is not consistent with the principle of sustainable development, we will not go forward with it.

● (1355)

[*English*]

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that I will be sharing my time today with the hard-working member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

*Statements by Members*

It is an honour for me to have the opportunity to participate in the debate on this motion about the proposal to block the development of the port of Gros-Cacouna marine terminal which was put forward by my colleague from the riding of Drummond.

I will begin by saying that the real outcome of this motion, if it is adopted, would be to bolster efforts to shut down Canada's oil resource industry by preventing Canadian oil from reaching any global market. Those listening at home need to understand that the port terminal which the NDP proposes to block is a key element of the effort to bring Canadian oil to markets in eastern North America and beyond. It could even help deliver energy to our allies in eastern Europe, who currently have to rely on, and be dependent upon, supplies from an ever more aggressive and expansionist Russia.

The energy east pipeline is a complex project aimed at constructing and operating a 4,600 kilometre pipeline from Alberta to the east coast, and it includes the construction of terminals at Gros-Cacouna, Quebec and Saint John, New Brunswick.

Why would anyone seek to prevent Canadian energy resources from going to willing markets as the NDP is always trying to do? I will give the member for Drummond enough credit to assume that he knows full well that energy markets are at least North America wide, and that there is already a glut of refining capacity. He is intelligent enough to know that spending literally billions of dollars on unneeded refining capacity would be just throwing Canadian and Quebec taxpayer dollars down a very deep hole.

I am aware of the concerns raised by the member for Drummond, especially concerning the impact of this terminal on the Saint Lawrence ecosystem generally and upon the beluga whale population in particular.

Today I want to reassure my hon. colleague that the Government of Canada is very committed to protecting the safety and security of all Canadians and of the environment.

A number of federal and provincial responsibilities have already been called into action as a result of the proposed Gros-Cacouna marine terminal, including those of the National Energy Board, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Transport Canada and Environment Canada, to name only a few.

For example, Fisheries and Oceans Canada is well on top of this issue and has already conducted a detailed scientific study of the impact of the necessary geophysical surveys on the Saint Lawrence beluga. It concluded that the risk of physical harm from these activities is low, and that any habitat deterioration from them will be temporary, if they are subject to strict scientifically determined conditions.

Also, once submitted by the proponent, the proposed energy east pipeline project will be assessed by the National Energy Board, which is the responsible authority. As members may know, that organization is an independent federal agency established as long ago as 1959.

Under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, and the National Energy Board Act, the National Energy Board will ensure that the appropriate environmental assessments are conducted for any project under its jurisdiction, including this one.

When that application has been made, Environment Canada will also participate in the review process. It will carry out a science-based review of the project, including environmental emergency preparedness and response, oil spill prevention, migratory birds, wetlands, and wildlife species at risk, and air quality.

Through this environmental assessment and hearing process, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce any risk whatsoever. For example, an important part of Environment Canada's review will be dedicated to modelling the very remote risk of spills and predicting the potential fate of any oil spill that might remotely originate from this project under a full range of conditions. This will be used to assess any impacts from a spill and to develop contingency and response plans to minimize such impacts. The Canadian Coast Guard will be the lead agency for ship-source spill response.

• (1400)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. I must interrupt the hon. member for Kitchener Centre at this time. He will have five minutes remaining in his speech when this matter returns to the House after question period.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### JEAN FORSYTH CASE MORRISON

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute today to a great Canadian.

On September 22, Jean Forsyth Case Morrison passed after 87 years of service to our country. A historian who brought alive the fur trade and the Northwest Company at Fort William Historical Park, she also wrote books on the labour history in turn of the century northwestern Ontario.

Jean used the lessons of history to help to guide us on building a better future. She opposed fascism of every kind.

Along with her late husband Ken, Jean contributed time, treasure and talent on the social and economic justice fronts and helped individuals with a hand out or a hand up whenever they needed it.

Jean was a founder and pillar of the Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship. She supported several political parties over her lifetime, and believe me, she knew how to hold her politicians feet to the fire.

Jean Morrison will be greatly missed.

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### PRIME MINISTER'S AWARD FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two outstanding teachers from my riding of Don Valley West who were recipients of this year's Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence.

*Statements by Members*

Ms. Maureen Sims, a grade 6 and 8 teacher in English, science and math at St. Bonaventure Catholic School, challenges her students to think outside the box every day. She employs special challenge projects to encourage her students to think on their feet and take risks to effectively problem solve.

Mrs. Sylvia Duckworth, a grades 3 through 5 teacher of core French at Crescent School, uses the accelerative integrated method and embraces digital tools such as Google Hangouts, computer animation and video making to increase learning and motivation in her classroom.

Both of these outstanding and innovative teachers instill in their students a love of learning and utilize new technologies to better equip their students.

Congratulations to both Ms. Sims and Mrs. Duckworth. Well done.

\* \* \*

**CHILD POVERTY**

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, most Canadians will be sharing the joy and meals of Thanksgiving with their loved ones. However, for the many who still live in poverty, they will only share their love and hope for a better future.

Twenty-five years ago the House made a commitment to eradicate child poverty, and today we have a higher poverty rate than in 1989. Currently, 967,000 Canadian children, which is 1 in 7 children, live in extreme poverty. In Toronto, the child poverty rate is over 30%.  
[Translation]

We are all familiar with the negative effects poverty has on children, not to mention the socio-economic impacts on the future.  
[English]

We need to act now. The children of Canada are her future.

Let us work collectively to reflect the real image and values of Canada. My Canada does not include children living in poverty.

I recently tabled Motion No. 534 to eradicate child poverty in Canada, and I hope the House will adopt it and work to make the dream of eradicating child poverty in our country a reality.

\* \* \*

**OUTSTANDING CITIZEN**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding citizen, Constable Steven Enns of the Estevan Police Service.

Constable Enns received the Canadian Police Association National Award of Excellence for his service during a patrol on May 18, 2012, in Estevan, Saskatchewan. The CPA National Award of Excellence recognizes members whose commitment to service, determination and courage place them at the highest level of the policing profession.

In the early morning, he bravely saved four people from a burning home. Constable Enns saw a home on fire and banged on the door,

waking up a woman. She informed Constable Enns that two others, as well as her two year old infant son, were still in the house. As the flames started to grow, he went upstairs to save the others who were still sleeping.

For his actions during this incident, Constable Enns was also awarded the Valor Award from the Saskatchewan Chiefs of Police.

I would like to thank Constable Steven Enns for his most excellent and courageous service. We are all proud of him.

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●(1405)

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL**

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a talented young woman, Alaina Joe, from Conne River in the Coast of Bays area of my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

Alaina was a contestant in the Miss Teen Newfoundland and Labrador Pageant this past week. After winning the Miss Humanitarian and People's Choice Awards, she was crowned Miss Teen Newfoundland and Labrador on October 5, becoming the first member of the aboriginal community in Newfoundland and Labrador to receive the title.

Alaina is a level II student at St. Anne's School where she excels academically and participates in the school's extracurricular program. She is also an active member of her community, where she is a Canadian junior ranger, a native cultural dancer and performance choir member. Despite her hectic schedule, Alaina still finds time to volunteer in Conne River. She says her career goal is to become a neurosurgeon.

Alaina's proud parents are Barry and Olivia Joe.

As we approach October 11, the International Day of the Girl, I ask members to join me in recognizing this remarkable young woman and wishing her and all girls around the world the very best in the future.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be scarier as we approach Halloween than the thought of a federal government controlled by the same environmental extremists who imposed the so-called green energy act from Toronto.

These radicals, like Gerald Butts and Mike Crawley, surround the "green" leader of the third party, filling his head with goofy ideas like carbon taxes and industrial wind turbines where they are not wanted or needed.

By hiding huge tax increases onto electricity bills under the guise of saving the environment, we have a new reality, thanks to the Liberal Party of Toronto: energy poverty in Ontario.

*Statements by Members*

Thousands of manufacturing jobs have fled my province, thanks to the Liberal electricity prices in Ontario, which are now the highest in North America. Seniors and others on fixed incomes now have to choose between heating and eating.

Conservatives protect jobs and the environment by saying “no” to new taxes. Carbon taxes are an economic disaster. Just ask the have-not people of Ontario.

Canada needs a strong, stable, majority Conservative government.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to highlight the exceptional work that many organizations in my riding are doing to combat violence against women and girls.

[*English*]

If people spent some time in Aylmer recently, they certainly would have noticed the eye-catching display of 40 red dresses along rue Principale. This display is organized by the Circle of Friends and L'Autre chez soi to increase public awareness on the issue of violence against women and girls.

[*Translation*]

Last night, the CALAS in the Outaouais made a huge impression by mobilizing a hundred people to condemn sexual violence against women during the annual “take back the night” walk.

Through their actions and activities, these organizations put violence against women at the top of the agenda. Thanks to their efforts, we will succeed in building safe communities for all women and all girls.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**YOUNG WOMEN ARE LEADERS PROGRAM**

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to acknowledge the presence of a group of young female constituents from my riding who are visiting Ottawa today as part of the “Young Women are Leaders” program.

Recently, I was proud to announce funding on behalf of Status of Women Canada to fund a local leadership development program.

As we are all well aware, we need to provide support to young women in our great country to encourage and motivate them to step into more public and private sector leadership roles.

Female leaders bring so much to the table. I am grateful to the Eastern Ontario Training Board for leading this program, and most important, I am proud of the young women who are participating in the program.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank several of my female parliamentary colleagues who joined us to inspire them with their experiences in community leadership and public life.

After meeting with them today, I am very confident that our country is in great hands with these young women who are undoubtedly going to make a positive contribution to our future.

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**WORLD WAR II VETERANS**

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the brave men and women who served, and continue to serve, our country at home and abroad.

This year also marks the 75th anniversary of Canada's engagement in the Second World War.

In honour of those who fought so valiantly in World War II, our government has announced a limited edition commemorative pin and certificate of recognition as a way to give special thanks.

Through this tribute, we express our gratitude to those who courageously battled in the name of freedom, democracy and the rule of law, veterans like Herman Consaul, Carlo Cosolo, Lloyd Dodgson, Arthur Fortin, Ray Gemmill, Audrey Graham, Samuel Hall, William Harris, Maureen MacDonald, Tom MacRae, Thomas McKeage, James Noble, George Sabin, David Sinclair and Alexander Wehrens from my riding of Richmond Hill.

I am deeply grateful to these heroes and to all our veterans for their willingness to defend long ago our shared values so that today we may live in peace.

I thank them. We will never forget.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

**ROLLING RAMPAGE**

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in Canada today there are over two million people living with physical disabilities. Many of them have specialized needs for housing, education and treatment. They require assistance for retraining, employment and recreation. The need is great, but public awareness is low.

Today on the Hill we caught a glimpse of the wealth of talent and ability in Canada's disability community through the Rolling Rampage event held here this morning. The 10 kilometre race featured top wheelchair athletes from around the world, and there was a 1 kilometre race involving parliamentarians. It is an effort by the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons and its partners to show to the world that people with disabilities are every bit as gifted and accomplished as their able-bodied peers if given a chance. These athletes are inspiring examples of determination and strength.

*Statements by Members*

While many of us enjoyed this event today, let us not lose sight of what these athletes are trying to show us: that we should not take disability for granted and that there is potential for achievement here, even world-class achievement, if we were to provide a helping hand.

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**FINLAND**

**Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we have the sincerest pleasure of welcoming His Excellency Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, and his spouse Mrs. Jenni Haukio.

Canada and Finland have much in common. It is a bilingual northern parliamentary democracy and has a similar geography.

On the world stage, Canada and Finland have shared values. Both our countries are committed to advancing democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law around the world.

On the Arctic, our two countries maintain strong co-operation of the Arctic Council, as we address the most pressing issues in the region.

Our government looks forward to deepening our ties with Finland, particularly in the field of science, technology and trade.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**GERMAIN NAULT**

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I witnessed a wonderful display of solidarity in Sherbrooke. A number of veterans in the region got together to help one of their own who is struggling with serious health issues and financial difficulties. All together they resingled their friend's house and officially launched a support network for veterans in the region. The message I got was that these veterans feel that Veterans Affairs Canada has abandoned them.

Therefore, I would like to acknowledge their initiative and, above all, implore the Conservative government to listen to veterans' urgent appeal. They deserve better after what they have done for their country.

Today, I would like to pay tribute to Germain Nault, a veteran who took part in the Normandy landings in 1944. Unfortunately, he passed away on September 23 at the age of 93. This courageous, genuine and patriotic man was decorated by the Legion of Honour just a few days before his death. He was overjoyed to receive this honour. His life was changed forever by the terrible experiences he had in Europe. I hope that my colleagues will join me in paying one last tribute to him in the House of Commons. Thank you, Mr. Nault.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have known for years that the NDP bows to the will of the big union bosses and their illegal political sponsorships. However, last month some big union bosses announced that they

would be supporting the Liberal Party rather than their fellow travellers in the NDP.

It did not take the Liberal Party very long to start following its new union bosses' instructions. Only a few weeks ago, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville was advertised on the Public Service Alliance of Canada Twitter account provocatively criticizing the government.

Unlike the Liberals, whose single policy is to legalize drugs, on this side of the House, we stand up for the interests of Canadian taxpayers. This government lowers Canadian taxes, balances budgets and puts money back in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. We will continue to stand up for them day in and day out.

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**IRAN**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to sound the alarm on the wave of wanton executions in Iran, the intensified persecution of the Baha'i and the imminent executions of three prisoners, including: the torture and threatened execution of senior Shiite clergyman Ayatollah Boroujerdi, known as "Iran's Mandela", which is a shocking example of the massive repression that has prevailed despite the reputed moderation under Rouhani; the imprisonment of renowned Iranian physicist Omid Kokabee, who is languishing in prison on trumped up charges, has been denied life-saving medical care and whose release has been publicly urged by 25 Nobel laureates; and, the threatened execution of sexual assault victim Rayhaneh Jabbari, who was falsely convicted of murdering her assailant based on a coerced confession and a Kafkaesque proceeding.

I invite all colleagues to join me in calling on President Rouhani to cease and desist from this wanton execution binge and to release these three prisoners threatened with imminent execution, along with other political prisoners, such as the leadership of the Baha'i, and to end Iran's culture of impunity.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is a pluralistic society that believes in women's rights, the rights of religious minorities and due process of law.

Fouzil Selmoune, an imam from a Montreal area mosque, fundamentally rejects those principles. He has called for the stoning of women for adultery. He has called for the hands of thieves to be chopped off. Shockingly, the Liberal leader has gone to this man shopping for votes.

Someone who aspires to be a leader ought to have better judgment than to associate with these types of extremists. What is worse is that the member for Malpeque repeated the Liberal leader's assertion that he expected the government to tell him who he should or should not associate with. I would expect a former solicitor general to be able to do a Google search.

*Oral Questions*

Associating with these types of people who have publicly called for Sharia law to be brought to Canada shows that the Liberals are absolutely in over their heads when it comes to Canada's national security.

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[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, fortunately, ridicule never killed anyone, or else we would be having a bunch of byelections in the next few months. This morning, the Parliamentary Budget Officer showed the extent to which the Conservatives' economic approach is a total fiasco. Their EI premium credit for businesses will cost \$550 million and will create only 800 jobs; not 8,000, but 800. I understand that each job is important, but with \$550 million, we can do a lot better. Creating so few jobs by spending over half a billion dollars smacks of amateurism.

While the Conservatives burn through this money without guaranteeing benefits for workers, the Liberals are boasting about a plan using the EI fund, but the numbers do not add up. One economist even referred to the Liberals' plan as an election gimmick.

It sounds as if the old parties are fighting over who will have the worst plan. It is time we had a government that puts in place real job creation measures. Canadians deserve better. They deserve an NDP government with a real jobs plan.

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[English]

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our responsible resource development plan is delivering results for Canadians. We have taken strong action to strengthen environmental protection, enhance aboriginal engagement, and create jobs and economic growth in our natural resources sector.

This sector is integral to our economy, employing 1.8 million Canadians, contributing nearly 20% of our GDP, and generating tax revenue that supports important programs, including health care and education.

Unlike the Liberals, who have no plan for resource development, and actually voted against increasing pipeline safety measures, our government remains focused on what matters to Canadians. Major natural resource projects must undergo a thorough science-based regulatory review process to determine whether they are safe.

We have been clear. Projects will only proceed if they are proven safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. Canadians can count on our Conservative government to create jobs, grow our economy, and strengthen environmental protection in our natural resources sector.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this week's vote was not the end of the debate on Canada's mission in Iraq. The government has not answered important questions. We still do not know how the government will protect Canadians and we have just learned that at least 130 radicalized Canadians who have been recruited by terrorist networks have left the country.

Why were those individuals not arrested or located? How can the government explain that breach?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to inform the House that there are currently 63 investigations under way concerning over 100 individuals. Why? Because Parliament passed a law to fight terrorism. Why is it that the NDP never supports the anti-terrorism measures put in place by the government?

● (1420)

[English]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, instead of rhetoric, I think the minister should focus on doing his job in stopping terrorists who are radicalizing Canadian children.

It is a very simple question here. Why did we learn today about new terrorist threats to Canadians from American intelligence and not from the officials who came before the public safety committee yesterday?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians can rely on the intelligence of their law enforcement community and their national public safety community to keep them safe.

That being said, we have to be vigilant, because there is a threat. That is why this government is sending troops and planes abroad to combat terrorism. We will make sure that while there are air strikes over there, we are keeping Canadians safe here.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry reiterated that Ebola is an urgent global crisis that demands an urgent global response from the international community. The World Bank estimates that the Ebola crisis could cost \$32 billion by the end of 2015.

Does the government intend to increase Canada's contribution to the World Health Organization in order to provide assistance that is commensurate with this crisis?

*Oral Questions***FINANCE***[English]*

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has been at the forefront of the Ebola response since early April. As the member knows, we have invested funds. We have provided expertise and equipment. We continue to be in contact with the WHO to respond to any particular needs. We are funding the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, and Doctors Without Borders to help build health capacity and improve the on-the-ground treatment and prevention of Ebola.

We, of course, have two very highly specialized medical labs in the area, with our Health Canada scientists, and we will continue to respond to the WHO.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is more Canada could be doing now to help the Ebola response, but the government has not even delivered on its earlier promises. The experimental Ebola vaccine still has not left Canada, and trials still have not started. In fact, the Conservatives persist in blaming the WHO, but it is not responsible for the delays. The commercialization of the vaccine is held by an American company, despite what the Prime Minister said yesterday.

Why has the government done nothing to get the Ebola vaccine moving?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would recommend that the member get her information about the vaccine that was created here in Canada by the Public Health Agency directly from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, who has told me directly that the vaccine supply we have, which has been given to the WHO, is in Winnipeg still, because the WHO has not decided when and if it will distribute it.

It has been very generously donated to the WHO, and we hope it is able to use it.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to think that a donation means that we then have nothing more to do with the matter. The fact is, and I will quote from a WHO press release—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Vancouver East still has the floor.

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I will quote from the WHO press release from October 1. It says:

The license for commercialization of the Canadian vaccine is held by an American company, the NewLink Genetics company, located in Ames, Iowa.

Is the Prime Minister saying that the WHO is not telling the truth, or is it just the minister?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** No, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the member has her facts completely wrong. She is dealing with two completely different issues.

In terms of the commercialization of the vaccine, that company is working very hard to have clinical trials sped up, and they hope to see the vaccine commercialized by December and hopefully available to the general public, if needed. The doses we have given to the WHO are owned by us. They are in Winnipeg. We have generously given them to the WHO for use.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with the latest unemployment figures showing 112,000 lost jobs, and Canada's latest monthly economic growth at zero, what does the government plan to put in its next omnibus budget bill?

Well, first, there is an EI scheme that the Parliamentary Budget Officer says will actually kill 9,200 jobs, and second, there is another scheme authorizing the swiping of television news programs for use in political attack ads. Why is the government perverting a budget bill to legitimize illegal behaviour?

• (1425)

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member for Wascana to wait patiently. As we travel across this country, we will be consulting with Canadians as to what goes in next year's budget bill, but there is one thing we can be certain of. With all the good measures we bring forward to help lower taxes, to create jobs, and to increase skills development, we can be certain that the opposition will continue, as in the past, to vote against all those measures.

\* \* \*

**COPYRIGHT**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, artists looking for copyright changes have been told to wait until 2017, but the Conservative Party gets served right now, this fall, by a copyright change bootlegged into an omnibus bill. Journalists will have their news content taken—they would say stolen—without permission or remuneration, and then they will be forced to broadcast their own stuff in partisan attack ads. It is expropriation without compensation. It degrades integrity and freedom of the press. Why does the government behave like such a tinpot banana republic?

**Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, we are not going to comment on rumours and speculation. That said, our position has been very clear. There is a public interest in ensuring that politicians are accountable for their actions and accountable for what they say in public settings. Major television networks should not have the ability to censor what can and cannot be broadcast to Canadians. We believe that this has always been protected under the fair dealing provisions of the law, and if greater certainty is necessary, we will provide it.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government wants to wait until 2017 to change the Copyright Act to better protect the intellectual property of artists.

However, when the Conservative Party wants to change the legislation to steal the content of news agencies and artists for negative ads, the government obeys without hesitation.

*Oral Questions*

Why do the Conservatives want to steal the property of shows like *Tout le monde en parle* and *Larocque Lapierre* for negative ads?

What kind of dishonesty does it have in store?

**Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we are not going to comment on rumours or speculation. That said, our position has been clear all along.

The general public wants politicians to be accountable for what they do and say in public. Major television networks should not have the right to determine what can or cannot be broadcast to Canadians. We believe that this has always been protected under the fair dealing provisions of the law.

If greater certainty is needed, we will provide it.

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[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, despite all the rhetoric about the urgency of joining air strikes in Iraq, we have now learned that it will take nearly a month for Canadian Forces to get there, and there is no confirmed place to stage our planes. We saw the same thing when we heard that the government deployed 69 military advisers, but only 26 were needed.

Why did the Conservatives use urgency as an excuse to cut short the debate on Iraq, when they are not ready to go?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure if the debate lasted 30 years it still would not get the support of the NDP. That being said, I can confirm for the House that just this morning we received approval from Kuwait to launch our planes from there, and I want to thank the Kuwaitis for their co-operation. This is just further evidence that the fight against ISIL is an international matter, and Canada, of course, will do its part.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while the minister might want to laugh about the seriousness of this issue, we take it very seriously on this side. It is not just the logistics—

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

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

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, just look at them.

It is not just that the logistics of sending Canadian planes are still being figured out; it is the combat plan as well. It has been reported that the government has not yet decided whether its policy will be to “assert a legal basis for bombing targets in Syria”, yet it has explicitly opened the door to bombing targets in Syria.

How can the Conservatives rationalize this war when they themselves cannot even figure out what they are doing or how to do it?

• (1430)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear, and in the motion before Parliament we have set out the timelines, we have set out the focus, and we have set out the mission.

If they were serious about this, they would have got on side with us this week and supported this measure. It was the right thing to do, and they did not do it.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, some countries, such as the United Kingdom, have explicitly ruled out the idea of going to Syria, and said that they would return before their parliaments for authorization if they had to carry out a military operation there.

That is in stark contrast to the Conservatives, who refuse to tell us whether Canada will conduct operations in Syria and what measures will be taken to protect civilians during air strikes in Iraq. Why is the government rushing to proceed with such a poorly defined combat mission?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is the opposite of what her colleague just said about our operational readiness.

We are moving forward. We have been very clear. What we did was get Parliament's support. I think that is something different, something that we never saw before. I think it was very important to do that.

Yes, we will work with our allies to degrade the capabilities of ISIL. It is the right thing to do.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government is talking about carrying out air strikes in Syria. Civilians will be affected. Even so, it is refusing to work faster to help refugees. The minister is fiddling with the numbers to cover up his failure to take action.

The government has not yet welcomed the 1,300 Syrian refugees that it promised to bring to Canada. Refugees are waiting months because of administrative issues. Why is the government abandoning Syrian refugees to their fate?

[English]

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since the start of the conflict, Canada has provided protection to more than 1,645 Syrians, all of whom are now safely in Canada. We have met our commitment to resettle 200 government-assisted refugees.

We will continue to process applications out of this region without compromising the safety and security of Canadians.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report on the hiring tax credit shows just what poor planners the Conservatives are. They cut the employment insurance program, and now they have created a tax credit that is supposed to stimulate job creation, but they have done nothing to make sure it will work. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the tax credit will create barely 800 jobs. Each of those jobs would cost \$550,000. That is ridiculous.

How can the Conservatives justify using workers' contributions to pay for a program that will not create jobs?

*[English]*

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the opposition should listen to the groups that actually create the jobs. Those are groups like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The small business job credit, it says, will create 25,000 person-years of employment.

I will quote the federation. It said:

This...is fantastic news for Canada's entrepreneurs and their employees, and as such, can only be a positive for the Canadian economy.

Our small business job credit will lower EI premiums by 15% and save small businesses over \$550 million.

While we are keeping payroll taxes down, they are—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Saint-Lambert.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I can sum up the Conservatives' budgetary policy in three words: cut, cut and cut. They have made such deep cuts to employment insurance that over 60% of workers who find themselves out of work collect no benefits.

Instead of covering up its incompetence by launching a useless job creation program with money that belongs to unemployed workers, why does the government not use the fund surplus to improve employment insurance benefits and coverage?

*[English]*

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member has the facts absolutely wrong. The facts are that those who are unemployed and have paid into the EI system are collecting. Eighty-two per cent of those are collecting EI and are eligible.

I do not know if the opposition is suggesting that individuals who have never paid into EI, never been part of the program, should collect EI. I do not think that is how Canadian taxpayers want their dollars spent.

• (1435)

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, unemployed Canadians sure know that under this scheme they are not going to be getting back to work very soon. This is at a time when fewer than 40% of unemployed Canadians are even eligible for EI. That is a historic low.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says the government could easily afford to expand coverage to another 130,000 unemployed Canadians. Instead, the Conservatives have chosen to raid the EI account for a program that is clearly designed to fail.

Why will the Conservatives not respect workers and start using the money to fix EI?

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the EI system is designed to help Canadians who are out of work through no fault of their own. In this system, though, people who are working and pay into the system then qualify for that EI program. Eight-two per cent of those who are unemployed have qualified for it.

The suggestion from the opposition that those who have not actually paid into the system should somehow collect EI is preposterous.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, at \$550,000 per job, it is the Conservatives' proposal that makes no fiscal sense.

The PBO has shown the Conservatives' lack of transparency when it comes to EI. First they built up a surplus by cutting benefits while keeping premiums high. Then, like the Liberals before them, they dipped into the EI fund to use it for their own pet project, funding a tax credit that does not do what it is supposed to do.

When are the Conservatives going to quit playing games and get serious about helping unemployed Canadians?

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that they are better off with our Conservative government.

The NDP members clearly do not get small business. They should listen to people who do understand small business. Let me quote what Jay Myers, of the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, said. He said:

The Small Business Job Credit will help a powerhouse — the thousands of small businesses — of the Canadian economy become more competitive.

Unlike the NDP, we will continue to keep taxes low to create jobs and we will also create opportunities for Canadians.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it will cost \$550,000 to create a single job, but Conservatives think they are brilliant at the economy.

When it comes to EI, Conservatives and Liberals seem to sing from the same songbook. They both love to raid the EI fund, they both love to cut millions of Canadians off the insurance program, and they both love to invent these hare-brained schemes that just do not work. It has gotten so bad for the Conservatives that the finance minister has to borrow Liberal math to justify his bad programs.

*Oral Questions*

Half a billion dollars to create 800 jobs is outrageous. When is the government going to withdraw this terrible scheme and bring in a plan that actually puts Canadians back to work?

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, beginning in 2017, premiums will be set according to a seven-year break-even rate, ensuring that premiums are no higher than they need to be.

Clearly the NDP does not understand small business. They should listen to those who do. Monique Moreau, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said that small businesses in Canada should be thrilled with this announcement because they have said time and time again that payroll taxes like EI are the biggest disincentive to hiring.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security meeting, the minister confirmed that the government is aware that 80 individuals have returned from overseas after participating in terrorism-related activities. The minister told us that those individuals pose a threat to our society, that they have broken Canadian law, and that they all should be put behind bars.

What is he waiting for? What exactly is it going to take for those individuals to be put in jail?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear: those who try to engage in terrorist activities here and outside the country pose a threat. That is why we passed the combatting terrorism act and that is why we are revoking passports. We are prepared to go as far as removing dual citizenship when people in that situation are found guilty. We live under the rule of law. My colleague will agree with me that the courts are doing their job and police investigations are ongoing.

What are the hon. member and his party doing to support the fight against terrorism here and elsewhere?

\* \* \*

●(1440)

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the Parliamentary Budget Officer disputed the Minister of Finance's claim that the government's so-called small business job credit will create 25,000 jobs. According to the PBO, this tax credit will create 800 jobs over two years and is going to cost taxpayers more than \$550 million. That is \$700,000 per job.

When are the Conservatives going to drop their flawed tax credit plan, admit they are out of ideas, and adopt the Liberal plan?

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that they are better off with this Conservative government.

The Liberal EI agenda includes such measures as EI for prisoners and a 45-day work year. The Liberal EI plan has 50 weeks of sickness pay that would in total add up to a whopping 44% increase in EI premiums. That would cost Canadians nearly \$6 billion. We cannot afford to listen to that type of Liberal idea.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal EI idea is actually endorsed by Canadian manufacturers, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, and by the CFIB, because it works.

The Conservatives are killing jobs by keeping EI taxes high just to pad their books on the eve of an election. Today's PBO report tells us that the Conservatives' artificial EI tax rates will actually cost the Canadian economy 10,000 jobs over the next two years. That is 10,000 more Canadians who will be out of work because of high Conservative EI taxes.

When will the Conservatives stop putting Conservative politics ahead of Canadian jobs?

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just last week the Liberals had to stand and apologize in this House for trying to find support that was not there for their Liberal plan.

Let us listen to what Dan Kelly, head of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said in regard to our credit. He just released this today. He said that small firms' number one concern is the total tax burden, that the number one most harmful form of taxation is payroll tax, and that the \$550 small business job credit helps.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Correctional Investigator tabled his annual report. Less than 5% of Correctional Services' total budget is allocated to correctional reintegration programs, and that despite clear evidence that offenders who participate in rehabilitation are less likely to reoffend.

Offenders are being sent back into communities without proper rehabilitation. Why does the minister continue to ignore, year after year, recommendations from the Correctional Investigator that would improve community safety? Why is he putting communities at risk?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we welcome the report of the Correctional Investigator. One thing that is clear on this side of the House is that while we keep criminals behind bars, we also have a serious concern for victims. That is why this government has tabled a victims bill of rights to ensure that our justice system achieves a balance through restoring the rights of victims throughout the system. We will continue to do so.

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is what it is all about. It is about balance, and there is a part that is missing.

[*Translation*]

There will be offenders on our streets who will not have had access to reintegration programs. Given that less than 5% of the Correctional Services budget is allocated to reintegration programs, it seems to me that this should be a priority.

Will the minister implement the recommendations of the Correctional Investigator in order to reduce the risk of reoffending and encourage reintegration, thereby protecting our communities?

• (1445)

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we welcome the recommendations of the Correctional Investigator.

However, we will not do what the New Democrats want to do and give inmates pensions. We see no sense in that.

We are going to continue to ensure that the Correctional Service of Canada works to keep criminals behind bars and we are going to ensure that those with mental health problems are dealt with appropriately.

I have implemented a strategy precisely in order to improve the services provided to inmates with mental health problems, and I look forward to seeing Correctional Services' report in response to the report on the investigation conducted by the Ontario coroner.

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives claim that they are working hard to fight terrorism. In reality, they cut \$700 million from the public safety budget.

A total of 100 intelligence services jobs at the Canada Border Services Agency were simply eliminated. Meanwhile, 130 radicalized Canadians travelled overseas to join terrorist groups.

How can the minister say that these cuts are inconsequential when that is clearly not the case?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that our government increased the number of front-line border officers by 26%. That is what we did.

I would also remind my colleague that, despite objections from the Liberals and the NDP, we passed legislative measures that allow us to revoke the Canadian citizenship of dual-nationalists who commit crimes, including acts of terrorism. We also passed an anti-terrorism law, which included a strategy.

What did the NDP do? They voted against it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on his part, it seems that the minister is more interested in his rhetoric than he is in results.

The reality is that we have under the Conservatives 130 Canadians who went to fight with terrorist organizations abroad, and 80 of those people came back to our country.

How can the minister stand in his place and say that CBSA cuts did not hurt the security of Canadians?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is really hurting the safety of Canadians is when politicians engage in partisanship and do not stand up to make this country more safe.

What is making this country safe is that this government has tabled a counterterrorism strategy with the combat terrorism act. We would revoke citizenship. We would revoke passports.

We are acting on terrorism, and members opposite vote against those measures.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is standing up for safe and sensible firearms policies, and I was pleased to see the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness introduce the commonsense firearms licensing act this week.

For too long, hunters, farmers, trappers, and sport shooters have been treated as second-class citizens due to failed Liberal policies.

Could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update the House on what our Conservative government is doing to cut red tape for law-abiding firearms owners?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette for his outstanding work and support with his team for wildlife, sports, and outdoor activities.

Of course, our priority is public safety. That is why there is mandatory training. That is why individuals who engage in domestic violence will lose their licences.

That is why we will cut red tape and make sure our country can restore dignity to those who are law-abiding citizens.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, according to the Minister of Transport, rail accidents are caused by the actions of individuals. The reality is that there is a much larger problem that relates to how safety rules are enforced.

Yesterday, the minister said that she will take the coroner's recommendations into account. However, it took years for the government to do something about DOT-111 cars.

*Oral Questions*

How much longer do we have to wait for the minister to guarantee that another train carrying dangerous goods will not be left unsupervised?

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers will continue to be with the victims and families affected by this tragic accident.

As we have been saying from the beginning, and as the Transportation Safety Board of Canada concluded, the rules were not followed. Certain individuals are facing criminal charges as a result of negligence, and court proceedings are under way.

Our government thanks the coroner for his report and recommendations. Our government has taken great strides in the area of rail safety, and in fact, we have already addressed some of the coroner's recommendations.

• (1450)

[English]

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's reaction to the report on Lac-Mégantic yesterday seemed to suggest that she thought it was only the result of a few bad apples, and that the systemic failures in her own department were not involved, despite the findings of the TSB.

Now the rail companies are fighting attempts to limit work and rest hours for engineers.

Will the minister stand firm against the rail companies and protect Canadians?

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member has it all wrong.

The government has been taking a number of important actions with respect to rail safety. Since 2006, we have invested in inspectors and put \$100 million in our rail safety regime.

With respect to fatigue management, the safety of Canadians obviously remains our top priority. Railway companies are required to submit their fatigue management plans to Transport Canada. These plans must address a number of factors, such as education and training, scheduling practices, dealing with emergencies, alertness strategies, and rest environments.

If there is non-compliance with those rules, we will take whatever action is necessary.

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**COPYRIGHT**

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as we have now heard, the Conservatives have a plan to change copyright rules in order to create an advantage for themselves in the next election.

I guess the unfair elections act was not enough. Talk about repeat offenders; it seems Conservatives are once again trying to tilt the playing field in their own favour.

My question is for the Minister of State for Democratic Reform, not the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

Will he ensure that the amendment comes before the House for proper study or will he have it stuffed into yet another omnibus budget bill?

**Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and say that I have already answered part of the question that was just asked.

However, do not take it from me, I would like to read what Michael Geist, law professor at the University of Ottawa had to say about this copyright issue:

...copyright law should not be used to stifle legitimate speech. ...attempts to use copyright to claim absolute rights over the use of a portion of a video clip is surely counter to basic principles of fair dealing (in Canada)....

He agrees with us.

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect this government to bring in legislation that is in the best interest of everyone. The Conservatives, however, prefer legislation that is only in their interest. We saw this with their electoral “deform”, which was tailor-made for the Conservative Party's needs.

Now they want to do it again by changing the legislation to be able to use content that belongs to broadcasters in their political attack ads.

Can the Minister of State for Democratic Reform name a single independent expert who recommended this change?

**Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member missed the answer earlier, so I will repeat what Michael Geist, a law professor at the University of Ottawa, had to say about this:

...copyright law should not be used to stifle legitimate speech....[and] attempts to use copyright to claim absolute rights over the use of a portion of a video clip is surely counter to basic principles of fair dealing (in Canada) or fair use.

Once again, he completely agrees with us. The members opposite should as well.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADA POST**

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, under the government, Canada Post has not only been allowed to reduce services but has closed post offices entirely and continues to eliminate door-to-door delivery.

As a result, seniors are being isolated, businesses are facing yet more barriers to success, and rural Canadians are being treated as second-class citizens.

When will the government do the right thing and tell Canada Post it is okay to deliver the mail?

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member should know that in 2012, Canada Post delivered a billion fewer pieces of mail than it did in 2006.

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

In 2013, that number slipped to 1.2 billion fewer pieces. The trend is confirmed in the Conference Board's report that says Canada Post will be posting losses of up to \$1 billion per year by 2020.

Canada Post has responded with a five-point plan. The member will know that Canada Post is an arm's-length crown corporation. It is carrying out its plan.

• (1455)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is absolute hogwash.

Let us be very clear. It is the Prime Minister and it is the government that is ending door-to-door delivery in Canada.

Imagine a reality check where we are going to have 75-year-old pensioners having to plow through ice and snow in January to pick up their mail.

Why is the government deliberately undermining the role of Canada Post?

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, despite the intense feelings over there, two-thirds of Canadians already do not have door-to-door delivery. Canada Post's plan is addressing the other one-third of those homes.

However, let us be clear. This is a serious problem that Canada Post is facing. It proposed a five-point action plan that it says would allow the corporation to return to a fiscally responsible state, while still ensuring that mail delivery continues in this country.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the negligence of successive Liberal and Conservative governments has left Toronto with a congestion crisis, according to the Toronto's Vital Signs report. In a city growing by leaps and bounds, less than a kilometre of rapid transit has been built per year over the last two decades. The report confirms what Toronto already knows: congestion is crippling our economy and undermining our quality of life.

When will the Conservatives recognize the economic, social, and environmental sense of investing in public transit?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, never has a government before ours invested so much in public transit.

The NDP wants to manage everything in Ottawa. It wants to centralize everything in Ottawa.

We want to respect jurisdiction. We want to respect provinces and municipal entities that are managing their own issues. We will continue to support them.

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, maybe the Conservatives can start respecting Toronto families.

Seventy-seven thousand Toronto families are on affordable housing waiting lists. The Conservative response was 267 units, built last year.

Liberal cuts and downloading started the housing crisis. Conservative cuts have thrown fuel on the fire. However, one of the ways they could turning this crisis around is by renewing affordable housing agreements.

Will they do that for Toronto families, today?

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that question, because it gives me the opportunity to talk about what our government has been doing to help the housing crunch and to work with our partners.

I have been travelling across the country over the summer, signing investment in affordable housing agreements: \$801 million in Ontario alone; \$1.25 billion across the country.

Whether it is our homelessness partnering strategy to help those who are homeless, our investment in affordable housing, or retrofitting and renovating social housing, we are helping provinces and municipalities with their housing needs.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recent media reports brought to light the fact that the Liberal leader was shopping for votes at a radical fundamentalist mosque that advocates stoning women who commit adultery.

Yesterday, unbelievably, the Liberal leader asked our government to tell him where he should or should not go. That is so disingenuous. In fact, anyone can find the shocking statements of this Imam simply by doing an Internet search.

I would like the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to tell us what the government is doing to protect Canadians from radical extremists.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a four-part plan to combat terrorism.

It is chilling to hear the kinds of comments being made here. There is no room in Canada for giving in to terrorism and barbarism. If a politician hears such comments, he should avoid associating with that person and use some common sense.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the "Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality" are weaker than drinking water standards in other national jurisdictions. Canada has no standard for certain substances, while other countries do.

### Oral Questions

For example, there are 189 substances regulated in other countries for which Canada has no standard.

In other cases, our Canadian standards are much more lax than those in other countries for the same toxic substance.

When will the Conservative government start to show leadership on the vital issue of drinking water quality?

• (1500)

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, both the Minister of the Environment and I, as the Minister of Health, work with municipalities and provinces on drinking water standards. Canada is not only working hard with our counterparts on cross-border issues related to water quality, but we will continue to do work with the municipalities.

\* \* \*

### CANADA POST

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, news broke today that Canada Post plans to discontinue door-to-door delivery to 29,000 homes in the St. John's South—Mount Pearl area next fall. Many of the people in those 29,000 homes are seniors. They are people with physical disabilities and mobility issues. They are Canadians who view home mail delivery as a treasured Canadian service.

What does the Conservative government have to say to the people of the St. John's South—Mount Pearl area who will be directly impacted by this massive cut in service?

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously Canada Post not only has a five-point plan to respond to its challenges, but it has certain commitments it has made to Canadians in terms of the implementation. If there are any service questions, I would ask the member to direct them to Canada Post.

\* \* \*

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday American media reported that Islamic State sympathizers were planning an attack on the American embassy in Ottawa and on a shopping mall. Once more, the Commissioner of the RCMP confirmed that they have active ongoing investigations on nearly 100 individuals who have travelled overseas to engage in terrorism.

Canadians are concerned about these threats posed by radical Islamic extremists. Could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please give the House an update on this real terrorist threat to Canada?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the chair of the public safety and national security committee for this important question. He has done great work on this issue.

Our national security agencies are constantly reviewing the threat to our country and taking action to keep Canadians safe.

[Translation]

Although I cannot comment on issues related to national security, it is clear that the Islamist terrorist threat is serious and that we need to remain vigilant.

[English]

That is why I count on the support of all parties when our Conservative government brings action to provide tools so that law enforcement and national security agencies can keep our country safe.

\* \* \*

### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a number of Canadian families, including my constituents Fred and Shelley Muntau, are dealing with heartbreaking separation from their children because of the Conservative government's ineptitude. Their children were legally adopted in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but Canada will not issue them visas.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration said that he would look into the matter several months ago. Nothing has happened.

Other countries, such as Italy and the United States, have taken proactive action and have fought for the families. Why will the minister not fight for Canadian families?

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, privacy laws prevent me from speaking about specific individual cases without written consent. We recognize that this is extremely difficult for adoptive parents.

On September 25, 2013, the DRC expressed concerns about the integrity of the inter-country adoption system and was putting a hold on moving forward on international adoptions while it conducted a review of the process.

Our priority is the safety and security of the Congolese children. We will respect the laws of the DRC, and our government will continue to monitor the situation very closely.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, more and more megatankers are travelling down the St. Lawrence River. At the same time, the government is moving full steam ahead with promoting oil development. The risks are increasing and spills can happen. As the risks increase, municipalities in eastern Quebec are concerned.

Matane and municipalities in the Magdalen Islands have expressed an interest in opening an oil spill emergency centre. Can the government commit to considering the requests from Matane and the Magdalen Islands and supporting them in this process?

•(1505)

[English]

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will take this specific question under advisement to the minister.

This government has put in place a very important oil tanker safety system. We have done a number of measures to ensure the safe transit of oil through our Canadian waters, such as increasing the national aerial surveillance program and adopting area response planning, as the member mentioned, which is to ensure that risks and environmental sensitivities are included in all response planning.

Most importantly, consistent with the polluter pays principle, we have removed the liability limit of the ship-source oil pollution fund so that 100% of the costs—

**The Speaker:** Order. That concludes question period.

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#### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Kevin Doherty, Minister of Advanced Education and Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Telecommunications.

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

\* \* \*

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today we are debating the NDP opposition motion that is based on the notion that it is not good for the economy or the environment to build a big oil terminal with raw unprocessed oil right smack on top of a beluga nursery. We are saying that is not a good idea for the Canadian economy. What we are saying is good for the Canadian economy is green energy.

[Translation]

We are talking about a \$1 trillion investment globally in the boom we are seeing in green energy. In the next few years, that number will go up to \$3 trillion. This translates into hundreds of thousands of jobs. Unfortunately, because of this government and its lack of knowledge on the subject, we are missing the boat when it comes to green energy. That is what we are debating today.

Obviously, I will ask my colleague, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, what the government is planning for the period following Thanksgiving.

I would like to wish all my colleagues in the House and all Canadians a happy Thanksgiving weekend. We hope everyone will share this time with family.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will continue with today's NDP opposition day.

Tomorrow, we will debate Bill C-13, the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act, aimed at combatting cyberbullying at third reading.

#### Government Orders

When we come back from our constituency week, on Monday, October 20, we will consider a motion to refer Bill S-4, the Digital Privacy Act, to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology prior to second reading. If we have extra time available that day, we will return to the second reading debate on Bill C-21, the Red Tape Reduction Act.

Tuesday, October 21, shall be the fifth allotted day. The Liberals will offer the day's topic of discussion.

[English]

Starting on Wednesday, October 22, the House will consider Bill C-42, the common sense firearms licensing act at second reading. This bill would cut red tape for law-abiding firearms owners and provide safe and simple firearms policies. I would note that this legislation has already been endorsed by a number of key groups, such as the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, the New Brunswick Wildlife Federation, the Canadian Shooting Sports Association, la Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, and the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters, among others.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to wish you and all members a happy Thanksgiving, and I hope that all will share that with their families.

\* \* \*

#### WAYS AND MEANS

##### NOTICE OF MOTION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83 (1), I have the honour to table a notice of ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act and the income tax regulations.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of this motion.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1510)

[English]

#### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

##### OPPOSITION MOTION—GROS-CACOUNA OIL TERMINAL

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Kitchener Centre has five minutes left to conclude his remarks.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been describing the many scientific assessments of this project that will help us better understand the potential and the risks. If the project goes ahead, the assessments will inform the design and operation of this proposed project to minimize any future risks. They will also ensure the protection of the beluga whale.

*Government Orders*

I would also like to stress that under the government's responsible resource development plan, rigorous environmental protection measures are being implemented to ensure the sustainable development of our natural resources all across the country, including for the proposed energy east pipeline project. The government has already undertaken many major steps to enhance an already robust oil tanker safety system regime and to create a world-class regime that protects both coastal communities and our environment.

As members know, Environment Canada has a mandate to protect water and air from pollutants, and it takes that responsibility very seriously. The department implements strong environmental laws, such as the Fisheries Act. The government will enforce all laws or regulations that are violated as a result of any spill and will ensure that the responsible parties are prosecuted to remedy any damage.

The department will continue to work in close partnership with other federal departments and other levels of government as well as with the private sector and international organizations to reduce the frequency and consequences of any violations in the marine environment. It will strive to prevent incidents. It will place emphasis on preparedness. It will provide response and recovery advice, and the department will work to advance emergencies science and technology.

To this end, Environment Canada's National Environmental Emergencies Centre is ready 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide scientific and technical advice and to identify environmental protection priorities when required. It is in a position to tailor its advice to the unique conditions of each emergency.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada is responsible for ensuring that the critical habitat of the beluga and other aquatic species is protected under the Species at Risk Act. In addition, I am very pleased that the environment department, through its marine program, has prepared a best practice guide to aid operators of vessels in avoiding collisions with large aquatic mammals. This very useful guide will be available as part of the process led by the National Energy Board to inform its decision and to inform any potential conditions that could be placed on the proponent, especially regarding the protection of the beluga whale.

At the end of the day, should environmental decisions not be evidence based and science based, rather than ideologically or politically based? By proposing a political decision today to block development before appropriate scientific study has been completed, the NDP has once again revealed its absolute determination to block Canadian resource development without any regard whatsoever for science-based evidence.

Needless to say, I urge my NDP colleagues to insist on the historic right of members to vote freely on non-government business and to defeat this motion. I am confident that the proposed Gros-Cacouna port terminal project will be rigorously and scientifically assessed in a manner consistent with the principle of sustainable development.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre for his speech and his comments. He and I are members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, so we regularly have the opportunity to discuss this subject.

Here is my question for him. He mentioned several times that it is important to make science-based decisions. The Government of Quebec asked the federal government a number of scientific questions about drilling at Cacouna this summer. Every time the Quebec government asked the federal government these questions, the latter asked the former why it wanted to know. The Quebec government wanted to know so that it could make a science-based decision.

It has been shown in court that the federal government was asked multiple times but did not share the necessary scientific opinions. That is why there was an injunction. It was shown in court that there were no scientific opinions. Why did they systematically refuse to share scientific opinions about drilling off the coast of Cacouna?

• (1515)

[*English*]

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Mr. Speaker, I am holding in my hand the scientific study produced by Fisheries and Oceans Canada on the impact of the very geophysical surveys at Cacouna Harbour on the St. Lawrence beluga that my friend is asking about. I am surprised that he has not been able to get a copy, because I was able to find it readily on the Internet. It contains a detailed scientific analysis of the risks of those geophysical surveys. It includes a number of conclusions, which I mentioned in my remarks earlier, and imposes a number of restrictions on those surveys.

Now that I am aware that the New Democrats did not have access to this, it makes it a little easier for me to understand why they brought this motion. Therefore, I will provide it to my colleague when the debate concludes.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier in this debate, it was noted that the refineries in eastern Canada are supplied by many countries, some in the Middle East that have very questionable human rights records. The energy east program and the development of these pipelines to eastern Canada would displace this offshore oil with Canadian feedstock.

Could my hon. friend, who is from the legal profession and understands the notion of human rights extremely well, talk about the importance of replacing this kind of oil with oil from domestic sources?

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my colleague for that question. He and I served together on the environment committee. He is an extremely diligent and hard-working member who knows his science on environmental issues.

The member is quite right that at the moment, there is feedstock that comes to North America from countries around the world that are guilty of human rights practices that we would not contemplate in Canada. In fact, the ISIL group that is operating in the Middle East right now has access to oil resources, which it is selling on the black market. It is not entirely impossible that some of that oil will find its way to our shores.

On the other hand, Canadian oil is the most ethically produced oil in the world, and we should be using nothing but that throughout North America.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this, through you, Mr. Speaker. In 2008, the Prime Minister said, “We will not permit the export of bitumen to any country that does not have the same greenhouse gas regulations that we are imposing”. It was a campaign promise.

Can the member across defend the decision to export raw bitumen? Can he assure the House that raw bitumen will not end up in countries that have lesser standards than we do?

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Mr. Speaker, I regret that my colleague's question is a bit premature, because we have not even had the assessment completed for this terminal, much less had it built or had it able to start exporting any products. I want him to hang on to that question, and in due course, when we reach that point, I expect that he will ask it again.

However, I would say this to the member. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been one of the most faithful—

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

**The Speaker:** The hon. member is out of time anyway, which allows me to remind him that we do not use each other's proper names, just ridings or titles.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I fully understand the honourable member's concerns. However, I also know how critical safe shipping is to ensuring Canada's economic prosperity.

The simple fact is that Canada is a trading nation. We depend on doing business with other nations to ensure that we can maintain our high standard of living and that Canada can continue to grow. Trade accounts for more than 60% of our annual gross domestic product. One in every five Canadian jobs is directly linked to exports.

Natural resources—including oil, minerals, and agricultural and forestry products—remain essential to Canada's economy. The petroleum sector alone employs over 550,000 Canadians and provides over \$18 billion in tax revenues, which keep Canadians safe and healthy and allow us to enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world.

Marine shipping is a critical part of that. However, let me be clear: marine shipping, especially of oil, must be done safely and in an environmentally responsible manner. I am proud to say that Canada already has a robust tanker safety system. Oil has been transported along Canada's coasts for decades without major incident.

This is due to an extensive range of prevention measures including our strong regulatory and oversight regime, collaboration with our international partners and efforts by the shipping industry. Although Canada has a strong marine safety record, we need to be prepared to take advantage of trade opportunities as global markets and trade patterns change.

As we pursue our trade agenda, we need to ensure that Canadians and the environment continue to be protected. That is why our government has already taken action to put in place a world-class tanker safety system.

The world-class tanker safety system is a comprehensive suite of initiatives that aims to prevent marine oil spills from happening in the first place, clean them up quickly in the event that they do occur and ensure that polluters pay.

As announced last year, our government is already taking action to increase tanker inspections so that each and every foreign tanker that enters Canadian waters is inspected the first time it arrives at a port and annually afterwards. We are expanding aerial patrols under the national aerial surveillance program to deter polluters and identify any marine incidents early. We are conducting leading-edge research on new oil products to build our knowledge of how they behave in different marine environments. We are implementing the internationally recognized incident command system to help coordinate response efforts with multiple partners in case of an incident.

Our government also appointed the independent tanker safety expert panel to identify more ways to strengthen Canada's marine oil spill preparedness and response regime. We also heard from people and stakeholders across the country, and we have listened. We listened to Canadians, the provinces, industry, first nations and environmental organizations.

Earlier this year, we announced new actions under the world-class tanker safety system. In addition to the actions mentioned earlier, we are modernizing Canada's marine navigation system by taking a leadership role in implementing e-navigation and investing in state-of-the-art technology and services. This will provide real-time marine safety information to vessel operators to help avoid navigational hazards and marine accidents.

We are also establishing area response planning in four areas across Canada, including the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec, which will cover the Port of Gros-Cacouna. This will lead to response plans that are tailored to local conditions, such as the regional geography, vessel traffic, and environmental sensitivities.

● (1520)

We will also be expanding the response toolkit for oil spill cleanup by lifting legal barriers to using dispersants and other alternative response measures when they will have a net environmental benefit.

Our government will also be conducting and supporting research and development on new oil products, the pre-treatment of heavy oil products at source and a range of response techniques so that we will be equipped to respond in the event that there is an oil spill.

*Government Orders*

As well, we will be strengthening the polluter-pay principle by introducing legislative and regulatory amendments to enhance Canada's domestic ship-source oil pollution fund through Bill C-3, Safeguarding Canada's Seas and Skies Act. These amendments would remove the current per incident limit of the fund and make available, if necessary, the entire amount. When you add this to the amount available from international funds, about \$1.6 billion would be available to cover cleanup costs and provide compensation due to a marine oil spill. Although it has never happened in Canadian history, if all domestic and international funds were exhausted, our government would top up the ship-source oil pollution fund on a temporary basis to cover any remaining claims and cleanup costs, which would be recouped from industry through a levy.

I would like to take the opportunity to update the House on Bill C-3 and advise my colleagues that this important legislation has completed second reading in the other chamber, and will soon be studied at committee stage. By implementing a world-class tanker safety system, our government will continue to meet its commitment to protect Canadians and the environment, while responsibly transporting our natural resources.

• (1525)

[*English*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Simon Fraser University did a report for the group Evidence for Democracy indicating there was a muzzling of scientists in many government departments. The environment commissioner has also expressed other very serious concerns recently about the government's actions.

[*Translation*]

In this case, apparently, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans did not ask its scientists for information, or perhaps did not give the province of Quebec the information it was asking for about the belugas in the Saint Lawrence. Here again we see that the government is not letting the scientists speak. How can we accept this decision of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. The work he refers to was analyzed by scientists in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and was approved after strict conditions were attached to mitigate the risks for marine animals, particularly the belugas.

As the project is still in its exploratory phase, no formal proposal to build a marine terminal has been submitted to the promoter for consideration.

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my honourable colleague, who is very familiar with the situation in Quebec, whether he agrees with the injunction issued by the Quebec Superior Court saying that drilling cannot continue because there were no scientific opinions from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Alternatively, does he have doubts about the decision of the Quebec Superior Court? I do not understand anymore.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. If there were such a proposal, it would involve a comprehensive process of environmental review, as is the case for any major infrastructure or development project. No project will be

permitted unless it is determined that it is safe for the environment and for Canadians.

• (1530)

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague whether he believes that a spill or an accident would be a blow, not only to the St. Lawrence River ecosystem, but also to the entire tourism industry and to the economic benefits flowing from the sustainable development on the banks of the St. Lawrence River.

This is one of the world's jewels in terms of its ecosystems and navigable waterways. We are on our way to ignoring all the studies that have been done on the port of Gros-Cacouna and to letting the oil companies do what they want once more. We are going to let them determine what the law is in one of the most beautiful places on the planet.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I would like to allay his concerns by reminding him that, for decades now, crude oil has been shipped safely by sea from east to west in compliance with our regulations.

I feel that those same regulations will allow us to ship crude oil safely from west to east for decades to come.

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the motion moved by my colleague from Drummond. I will read the motion.

That, in the opinion of the House, the proposed Port of Gros-Cacouna oil terminal, which will be used for the sole purpose of exporting unprocessed Canadian oil, will have a negative impact on the Canadian economy through the loss of well-paid jobs, will constitute an unacceptable environmental threat to the St. Lawrence ecosystem, including the beluga whale population, and therefore, is not consistent with the principle of sustainable development, and must be rejected.

Everyone has heard of this issue. It has gotten a lot of media coverage over the past six or seven months. The Port of Gros-Cacouna would become a marine terminal for shipping oil on the St. Lawrence.

I am against this bill for a number of reasons. I am primarily against it because of the beluga nursery in the St. Lawrence. What is more, there will be environmental repercussions. All the ballast water from all those tankers will be discharged into the St. Lawrence.

The ships carrying oil to Asia or India or anywhere else return to the St. Lawrence filled with ballast water for increased weight and stability. When they get close to the Port of Gros-Cacouna, they discharge that water.

Under Canadian law, that water has to be discharged before entering the estuary and the gulf. However, the transporters are certainly not going to waste their money stopping to discharge ballast water before entering the gulf. As a result, it is discharged in the gulf and the estuary on the way to the Port of Gros-Cacouna.

*Government Orders*

What is more, that ballast water ends up in a completely different ecosystem. It might contain algae or other species when it is discharged into a completely different ecosystem. This may have consequences for the St. Lawrence, such as introducing exotic species. They are called exotic species when they are not normally found in an ecosystem. Unfortunately, that will happen in the St. Lawrence. That is one of my concerns. Increasing tanker traffic on the St. Lawrence, will increase this exchange of water and that will cause problems.

We have also heard a lot about the belugas, a species at risk in Canada. Last week, I read in a report by the World Wildlife Fund that wildlife species have dropped by 50% in the past 40 years. That is very worrisome.

The beluga is species at risk and it is our responsibility, and that of the government, to ensure that the conditions necessary to this species' survival are met.

Here are some troubling numbers: in 2000, there were approximately 1,000 belugas. That is not very many. There was another census in 2012 and there were 889. In one decade, 10% of the beluga population was decimated. Their numbers are even lower today, and that is cause for concern.

It was reported in the news last week that newborn beluga carcasses were being found on the shoreline of Kamouraska.

• (1535)

In 2012, 16 young beluga carcasses were found on the shoreline. A total of 10 have been found so far this year, and the year is not yet over. That is disturbing.

The reason why the Port of Gros-Cacouna initiative is troubling for the belugas is that the noise of the drilling can seriously harm them. As we know, marine mammals' hearing is far more developed than ours and the noise is amplified. I think we have every reason to be concerned.

In addition, there are all the problems that come with an oil spill. If this project goes ahead, heavy crude will be transported to the port. It will sink to the bottom of the St. Lawrence, unlike other crude, which normally floats. We are very concerned about oil spills.

A number of experts have spoken out against this project. Environmental experts have said that we need to be very careful. They raised concerns about an accident and oil spill in the St. Lawrence. I would like to read a quote from Équiterre from August:

Tar sands oil sinks when it comes into contact with water (unlike light crude, which floats). A spill in the St. Lawrence would have disastrous consequences for the dozens of municipalities that get their drinking water from the river.

That is another concern. There are about 80 waterways connected to the St. Lawrence. Can we really run the risk of that happening in this iconic Quebec river? This is a question we need to ask ourselves. I think this is a reflection of what happens when the Conservatives withdraw protection from waterways.

I want to make an aside to talk about an issue specific to my riding. My riding is home to one of the last uncovered creeks on the Island of Montreal, Bouchard Creek. A number of groups in my riding are trying to clean it up, since it contains a lot of ethylene

glycol, the de-icer used by Aéroports de Montréal to de-ice airplanes. These products end up in the creek. It should freeze over in the winter but it does not. I think it is a problem that Canada allows companies to shirk their environmental responsibility to protect waterways. I have already spoken to the minister about this. The creek runs into Lac St-Louis, which is part of the river. The creek is polluted and it goes through my riding. We are talking about the St. Lawrence, the iconic Quebec river, and the government is allowing all kinds of oil tankers travel along it without any real scientific study.

There is currently an injunction. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was to submit a scientific report in order for the work to start, but it was not submitted to Quebec. That is why the work has stalled.

I thank my colleague from Drummond for moving this motion. It is very important.

There is something else that I have not mentioned, and that is the topic of jobs. All of the crude oil in Canada could help to create jobs. The government says that it does not want to do anything in Canada. The energy east project is meant to start in Saint John, New Brunswick, where there are refineries and where we could have created jobs. As of now, we are being told that the crude oil will be exported.

• (1540)

That is another good reason why we should all support this motion. I hope that the government and the other parties will vote with the NDP.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to point out what I think is a real concern that Canadians should have with regard to the NDP's approach to this motion.

If we really stop to think about it, what the New Democrats are saying is that even though there has been no scientific study to say that this is a bad idea, we should making a political decision, not one based on science or on facts but, rather, based on the whims of the New Democratic Party in this case. They are the ones who have made the decision that this is a no-go. It causes me concern because I am from the Prairies. The development of our natural resources is not only in the best interests of the Prairies, but all of Canada.

Would the member not acknowledge that when we talk about economic or sustainable development, it is the wrong road to take if decisions are based on one's political party and what the party wants versus scientists, what studies will prove and the facts to demonstrate whether it should be a go or no-go?

[Translation]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I think this is unbelievable.

As one of my colleagues said, unlike the Liberals, our party will certainly not be giving the government a blank cheque. The Liberal member apparently thinks that there is nothing to prove this project is harmful to the environment, since the two-page report from Fisheries and Oceans Canada was not accepted.

*Government Orders*

Nevertheless, no expert has told us that this project would be good for the environment or for the whales, or that the ballast water would be a positive addition to the St. Lawrence River. According to the hon. member, since no experts have told us this is a bad project, we should not be discussing it here today.

I am proud that my party has introduced a motion to force a debate in this House to discuss the impact of the Gros-Cacouna project, something of great concern to Quebeckers. The St. Lawrence is an important river. I am pleased to learn that the hon. member is concerned about it, but I am worried about what is going to be added to the St. Lawrence's waters. Thus, it is important for us to talk about it today.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague from Winnipeg North, who made some excellent points. He opened the door to a question I always want to ask.

Knowing that their economic policies have failed completely and knowing that their socialist left wing ideology has failed, which happened when the Berlin Wall fell, what the New Democrats have done, through their politicization of the environment and science, is look around for something and they settled on the environment.

I have never heard such a rambling, incoherent, disconnected speech on the environment from my colleague in my entire life. She went from ballast water to de-icing fluid, on and on, completely misrepresenting and misunderstanding the situation itself.

Why is her party supporting a motion against this project long before the proposal has even been approved or any assessment has been done?

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the hon. member, I believe science and the environment go hand in hand. Here we are talking about job creation. It would be a good thing if the oil from the west could get to Saint John, New Brunswick, in order to create jobs. I did not say I was absolutely opposed to oil. I said I was worried about the millions of tonnes of oil that would be shipped on the St. Lawrence River every day.

In making such comments, the hon. member shows he does not know what ballast waters are. I would be very happy to educate him about ballast waters and their harmful effects on ecosystems like that of the St. Lawrence.

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see the NDP supporting the position that many people in the region have been arguing for since June. I will be supporting the motion.

I would like my colleague to clarify one simple point. The project includes a fork near Rivière-du-Loup. I understand that the NDP does not want an oil port at Gros-Cacouna, but is it opposed to the pipeline that goes all across Quebec to get to New Brunswick?

In my opinion, the whole project should be abandoned; it should not be happening in Quebec. I am worried, since the leader of the NDP indicated, on June 18, that he supports shipping oil to the east.

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, my leader said he was open to the possibility of having such a pipeline. Right now, there is a job deficit in Canada and this can create good job opportunities, if the refineries in New Brunswick can provide employment for a lot of people. Right now, many municipalities are opposed. We will have to study the final project once it is submitted. Still, my leader did say he was open to the idea, for now.

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker,

In the beginning, it lay sleeping.... A gigantic mantle of pure ice awaiting the coming of the Earth's spring. Then, cataracts of water gushing forth from the glaciers, rolling towards the ocean, gouging in the northerly soil of the Americas the bed of a colossal river and the greatest estuary on the planet.

Freshwater whirlpools collide with the vast salt waters flowing from the Arctic, overwhelming. And then, the miracle. Life explodes, microscopic and luxuriant. Hosts of fish, mammals and birds. Season after season, tide after tide, the harvest is renewed. Drawn by the inexhaustible wealth of these waters, creation's bravest and best gather to feed and to bond.

Humpbacked, bowhead and blue swim alongside dolphins and giant turtles, salmon, smelt, halibut, infinite schools of herring and cod.... The river is a torrent of life.

"*Magtogoek.*" The mighty river. So named by the first peoples.

These are the lyrical opening passages of Frédéric Back's 1993 animated film masterpiece.

Oh, my beautiful river, my immense St. Lawrence, with your tidal flats, your crosscurrents, your bars, reefs and shoals, your villages like beads on a rosary along the coast still remember, in their foundations, the shaking from the cannonballs of conquest, in your mists and gusts, your shields, your funnelled winds, your fogs and your ice covers.

Today I have listened to people speak the whole day. I have heard speeches by members of Parliament who do not know you, my river, in the heart of the valley of valleys where my nation lives, my mighty river, the artery that is vital to Quebec's development.

While I listened to them, I told myself that they have closed their eyes to Quebec's soul, and the soul of Quebeckers. There are no Quebeckers who at some point in their lives have not gone to admire the aquatic ballet performed by whales off the coast of Cacouna or Tadoussac. There are no Quebeckers who have not admired the flowing maritime beauty in the Lower St. Lawrence and the Saguenay fjord. The St. Lawrence is a precious and fragile legacy that Quebeckers want to safeguard for the generations to come. It is a unique and magnificent river, but a river at risk, a river that is choking, a river that has been polluted, mistreated and plundered, a river in need of oxygen and in dire need of love.

Of all the paths I have taken in my life, the road along the St. Lawrence River is the most beautiful and the most evocative. When I reach Île Verte, my present meets my past and all the generations who watched me grow up come to mind.

*Government Orders*

In the middle of the river, facing Tadoussac, at the slack water, the current never takes long to turn. The currents at the mouth of the Saguenay can reach 7 knots at the ebb tide. When the St. Lawrence tides turn, the water runs back up the current and rushes into the clear tributaries: the majestic Saguenay, the Sault-à-la-Puce, the Sainte-Anne-du-Nord, the l'Ombrette, the Gouffre, the Malbaie, the Sud and the Loup, the Escoumins and the Sault-au-Mouton, the Cèdres and Sault-au-Cochon, the Betsiamites and Papinachois, the Outardes and Manicouagan, the Franquelin and Godbout, the Trois-Pistoles, the Rimouski, the Mitis and the salmon-filled Matane.

The St. Lawrence is a great liquid lung that breathes water.

Today, the threat to the belugas' reproduction off Cacouna from the construction of a supertanker terminal port is only a prologue to a much broader issue—that of the environmental protection of the St. Lawrence, its tributaries, its marine life, and the coastal life and economic activity of an entire region.

What is the oil industry proposing, in fact? What are they offering us? To impose the burden of a long-standing and unimaginable threat over this fragile, unique and irreplaceable ecosystem against a few dozen jobs.

• (1550)

Accepting this offer would be like selling our soul for a mess of pottage, especially since the means we have today to respond to an oil spill in the St. Lawrence and in the Gulf are pitiful. According to a panel of experts, the resources available to us today would enable us to recover only between 5% and 15% of the oil that might spill into the St. Lawrence.

Every year, there are no fewer than 82 150,000-tonne ships, one every four days, sailing up the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the estuary to supply the Ultramar refinery in Lévis. This is in addition to the 10,000 commercial ships that make their way along the St. Lawrence river channel annually.

We have been told that the project would triple the number of supertankers that sail from the St. Lawrence estuary to the oil-importing countries. There are already too many hazardous materials on the St. Lawrence. What would remain of this mythical river after a major oil spill? What would be the impact of 150,000 barrels of oil spilling over the waters and the ice of the St. Lawrence and spreading for kilometres through its tributaries? And who would then go spend their vacation in the Charlevoix, in Tadoussac, Trois-Pistoles or Bergeronne, to look at a black tide full of dead seagulls, belugas and whales? Who would go fishing in the St. Lawrence estuary or in the salmon rivers polluted by an oil spill?

We will save the belugas because they must be saved. They will become the very symbol of this government's pro-oil stance and its defeat in the coming elections. Like the canaries that miners carried into the mines with them to warn them of danger, the belugas are warning us today that our development strategy is hazardous to our health.

Only an NDP government under the leadership of the member for Outremont will be able to reverse the trend and ensure that Canada will develop in a way that is respectful of the environment.

I have listened the whole day today to our opponents claiming that we are against development. We are not against development; we are in favour of sustainable development, as part of a sustainable approach, in favour of development where projects are approved by the communities, projects that safeguard natural resources for the generations to come—everything that this project is not.

This project threatens the most fragile ecosystem in Quebec, and it is not Canadian oil companies that are going to threaten this ecosystem. We are going to protect the St. Lawrence estuary, and the flowing waters of its rivers and tributaries. This is why we have tabled this motion to prevent the construction of a port terminal in Cacouna.

• (1555)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is anyone who undervalues the importance of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Whether it is the Nelson River in my own home province, or the Churchill River, or the Fraser River, they are all a very important part of our environment, our economy, and so forth. I am sure a number of the member's comments were an expression of his passion for our rivers. He really underscored how oil could cause so much harm. There are a number of tankers. We are talking about dozens of tankers that travel the St. Lawrence every year.

Am I to take from his comments that he would like to see the number of tankers reduced on the St. Lawrence maybe in favour of some other mode of transportation?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has understood quite well. Quebecers need to be given the opportunity to be supplied with Canadian oil and prevent transshipments and the transport of oil on the St. Lawrence. Indeed, if we started using oil from the oil sands heading to Montreal, we would no longer need tankers bringing oil from Algeria, Mexico and Venezuela. We would ensure a Canadian supply from Canada's natural resources.

[*English*]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there were many inaccuracies in not only the member's intervention today, but those of many of his colleagues.

I have the honour of serving as the chair of the environment and sustainable development committee, and I want to underline the fact that it is both. It is environment and sustainable development. I am proud of the record of our government when it comes to protecting our environment. In fact, the greenhouse gas emissions alone since our government took office have been reduced by over 5%, during a period of time when the economy grew by over 10%. That is a big contrast to the Liberal record when greenhouse gases rose by over 30%.

Why would the NDP oppose a proposal that has not even gone to the National Energy Board yet? Also, is my colleague implying that we should shut down all boating and shipping on the St. Lawrence Seaway?

*Government Orders*

•(1600)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle:** Mr. Speaker, too much oil is being currently moved on the St. Lawrence. Last week, Suncor announced the movement of 350,000 barrels from its facilities in Sorel, which poses an incredible and incalculable threat to ecosystems, not only in Cacouna, but also in every region along the St. Lawrence.

We need to find ways to move oil other than on the St. Lawrence because we cannot clean it up if there is a spill. There is currently no way to clean up the oil if it spills into the ice. Spills happen regularly. Our colleagues opposite pretend they do not. There are many oil spills in Canada, and there have been many in the St. Lawrence. If there were a major spill, and that does happen, we would not be equipped to deal with it. Only 5% to 15% of oil spilled into the St. Lawrence could be cleaned up. The rest would flow practically to the mouth of the tributaries, would pollute the entire gulf and would threaten the economy. Currently, the tourism industry generates \$250 million annually in that region. The Conservatives are not going to threaten that income.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion. I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Halifax West.

The Cacouna port project is no small potatoes, as the saying goes. According to *Le Devoir*:

TransCanada has ambitions of building...nothing less than the largest infrastructure in history for transporting and exporting oil from the oil sands.

As an aside, let me say that if this energy project is seeing the light of day today, that is partly because the government has failed with the Keystone XL pipeline. We are still waiting for a positive answer from the U.S. government. We have reached this stage because of the Conservative government's clumsy diplomacy, and now it is talking about building a major port on the St. Lawrence.

I will continue quoting the article from *Le Devoir*. TransCanada "actually wants to build a port that is unprecedented in the history of Quebec". That is no small thing. To better understand the scope of this project, the ships that will come to the port to take on cargo, "will carry two to five times more oil than the amount spilled by Exxon Valdez in Alaska in 1989"; this is according to *Le Devoir* once again.

It must also be noted that navigation in this part of the river will necessarily be complex. If the project gets the green light, and this was mentioned by my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, we would also be facing the problem of the discharge of enormous quantities of ballast water. As we all know, ballast water is a kind of conduit for invasive species that come from elsewhere and fundamentally and irreversibly alter aquatic ecosystems, in particular the Great Lakes ecosystem.

I will not say more about the potential impact of this gigantic project because the real nub of the question we are debating today, as far as I am concerned, is the process that will be used to either confirm or dispel the concerns about a future port in Cacouna. In other words, we are talking today about the quality and rigour of the environmental assessment process that will be used to reach a decision about this project.

We know that the assessment is coming and I have serious doubts about it. To begin with, I do not have a lot of confidence in the assessment, and that is partly because of one of the mammoth bills the government introduced in the House, a budget bill that, as we know, completely changed the rules for federal environmental assessments in this country. In other words, since 2012, energy projects such as pipelines are assessed not by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, but by the National Energy Board.

We are entitled to wonder whether that board has the expertise needed for properly assessing the impact of projects like these on the environment; we might also wonder whether its priority is to protect the environment or simply to advance the private interests of companies in the oil industry.

•(1605)

We know that because of that bill, in 2012, apart from the fact that responsibility for environmental assessments of these projects has now been handed to the National Energy Board, the number of stakeholders with the right to present their views on the potential environmental effects of an energy project has been reduced. That bill, which is now law, also shortened the time allowed for doing an environmental assessment. And last but not least, under the new law, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will now be acting as a mere consultant to the National Energy Board, and has had all its decision-making powers on this kind of project taken away.

I would like to draw a parallel between the environmental assessment that will be done for the energy east pipeline and the one that has already been done for the northern gateway pipeline project. In British Columbia, there is talk about the impact of a pipeline on whales. In that case, they are not belugas, they are humpback whales, off the coast of British Columbia.

In that environmental assessment, the issue was the risks that the pipeline project posed to the whales. According to a professor at the University of Calgary, the report and recommendations of the assessment committee frankly left a lot to be desired, because they seem to have disregarded the concerns about the fate of the whales in the context of the northern gateway pipeline project.

[*English*]

In recommending the approval of the project, Professor Shaun Fluker said that the National Energy Board panel erred by

...accepting that known threats to the humpback whale will occur from tanker traffic in critical habitat and [yet] by concluding that this will not be a significant adverse effect on the species.

Then he went on to say that:

Enbridge [the project's promoter] submitted that knowledge on whales is sparse, vessel strikes and other impacts on whales are unavoidable....

However, in the end, the panel wholly accepted Enbridge's view that the project would not have a significant adverse impact on the humpback whale. Therefore we see that, yes, the Energy Board does do assessments now, but when it comes to the impacts on wildlife and, in this case, on whales, it just seems to skirt the issue a bit.

*Government Orders*

Even if we can assume a rigorous environmental assessment process, we have to have good information, and we see that the government is not really forthcoming with good information that is the product of research by scientists. We know that scientists are muzzled; that is pretty clear. We have seen in the court case that imposed an injunction on the exploratory wells at Cacouna that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans was not very forthcoming with very important information needed for the decision on whether to allow exploratory wells. I am just saying that I am not very confident that the environmental review will be as rigorous as it should be.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and his contribution to this debate. However, I cannot help but point out the contradictions that we have seen over and over again in his leader's position on the Gros-Cacouna oil terminal project.

Regarding the Cacouna oil port, the member for Papineau said that we need to move forward. What about the lack of scientific evidence?

I would like to know how my colleague's leader can justify proceeding so blindly.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, we are open to economic progress. We do not close the door on every industrial project in the oil and gas sector. We must move forward with the pipeline.

However, the law and common sense dictate that we must proceed with a rigorous environmental assessment before making any final decisions regarding this project.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague is aware of the ruling handed down by the Quebec Superior Court, which issued an injunction against the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, which issued advice and a permit without consulting its scientific experts on the issue of beluga whales?

As we already knew from a recent report by Simon Fraser University, many departments are muzzling their scientists. In this case, the department gave advice without consulting its experts.

What does he think of the government's way of doing things?

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, a certain culture has been created within federal departments. Scientists are being muzzled and management is being given carte blanche to issue advice without consulting the experts.

It is as though the government gave its permission for departments to give non-scientific advice that appears scientific for all development projects, without having to consult any scientists.

A culture has been created where everyone believes they have this right. Officials in these departments feel they have the right to issue an opinion on subjects without having any evidence to back it up, in order to please the political higher-ups.

• (1615)

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, this is a very troubling issue, and I am grateful the official opposition has brought it to light, but it is not the only time that whales have been ignored in this part of the world in the efforts to develop petroleum. Seismic testing took place by Corridor Resources for Old Harry, which is a deepwater oil well currently proposed between the Magdalen Islands and Newfoundland and Labrador. Those tests took place during the migratory season for right whales, again, with no consultation with officials before it was approved.

I would love to know if the Liberal Party will join with the Green Party in calling for a moratorium on oil and gas development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that I think it is completely inappropriate that we allow exploratory work at very sensitive times of the life cycle of whales in this particular case. It is obvious from my remarks that I think the decision that was made on the northern gateway, a review panel decision that ignored the impacts on the humpback whale, is a mistake. It really undermines confidence in the environmental processes that are going to be done in future by the National Energy Board. Yes, we have to be sensitive to these seasonal patterns and so on. That is why the Superior Court in Quebec made the decision it did, and I agree with that decision.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this misguided NDP motion.

The motion we are debating calls on the federal government to outright reject a proposed Port of Gros-Cacouna oil terminal.

Unfortunately, as the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans pointed out yesterday in this House, no proposal for the terminal construction has been submitted yet. No assessment has been done.

[*English*]

The Cacouna terminal is one component of TransCanada's energy east pipeline proposal. Actually, it is not yet a proposal because it has not put it forward to the NEB yet, but that is the idea. TransCanada's exploratory drilling in Cacouna has been temporarily halted by the courts, as we have discussed today a great deal.

As we know, the company has been studying the composition of the seabed in that part of the St. Lawrence to determine if it is suitable for a terminal site. Of course we are very concerned about the situation there with the belugas and how this decision came about.

A marine terminal in Cacouna and another in Saint John, New Brunswick, would allow TransCanada, as it proposes, to export oil from Alberta as part of the energy east project.

It is estimated that the energy east project, if approved by the NEB, would pump the equivalent of 1.1 million barrels of crude oil a day through the pipeline to refineries and terminals in Quebec and New Brunswick. This is a big project. There is no question about it.

*Government Orders*

We are talking about some 4,600 kilometres of pipeline. The company says it would generate more than \$2 billion in tax revenues for the Province of Quebec alone. It would also create 2,200 jobs in the development phase, 7,300 jobs during construction, and more than 500 jobs in operation.

[*Translation*]

Canada needs new infrastructure, including pipelines, to move our energy resources to domestic and global markets. These projects must earn the trust of local communities and cannot ignore the implications for coastal economies and the environment. Liberals have been consistent in calling for stronger environmental protections and pushing for a more substantive project review process.

We are deeply concerned that the federal government deliberately withheld information needed to assess the impact of the explorations being conducted at Cacouna.

This is yet another example of the government preventing scientists and evidence from informing decision-making on project developments. The federal government must turn over all the information it has to Quebec, so that the impact of the exploratory work can be properly assessed. This is the only way to determine and mitigate the impacts TransCanada's work might have, including on the beluga whale population in the case of Cacouna.

• (1620)

[*English*]

In this motion, the NDP is asking Parliament to reject a project that has yet to be submitted for approval and has not yet been put through an environmental assessment. This comes after the NDP leader promised last December to "...take arbitrary powers out of the hands of cabinet", so it could not override the findings of environmental assessments.

Apparently, now it wants to pass this motion to demand that cabinet do exactly what it said it should not do, which is take arbitrary actions in the absence of an environmental assessment.

What is the NDP policy on this? Is it environmental assessments or arbitrary action? Does the NDP want an independent process or not? Apparently it does not.

The NDP's central argument here, though, as it was in a debate this spring on the Keystone XL pipeline is that the export of unprocessed Canadian oil will cause the loss of well-paid jobs. That is the first issue and the main issue the New Democrats cite in the motion today.

The NDP is saying the oil has to be refined in Canada, every drop of it. Does this mean it is saying it would have the government subsidize refineries? Refineries have been shutting down because they have not been competitive. In fact, the demand for petroleum products in the North American continent is declining, unlike in most parts of the world.

The NDP wants to tell the market how it should work. Perhaps the plan is to have the government build refineries. The New Democrats have not actually considered the economics of this. In fact, there is lots of evidence that they are out to lunch in what they are saying here.

It costs about \$10 billion to build a refinery. It would be about 5% of the federal budget just to build one. Therefore, the question is where New Democrats will find this money. Will they raise taxes? What will they cut?

Environmental and industry groups have said there is no market case for refining in Canada. Even environmentalists say there is no market case for refining in Canada. Generally speaking, refining is done close to the market because a lot of the products for refining are volatile and should be moved as little as possible. New Democrats ignore this reality. However, if the products can be refined economically in Canada, Liberals are all for it. That is great; we want to create jobs here, but let us have an economic case and let us not ignore economics in this case.

New Democrats want to engage in magical thinking and ignore these things, so how are they going to cause it to happen? That is a good question. I do not know. However, let me be clear. I do not believe that Canadians have much confidence in the NDP to determine what makes economic sense, so I am not too worried about that.

This is really about the NDP wanting to say one thing in Alberta and something else in Quebec. In Alberta, New Democrats want to appear to support the development of the oil sands and in Quebec they want to appear to be opposed. In the Atlantic, New Brunswick especially, they want to appear to be in favour of the pipeline but want to appear in Quebec to be opposed to a pipeline.

They say no oil should be exported unless every drop is refined in Canada. Is it their position that the oil should stay in the ground? If that is the case, why do they not have the courage to say so? If this is not what they are proposing, then I invite them to tell us what their position is.

What is the point of view of industry? This is what the Canadian Fuels Association said about pipelines:

In a nutshell, new pipeline capacity...is essential to enable Canada to fully benefit from...oil production in a world where energy demand is expected to grow by more than one-third by 2035. Failure to get our oil to markets is detrimental to Canada's economic growth and Canadians' prosperity. West-to-East pipelines that provide Eastern Canadian refineries with access to Western crude will help secure their future and the jobs they provide and communities they support.

Ironically, the leader of the NDP has said he supports energy east. Yes, that is right. We would not have believed it earlier today when New Democrats were attacking the leader of the Liberal Party for saying he was supportive of energy east provided, of course, there was the proper environmental process. They were attacking him for that, which appears to be the same thing as their own leader has been saying. It is a little hard to understand what they are getting at here exactly. Maybe some of the NDP MPs missed that endorsement by their leader or maybe they are more interested in playing political games.

*Government Orders*

It is interesting that our NDP friends support the pipeline on one hand and reject the terminal on the other. Do they really expect Canadians, particularly Quebeckers, to be fooled by such obvious trickery? Yes, in both cases they ought to go through the proper process, and in fact the Conservatives should allow the Quebec government to have the proper information on which to base their decision in a case like Cacouna. That terminal should only go ahead if it makes sense scientifically.

I think all of us in this room, I hope, are concerned about the belugas. They are a threatened species. We ought to be very concerned about them. We do not want them to be harmed, so let us be careful what we do in that situation in the St. Lawrence.

I could understand if the NDP had brought forward a motion saying that the Cacouna project should not get approval unless there were guarantees it would not constitute an unacceptable environmental threat to beluga whales in the St. Lawrence. If New Democrats were acting responsibly, that is what they would have done, and I believe everyone in the House probably would have supported that, because they must be protected. However, New Democrats are asking us to kill a project that has yet to be proposed and on which no assessment has been carried out.

• (1625)

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I simply cannot believe what I just heard. I just heard from the same party that was in power for almost 100 years and made sure that secondary and further processing in the fishery would never be done, that it would be sent to Japan or any other place in the world, and it would not create jobs with our own materials.

Now he just got up and said the same thing. He said taxpayers will have to pay for a refinery. No, the business that is taking the oil out of the ground will be the one building it. Do Liberals not trust that Canadians could do their own refining and sell it across the world, making the money and creating the jobs here in Canada, instead of sending our jobs all around the world?

That is what the leader of the NDP said: that the jobs should be our jobs. It is our revenue. It is our primary resource and it has to be done here by our people. The Liberal Party has given all the jobs to other countries instead of keeping them here in our own country.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** First, Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy my hon. colleague's passion. However, I wish the level of his logic would reach the level of his passion. If he were in Saudi Arabia, for example, I think he would say that no oil should leave Saudi Arabia because it should all be processed right there. That is what he would say. They should not export it and have benefits come to their country as a result.

I have talked already today about the economic case. Economists, the industry, and even environmentalists admit that there is not an economic case for more refineries in Canada. I invite him and his colleagues to listen to what I am saying: one of the few continents in which the demand for petroleum products is in decline is in fact North America.

If there are cases to have refineries here in Canada, let us have them, absolutely, but let us have an economic basis. Let us live in the real world. Let us not just engage in magical thinking.

**Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thought I would just chime in on this fascinating debate.

I appreciated most of my hon. colleague's speech. I just want to catch a couple of points.

His colleague with whom he shared his time mentioned the northern gateway, and it is true that based on science and fact, we accepted the recommendations of the National Energy Board to impose 209 conditions on that project in order for it to proceed. In fact, 50% of those would have to be completed before shovels could be in the ground.

There is a bit of a discrepancy here. I would call it cherry-picking. They have a certain amount of enthusiasm for energy east, which has not even gone into the environmental assessment process, yet they reject the science- and fact-based position of an independent organization, the National Energy Board, on the northern gateway project.

I am just wondering if that member can reconcile what appears to be a competing claim on a project-to-project basis.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, what the hon. minister is suggesting is that we cannot be in favour of one pipeline and against another. That makes no sense to me at all.

Yes, we want to have good, strong environmental processes. In fact, the way the government has weakened those processes leaves us very concerned about projects like northern gateway.

However, we believe we ought to have an independent process, contrary to the NDP, which wants to have an arbitrary process. The NDP wants us to vote today and decide right now what happens with this project. That does not make any sense either.

Let us have a good, strong environmental process and make our decision. In the case of northern gateway, we have very strong concerns about the course it has taken and the environmental impacts it would have, and it is legitimate for us to have those concerns.

In the case of energy east, we want a good environmental process. We are open to it. We think it has many benefits. Let us see it, but let us do it based on science, the kind of science that has been squelched by the government, squelched by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans' department.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for York South—Weston, Social Development.

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limouilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to this fundamental motion. I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague, the hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

*Government Orders*

Before I begin my speech, I would like to say something else. I have had the great privilege of sitting as a member of Parliament for three years now, and I have often condemned the government for its ingenuousness and naivety, at best, or at worst, its complicity in dismantling our economy and transforming us into a nation of hewers of wood and drawers of water—

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

**Mr. Raymond Côté:** Look at them laughing, Mr. Speaker. Sure, they can go to cocktail parties with big business here in Ottawa, or in Toronto, Montreal or Calgary. The reality is that we have become nothing more than providers of natural resources, except for some high-tech sectors that are struggling to get by but have to face global competition. I have heard some talk about that from the aerospace industry and other high-tech businesses.

After listening to the speech by the hon. member for Halifax West, I have to admit that my charges of ingenuousness, naivety, or at worse, complicity, also apply to the Liberals. I can hardly believe that this member could claim that there was absolutely nothing to be done with respect to adding value to our natural resources, oil in this instance. I am going to give him some time to understand this as I give him a brief course on the subject.

In the petroleum marketplace, there has been massive consolidation at the refining stage. A number of Canadian refineries have closed, which has reduced the distribution of refined products and forced prices upward, as the refinery margins have increased. When a market is left to operate as it wishes, it tends to consolidate and become an oligopoly.

I cannot stop the hon. member for Halifax West, or any of my Conservative colleagues, from drinking the Kool-Aid they are offered at the cocktail parties they attend. However, I will not let them serve that Kool-Aid to the people of Canada, because I am convinced something can and must be done.

In fact, there are many countries on the international market that make Canada look like a Boy Scout in comparison, like a little boy in shorts getting bullied in the schoolyard. One day we will need to wake up because, while they savour their great success stories, when I go meet people in the field, as I did all summer long, and as I will continue doing this fall and winter, people talk to me about their concerns. They are afraid of losing their homes, they want to have a decent job, and they want their kids to have a future. That is the reality of the situation.

Let us talk now about the issue that concerns us, another part of the situation. The issue is truly important because the future of vast regions and populations that are very proud of their identity, their history, their achievements and, most of all, their way of life is at stake. We cannot place them in jeopardy just to address specific interests, or even one interest.

Let me tell you a bit about my childhood. I grew up in Saint-Rédempteur, which is now part of Lévis. That same city of Lévis, now unified, houses one of eastern Canada's very large refineries, the Ultramar refinery, which operates at full capacity. Over the past few years, it again invested hundreds of millions of dollars to improve production. My father, who was a carpenter, helped build the refinery in the 1960s and 1970s, so it is part of my heritage, in a way.

● (1635)

The reality is that the Ultramar refinery is fed, almost entirely, by imported oil. We can always discuss the merits and problems of importing oil, but beyond that, there is a very clear reality for eastern Canada, in that it is largely dependent on foreign markets for its supply of petroleum products.

This is the kind of debate the House should hold on other days. The problem must be taken seriously because it concerns our collective future and our quality of life. We must not ignore the fact that the world changes very quickly. Of course, Conservatives want, at all costs, to live like in the good old days, but life is change. Life is progress. Being progressive means meeting the challenges of everyday life head-on.

Regardless of what options are chosen following these debates about our energy future, we must realize that the oil industry is risky, in every aspect. I will use an analogy. Driving involves a risk. I regularly drive between Quebec City and Ottawa. That is a risk, but it is a risk that can be managed. Driving the wrong way on the highway, on the other hand, is a totally unacceptable, reckless and suicidal risk.

If we consider the goal that building the Gros-Cacouna oil terminal is intended to achieve, a goal tied strictly to export, that is like wanting to drive the wrong way on the highway. Why are the Liberals and Conservatives so intent on closing their eyes, letting things run their course and finding themselves with a *fait accompli*? Why let it get to the point of no return? We will be left with an unmanageable legacy.

We really have to think clearly on this. There will have to be a debate about the decisions to be made for bringing oil from the west to the east. We will have to examine options. In the case of the Gros-Cacouna port, the debate we are having today is precisely about putting quality of life in the balance, or even the possibility that we will have thousands of people living in a fragile environment. If I had more speaking time, I could have talked about the beautiful landscapes in Kamouraska and Cacouna, for example, with their lowlands that are bathed by the salt water of the river.

I recall a battle to protect the aboiteaus, several decades ago now. That shows just how interconnected the farmlands and the river are.

When we understand the river environment of the St. Lawrence, we know just how enormous the constraints of that environment are, with its currents and tides, and we know that a spill would be an immeasurable and virtually unmanageable disaster. It would affect virtually everyone from the Île d'Orléans to Matane or Sept-Îles.

● (1640)

We cannot disregard the fate of those communities to fulfill the wishes of a single very small group.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with amazement to the speeches of the New Democrats. It must be nice to be on planet NDP.

The New Democrats say that there are not enough jobs and that people are struggling for survival. One of his colleagues said that there was too much oil being shipped on the St. Lawrence and that the shipping should be reduced. They sneer at natural resource jobs, calling them hewers of wood and drawers of water. I represent a constituency of hewers of wood and drawers of water and they are very proud of what they do. They work very hard. We represent the working person here. Those members do not.

Given that the New Democrats claim to represent the working person and many union pension plans are invested in natural resource industries, which they claim to detest, does he have the intestinal fortitude to recommend that union pension plans reduce their holdings of natural resource industries to zero?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, but he has clearly lost touch with reality. In no way am I claiming that jobs in the oil industry are poor quality jobs and that they should not be filled. Quite the contrary. It is an economic activity like any other. However, it is an activity whose issues must be clearly understood. We must also understand that exporting our raw resources brings about some benefits, but the benefits are so limited that the jobs that will not be created can be reckoned in the hundreds of thousands.

It is amusing to see my colleague continue along the same path and ignore the example of many countries that put a huge value on their natural resources and, moreover, import huge amounts of natural resources for processing. Meanwhile, Canada is content just to sell them off at rock-bottom prices. My colleague is going to have to be answer for that one day.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member. My concern is the St. Lawrence. It is a beautiful river. It has contributed immensely to Canada's economic well-being, has a wonderful history from an environmental point of view and is a beautiful place to visit.

Listening to some of the arguments that have been presented this afternoon, could the member provide some clear indication of what the NDP position is on any sort of economic development on the St. Lawrence? Is it the position of the NDP that an environmental study is not necessarily required, that in fact a political party can make a decision? Do the New Democrats have any base requirement that would say we would want some sort of scientific study, an environmental assessment, prior to a decision being made, or do they believe it is okay to make a decision before any sort of an assessment?

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his question. His comment is very interesting, actually. As the member of Parliament for Beauport—Limoilou, I have to deal with the consequences of the decisions made by Jean Chrétien's Liberal government, which decided to relieve Transport Canada of the management of port authorities and hand them over to agencies that are little different from private companies.

### *Government Orders*

Currently, at the Port of Québec, there is virtually no accountability to local authorities and to the people directly. When it comes to facing up to the requirements of the social acceptability of environmental assessments, the Liberals already have a black mark against their name.

I am prepared to deal with those consequences. I have people telling me about their health problems because of the polluted air coming from the Port of Québec. But the case is before the courts and in the hands of the lawyers. It will go on for years. We need solutions immediately. That is what we are proposing.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we in the NDP respect science just as we respect the law. At home, we have a piece of legislation called the Environment Quality Act. The decision to stop drilling was made pursuant to that act, based on the precautionary principle, because of the presence of a threatened species, the belugas.

That may be an alien principle for the Liberals and the Conservatives. But we in our caucus support it.

[*English*]

I will talk about the river and the beluga. I will also talk about the reasons why we reject the chosen location of Cacouna for a terminal for export.

I will start with a poem by Judith Farley:

St. Lawrence, kingly River!  
What legends o'er it dwell,  
They slumber in each hollow,  
And on its billows swell;  
They breathe, o'er its fair landscape,  
And lend a pleasing charm  
To sunny bays and inlets,  
To homesteads bright and warm.

Those homesteads have been there a long time. The river has been populated for over 9,000 years. It was called Kaniatarowanenneh by the St. Lawrence Iroquis people who settled it 9,000 years ago. It was known as the Champlain Sea then and over time, it has seen many changes. It has always been a river for trading. Quartzite, copper, jasper, flint were all traded. It was also used for transport. It was used for fishing for sustenance. The islands on it were used for burial mounds. It has been used by humans for a long time, and no one is arguing that we stop humans from using the river.

Belugas ended up in the river. I mentioned the Champlain Sea and I mentioned the amount of time, 9,000 years. Belugas are adapted to the Arctic, so one has to wonder why they are so far south? Why are they swimming around in the St. Lawrence? During the time of glaciation, which was about 10,000 years ago, they might have already been there. They might have been there longer than human beings.

I feel bad for belugas. They are so pleasing to the eye and people like them so much. People think we are saying that we should protect them because of the way they look, but my reason for protecting them is a bit more selfish and a bit more anthropocentric.

### *Government Orders*

The beluga is known as a sentinel species, or an indicator species. It means that when we study the beluga, we can actually see the health of our own communities. It was not always this way.

In 1928, the Province of Quebec offered a monetary reward for every beluga killed because people were competing with them for fish. One hundred years later we do not have the same way of thinking. Scientists look at certain species in our ecosystem and count them as indicator species. They indicate how well we are doing as human society in terms of protecting our environment and our own human health, and we contract the changes.

The reason why belugas are indicator species is because they are long-lived, top of the food chain, and they have lots of fat and blubber. Different substances can be found stored in the fat. In 1996, a study was done and unfortunately it found that DDT, lead, mercury and cadmium were in beluga carcasses. One would wonder why DDT would be found in them since we got rid of that. As I said, they are long-lived and they store these substances in their fat. A lot of belugas died from these substances.

Beluga contain so many toxic contaminants in their carcasses that they are considered toxic waste. When they wash up on the shore, people are told not to touch them because they are so contaminated with human chemicals. PCBs and all sorts of contaminants have been found. The fact that so many contaminants were found in the belugas in 1996 was the reason why people started to monitor the health of the St. Lawrence.

Canada and Quebec got together to come up with a recovery plan for these populations. They were going to try to rehabilitate the beluga population. Following up on that in 2009, they looked at the beluga whale population and said that it was not recovering the way they thought it would, and they had theories explaining why.

• (1650)

Some of the reasons were anthropogenic, which means human caused. They had habitat degradation, diseases from runoff, maritime traffic and contaminants.

The precautionary principle that informed the decision that the Quebec court made was based on the fact that foraging would perhaps degrade the habitat, would perhaps increase maritime traffic. The reason they stayed that decision to forage there was to protect the beluga. Again, it is not because belugas are cute, but because they perform something in our ecosystem. They are an indicator species for the health of our ecosystems. As long as they are there, we can monitor them and look at how well we are doing and how we are taking care of our own water and lands.

The water off of Cacouna is the essential habitat of the beluga. The presence of the beluga should be a sign, I would say, that this is the worst place to locate an export terminal for unprocessed bitumen.

Having said that, I also want to talk about the whole idea of exporting unprocessed bitumen.

I think there is a lack of imagination on the part of the Conservatives when they look at our natural resources. The NDP support the extraction and transformation of Canadian bitumen; however, we would prefer that it be in Canada.

We always hear from Liberals and Conservatives that this is not realistic, that Canadians cannot consume enough oil, that our population is not large enough. I am sorry, but we are close to New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore. I could go on listing American cities that consume petrol. There is no shortage of consumption of petrol in North America. It is within the whole refinery shed of a Canadian refinery.

Our leader has spoken on this. He said that our extraction of this resource has to be sustainable. When he spoke about the Keystone pipeline, he said:

Keystone represents the export of 40,000 jobs.... We have never taken care of our energy security. We tend to forget that a 10-year supply to the U.S. is a 100-year supply to Canada. We are still going to need the energy supply to heat our homes and run our factories, whether it comes from the oil sands or it comes in the form natural gas. Fossil fuels are always going to be part of the mix [for a long time to come].

I could talk for a long time about the need to make the transition to more renewable sources of fuel. I worked for a year on a study in the natural resources committee which looked at innovation in the energy sector. Many witnesses said that Canada was missing the boat when it came to innovating in the energy sector. They said that Canada was not investing enough and not looking at research on geothermal energy, wind energy, solar energy, a greater mix of fuels that we could have, and that we could actually be leaders in the field of renewable energy.

There was a promise made in 2008 by the Prime Minister. He said at the time that export of raw bitumen to countries that had lower standards than ours should not be allowed, and that he would do everything in his power to prevent the export of raw bitumen to countries that did not have the standards of refining and processing that we have. Yet, I have been here almost four years and I have never heard anything from the Prime Minister to bring in a law that would prevent the export of raw bitumen to countries with lower standards than Canada's.

All these reasons that I mentioned, the beluga, the river and the export of raw bitumen, are the reasons we cannot support the location of this terminal at Gros-Cacouna.

• (1655)

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have to say at the outset that I have had the good fortune of flying out of Bagotville and have seen the belugas around the mouth of Saguenay many times. They are beautiful creatures, and we should do everything we can to protect them. I agree with that totally.

I am also old enough to remember the great pipeline debate back in the day. I do not remember all of the details of it as I was not that old, but I do remember the rancour of the debate. I recall that the party of which the NDP is the legacy party was dead set against the pipeline for similar rationale that we are hearing today. There was some kind of environmental or scientific assessment done at that time and they went ahead with it after that scientific process was done.

I am curious as to why it was okay then, and I realize this is a bit dated, but it is not okay now to let the assessment go ahead with the qualified people who are there to make these kinds of assessments and then decide, rather than making up one's mind before the first bit of science is in.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Mr. Speaker, for the reasons that I mentioned, the fact is that foraging itself might actually disturb the habitat so that the beluga will not return.

In reference to the pipeline debate of 1956, I can inform the member that the CCF was largely opposed to that project because of Canadian financing from Canadian taxation for an American company that had questionable characters in it, such as Clint Murchison, at the time, who was a Texas oilman and whose allegiances to Canada were questioned.

Part of the rancour of that whole debate was the Speaker reversing the decision on black Friday and the impact that had upon the House. Also, it was the first use of closure since 1913, which was an affront to Canadian democracy at the time. Unfortunately, we have seen it used 80 times now. That bad precedent set by the Liberals has been continued by the Conservatives, unfortunately.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to Gros-Cacouna being the worst location in which we could have a terminal of this nature.

It does beg the question, from his perspective what would be the ideal location? Is there a place along the St. Lawrence he feels would be more appropriate?

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Mr. Speaker, I would prefer that scientists rather than oil companies choose the location.

If we could get a council of scientists that would choose the location for the TransCanada company, I would be comfortable with that. I would accept the recommendations of those scientists when they chose that area, as long as they were independent and not scientists hired by the company itself. It would have to be a completely independent body that would choose that location, rather than an oil company.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's detailed speech made a strong case for our position as a party.

As someone who represents a part of the country where we both rely on natural resources and have a very rich ecosystem, including wildlife like beluga whales, we know it is important to strike a balance to ensure that our exploitation of natural resources and that our livelihoods do not hurt what is so near and dear to us, like the beluga whale or the polar bear, or fragile ecosystems in our north.

In fact, many of us fought back against a proposal to ship crude oil through the Bay line, through the port of Churchill into the Arctic for that very reason, because we need to ensure that balance is struck.

I would like to ask my colleague, in terms of our party's strong position in support of value-added jobs and ensuring that our development of economic resources benefit our communities, to comment on that and the importance of balancing that with protecting fragile ecosystems and increasingly fragile wildlife.

• (1700)

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to preface my comments by saying that I believe all work done in Canada has value to it. With respect to the question about value-added jobs, I think that everyone working on the landscape in the resource industry is adding value to the Canadian economy. I do not want that to be questioned.

However, with creativity, I think we can see the value of preserving the ecological beauty of Canada for tourism for generations to come, rather than looking at things in the short term. I think the strategy to do short-term exports of raw bitumen is misplaced. I think the plan to build a pipeline to Texas is an export of 40,000 jobs. I would like to see jobs being created in Canada, people working with Canadian resources, transforming them, and moving our economy forward.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we resume debate, I will let the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour know that there is approximately 13 minutes remaining in the time allocated for the business of supply today, so I will need to interrupt her at around the 5:15 p.m. mark. However, I will give the usual indication when we are getting close to that time.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to join this debate today, but to be quite frank, I am very surprised that we are actually having this debate. In British Columbia where I am from, the provincial NDP leader announced that he was not going to support a project which he had originally said he was going to wait for the environmental assessment review on. He announced he was not going to support it, to everyone's surprise and shock. Certainly the voters told him what they thought of that particular move in the recent election there. Here we have a project that has not even been applied for, and the New Democrats are opposing it off the top. We have scientists in place, plans in place, systems in place. They might want to learn from their counterparts in British Columbia about allowing proper processes to go through. Anyway, we are here to speak to this motion by the member for Drummond.

As all members know, Canada's energy sector is of great importance to our national economy and our quality of life. Energy is our leading export. The oil and gas sector generates 7.5% of Canada's GDP. All Canadians depend on this energy for their homes and transportation. Over 190,000 people depend on the oil and gas industry for their jobs and their livelihood. In addition, the energy sector provides many other benefits to Canadians. I have to note that almost every time I get on a plane to come to Ottawa, or I go from Kamloops to Vancouver or Calgary, the plane is filled with people who are going to work in Alberta. They are supporting their families. Those jobs are incredibly important to them and to their families.

*Government Orders*

The energy sector has paid royalties and taxes to government totalling over \$23 billion annually over the last five years. These government revenues have helped pay for programs and services for all Canadians, including education, health care and pensions. Again, I have to look at the New Democrats. We consistently hear them wanting a whole variety of new spending on social programs, 45-day work years, increases to this and increases to that. Then they say no to absolutely everything that would potentially provide the resources for some of these programs they are asking for. Canada is very fortunate to have a great wealth of oil and gas resources. We can all take comfort in knowing that the energy sector will continue to generate significant economic activity throughout Canada, including jobs and government revenues for many years to come.

It is for these vital economic reasons that our government is proud to say that we support Canada's energy sector and all of our resource industries. That is why we created our plan for responsible resource development, a plan to ensure the success of Canada's resource industries and the protection of our environment.

Under this plan, we have focused on four key objectives.

We have made the regulatory review process for major projects more timely and predictable. That is really important. Investors need to get to a yes or a no in a relatively timely fashion. Now we have set timelines. Again, getting to that yes or no is absolutely critical.

We have reduced duplication across federal agencies and with provincial organizations. I remember the day when the provincial government would have a process, for example, for a mining project, and the federal government would have a process. There would be duplication of many things. We have taken those processes and had them make more sense so there is not that duplication across the organization.

We have enshrined stronger environmental protection measures in legislation, including new enforcement and compliance tools. We are also strengthening protections for marine transportation, offshore development and pipeline safety.

We are also strongly committed to engaging first nations in every aspect of resource development, underpinning all of these objectives and the many benefits they will bring.

It is a basic fact that major resource projects will only be approved if they are safe for Canada and safe for the environment.

I would like to also note that the Kinder Morgan pipeline has gone through the Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo riding for over 60 years now. When I look at that road, I understand if that pipeline were not there to move that oil to where it goes, there would be 2,300 trucks per day on that highway.

• (1705)

I drive that highway, and I know it is a two-lane highway. There are very few passing lanes. There are some horrific accidents, and I can only imagine what 2,300 extra trucks per day on that road would do.

The community of Kamloops looked at it just the other day and made some suggestions around the routing of the pipeline. We certainly recognize the importance of the gas to the people in

Vancouver who regularly use it. I understand that 90% of the gas they use actually comes through that Kinder Morgan pipeline. They probably need to reflect on that particular issue.

I have talked a little bit about pipeline safety, and it is certainly something we all care about. We care about it for the safety of our families, the safety of our communities, and the safety of our environment. I just talked about that road and what the impact to it would be.

Canada's pipelines are among the safest in the world. Between 2008 and 2012, 99.999% of crude oil and petroleum products transported through federally regulated pipelines in Canada was moved safely. Furthermore, during the last 3 years, 100% of the liquids spilled on these pipelines were completely recovered. Our pipeline safety record is outstanding and compares well to the record of Europe and the United States.

There are some 73,000 kilometres of federally regulated pipelines found throughout Canada. These pipelines transport \$100 billion worth of oil, natural gas, and petroleum products each year. That is, of course, just the activity that is within Canada. Beyond our borders, as global energy markets change, other nations are moving quickly to capture growing energy markets in places like China and India. As a result, Canada must act now if it wants to continue to fully benefit from the vast resource wealth.

Here, we are talking about the east coast, but I look at British Columbia and the keen interest of the province in terms of the opportunities around LNG. It is very actively trying to enjoy those opportunities for the benefit of British Columbians and Canadians.

Virtually all Canadian exports of oil and gas are destined for the United States, but growth of the unconventional gas and oil industry in the U.S. is making it essential for Canada to broaden its customer base. There is no question that Canada will continue to be a key supplier to the U.S., but shifting global demand and supply conditions clearly make it imperative for Canada to access new growing markets for its energy.

A key to achieving this market diversification is the development of new Canadian infrastructure. To support such expansion, our government is taking concrete actions to strengthen pipeline safety, marine safety, and rail safety, so that our energy transport system continues to be truly world class. The government will soon be introducing legislation to strengthen Canada's pipeline safety regime, and this new legislation will further contribute to its plan for responsible resource development by strengthening incident prevention preparedness and response, and by increasing liability and compensation.

Canada can rightfully be proud of its record for pipeline and marine safety. At the same time, we should never stop trying to do better. It is crucial to keep improving technology and updating regulations to further enhance pipeline safety.

We intend to enshrine the polluter pays principle in law, so that polluters, not taxpayers, will be held financially responsible for the costs and the damages they cause. We will introduce no-fault liability. We will require companies operating pipelines to hold minimum financial resources for incident response. For companies operating major oil pipelines, this financial requirement will be set at \$1 billion. Together, these measures will significantly strengthen our pipeline safety regime.

All proposed pipelines will undergo a thorough, objective, science-based review, which will be through the regulatory process of the National Energy Board.

• (1710)

The National Energy Board will consider the potential environmental effects of increased marine shipping activities that would result from proposed projects, including the potential effects of accidents or malfunctions within the scope of its review.

As I stated earlier, no project will be approved unless the government is satisfied that it is safe for Canadians and for the environment.

In conclusion, right now no country in the world transports oil and gas as safely as in Canada. Canadians expect, and deserve, that government and industry should continually strive for the highest safety standards possible in the movement of oil and gas. The pipeline project would play an important role in the export of Canada's energy. The NEB will fully consider the potential impacts.

Again, the NDP wants to say no to a project before there is even an application. It is absolutely absurd. On this side of the House, we believe in having an intense, robust, strong process and letting the scientists do the evaluation, the assessment, make the decisions and advise government on how to move forward.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite used the word “absurd” near the end of her speech. According to her, there is something absurd about us asking questions and opposing what is happening with the Cacouna port.

Is the hon. member aware that the ruling handed down by the Quebec Superior Court includes a stack of documents that prove the absurdity and administrative fiasco at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans under the Conservatives? Despite the province's request, this department repeatedly refused to provide a scientific opinion on the issue.

That is what is absurd, and that is the problem.

[English]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to look at the facts. The facts are that DFO informed the Government of Quebec that it was considered work and the proposed mitigation measures did not violate the federal Species at Risk Act or the Fisheries Act.

On August 8, in a response to a letter from the ministry of sustainable development, environment and the fight against climate change, DFO also sent to Quebec both documents it produced on the geotechnical work and all the supporting documents that were used to produce its analysis and make a decision about the project.

### *Private Members' Business*

I do not know if I have to go through the list of all the documents that were provided, but I am happy to further discuss this at any point.

• (1715)

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** In my opinion, the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, we request that the division be deferred until Monday, October 20, at the end of the time provided for government orders.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, October 20, at the conclusion of government orders.

[English]

**Mr. Joe Preston:** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### SUPPORTING NON-PARTISAN AGENTS OF PARLIAMENT ACT

The House resumed from September 15 consideration of Bill C-520, An Act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's debate.

*Private Members' Business*

The principle of the political impartiality of the public service agents of Parliament and officers of Parliament is a fundamental element in our government system.

The bill before us today further protects this vital feature of our democracy by supplementing and adding transparency to the existing regime. As such, it deserves support in the House.

By way of background, it is worth noting that the federal public service has a tradition of non-partisanship dating back to the early 1900s. For almost 100 years, this tradition of non-partisanship has made our system of government work. An impartial public administration ensures Canadians, regardless of their political views, receive fair, objective treatment from government officials.

We are fortunate to have a non-partisan, high performing and professional public service. In fact, the Government of Canada employs some of Canada's best and brightest, and their work is intimately tied to our country's success.

Public servants operate in more lines of business and do so on more points of service than any other Canadian organization, public or private. Public servants provide a multitude of services that have real life consequences for Canadians, from inspecting food and regulating the safety of our pharmaceutical drugs, to manning the border and employing Arctic icebreakers in the Northwest Passage.

For example, in any given year, public servants welcome more than 22 million visitors to our national parks and issue close to five million passports with remarkable client satisfaction. They inspect more than 1,000 high-risk foreign vessels to ensure our ports are safe and our water is clean.

The exceptional work public servants do behind the scenes every day impacts all of our lives. The Prime Minister said it best, "the Canadian public service is, in fact, a critical asset that this country possesses in a difficult and uncertain world".

One of the keys to the public service being such a critical asset is the principle of non-partisanship. In recognition of this, both the Values and Ethics Code and the provisions in the Public Service Employment Act protect the impartiality of the public service and agents of Parliament.

Clearly the principle of non-partisanship is of great importance. In fact, it is essential to the success of the public service that this reputation and tradition of impartiality should be maintained in the eyes of both the public and all Parliamentarians.

The bill before us today seeks to preserve that tradition and reputation. It recognizes that while non-partisanship is expected of all public servants, agents of Parliament play a particularly important role in government oversight.

Agents of Parliament, such as the Auditor General, the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Information Commissioner, are a unique group of independent statutory officers who serve to scrutinize the activity of government. They report directly to Parliament rather than to government or an individual minister and, as such, exist to serve Parliament in relation to Parliament's oversight role.

Agents normally produce a report to Parliament to account for their own activities, and their institutional heads are typically appointed through special resolutions of the House of Commons and the Senate.

Given the close relationship of agents of Parliament and their employees with parliamentarians, it is critical that these offices be independent of political affiliation in carrying out their duties. I also believe it is crucial that the staff of agents of Parliament work in a non-partisan way to maintain the confidence of all parliamentarians and all Canadians.

With that goal in mind, the bill would require every person who applied for a position in the office of an agent of Parliament to make a declaration with respect to past engagement in politically partisan positions. Specifically, this declaration would state whether, in the past 10 years before applying for that position, the person occupied certain specified politically partisan positions.

The bill also prescribes a declaration for persons who work in the office of an agent of Parliament. In the interests of complete transparency, the declarations would be posted on the website of the office of the relevant agent of Parliament.

The bill would also require persons who worked in these offices to provide a written undertaking that they would conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner in fulfilling the official duties and responsibilities of their positions.

These provisions provide enhanced transparency and accountability for all parliamentarians who must have confidence that the work of agents of Parliament is impartial.

● (1720)

As we know, accountability and transparency are the hallmark of this government. Our commitment to those principles was evident with our first piece of legislation, the Federal Accountability Act, and that commitment continues today with our support of this bill.

I encourage everyone in the House to support this important legislation. It augments non-partisanship in our system of government.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to Bill C-520. Yes, at first glance one might wonder why we would be opposed to more transparency. The answer to that question is that, on closer inspection, this bill seems to be the government's way of conducting trumped-up witch hunts to intimidate agents of Parliament.

Under this bill, the 10 agents of Parliament as well as their staff would have to make declarations and post them on the Internet stating whether, in the 10 previous years, they occupied a partisan position. This is yet another example of the Conservatives' narrative of attacking those who keep them accountable, as was the case with the auditor general and the chief electoral officer.

Under this bill, if members of Parliament or senators were the subject of an independent investigation by these agents of Parliament, the parliamentarians could make it hard on these agents by calling for their own investigations in order to call the agents' integrity into question. That is absurd, ridiculous and nonsensical.

The law already requires agents of Parliament to be impartial. Why create a new law? There is no need to allow people to carry out witch hunts in these offices. We have already witnessed this government attack public servants who spoke out about irregularities or who dared to tell the government things it did not want to hear.

I am thinking about Kevin Page and Marc Mayrand, well-respected men who acted with good judgment and who told the truth, but who ultimately ended up paying the price. Is that the example the government wants to set?

• (1725)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. While I was listening with great interest, the member mentioned the Prime Minister by name.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I appreciate the hon. member for York Centre bringing that to the attention of the House. I am sure this is the kind of thing that happens from time to time.

[Translation]

I am sure that the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé will correct herself next time.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of naming the Prime Minister. We all make that mistake from time to time. That kind of thing happens.

As I was saying, these were people who dared to tell the government things it did not want to hear. People like Kevin Page and Marc Mayrand, well-respected people whose actions were guided by wisdom and who told the truth. That is why I am here today with my colleagues. We think that we need to stand up for these agents of Parliament.

I watched some of the testimony from the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. During the study of the bill, my colleagues repeatedly asked the government for a definition of “partisan conduct” and for reasons why this bill was needed.

No satisfactory answer was given, which makes sense, because the fact is that there have been no proven cases of conflict of interest or even the appearance of conflict of interest in the offices this bill targets.

This is what the Information Commissioner of Canada says about this bill:

[It is] difficult to understand the need for the Bill or what problem it is attempting to resolve. [It] creates a duplication of regimes. Although the stated purpose is to avoid conflicts related to “partisan activities” that term is not defined or mentioned in the Bill. [It] creates an environment that may hinder the independence and the execution of the mandate of the Office of the Information Commissioner.

Currently, the partisan activities of public servants are already regulated by Part 7 of the Public Service Employment Act, the Political Activities Regulations, and the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. This leads us to again question the legitimacy and the relevance of this bill.

Fortunately, with pressure from the NDP, the Conservatives have withdrawn major parts of the bill, including the ability of members of Parliament and senators to ask for investigations of officials working in the offices of parliamentary oversight bodies that demand

### *Private Members' Business*

accountability from government. However, the government's concessions are minimal compared to the concerns of the NDP and of the agents of Parliament.

I really find it quite disappointing that the government is using public officials as punching bags and is trying to make people believe that this bill will help increase transparency.

I have been here for three and a half years and what I notice is that, all too often, this government does the opposite of the definition of transparency. Some people also accused the government of coming up with this bill as a diversion from the problems in the Senate. To that accusation, the author of the bill replies that the intent is to increase people's trust in the agents of Parliament. Personally, I think that the main issue is to increase people's trust in the government.

Mary Dawson, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, raised another interesting point before the parliamentary committee. She feels that the bill could allow anyone to attack the reputation of an employee because there is no clear definition of partisan activities or of the reasons that could justify opening an investigation.

Mary Dawson says that she is opposed to this bill because it has serious shortcomings in terms of respect for privacy and because it violates the merit principle in hiring in the public service. She adds that the Conservatives provided no witnesses in support of the bill and that they refused to answer the questions they were asked.

With the Conservatives, that does not strain belief at all.

This bill has nothing to do with transparency; its goal is to distract Canadians from this Conservative government's repeated failures at making Parliament accountable by launching a baseless attack on the offices of the parliamentary watchdogs whose jobs are to hold the government to account.

I will close by quoting Jean-Pierre Kingsley, who headed Elections Canada from 1990 to 2007.

This bill aims to fix a problem that does not exist.

I absolutely agree with him that this bill is completely unnecessary.

• (1730)

[English]

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide the government's response to Bill C-520, an act supporting non-partisan offices of agents of Parliament. I know that the member for York Centre has worked very hard on this bill, and I would like to assist the House in explaining the reasons he brought it forward.

The purpose of the bill is to avoid conflicts that could arise, or be perceived to arise, between partisan activities and the official duties and responsibilities of any person who works in the office of an agent of Parliament. For the record, this bill would apply to the offices of the Auditor General of Canada, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Privacy Commissioner, the Commissioner of Official Languages for Canada, the Information Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying, the Senate Ethics Officer, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, and the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner.

*Private Members' Business*

We all know these offices quite well. They oversee the activities of our public institutions. Their chief officers report directly to Parliament rather than to government or an individual minister, and as such, they support MPs in carrying out their important duties.

Some have been part of our system of government for a very long time. This includes the position of Auditor General, which was created shortly after Confederation to provide objective information and assurance regarding the use of public funds.

In 1920, the position of Chief Electoral Officer was created. Among its many duties, this office monitors compliance with electoral law and maintains readiness to conduct federal elections.

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has also been with us for some time. Established in 1969 with the adoption of the Official Languages Act, this office ensures recognition of the status of each official language in Canada. It also ensures compliance with the spirit and intent of the Official Languages Act in the administration of the affairs of federal institutions.

Then, in 1983, as issues related to personal privacy and access to information began to draw more and more attention, the positions of Information Commissioner and Privacy Commissioner were created.

More recently, the government created three additional agent of Parliament positions: a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and a Public Sector Integrity Commissioner in 2007, and a Commissioner of Lobbying in 2008.

Each office serves a specific function. They contribute enormously to the accountability of our system of government, and taken together, they provide Canadians with assurances that government programs and services are working as they should and that institutions and individuals are accountable for their actions and decisions.

Here are some of the important functions they ensure: that funds provided to a federal organization are fully accounted for and used in compliance with programs or project agreements, that public service employees and other officials adhere to standards of professionalism and ethics, that activities are conducted in accordance with an organization's legislative mandate and adopted policies, that government activities are conducted in the most efficient and effective manner, and that the inefficient use of resources is avoided.

In short, agents of parliament play an invaluable role in our Westminster style of government. As a whole, they oversee the activities of a vast array of public institutions and officials that provide countless services and benefits to Canadians around the world.

It is worth remembering that the federal government is the largest employer in Canada. Its range of activities is as broad as it is vital to the future of our country. Indeed, we have people working in hundreds of locations in all parts of Canada and around the globe. From hospital orderlies to research biologists, from economists to crews on naval ships, from ambassadors to correctional officers, from police officers in remote communities to aircraft pilots, the knowledge and skills demanded of public service employees are as varied as Canada itself. This all takes place in a complex and unpredictable environment.

It is part of our challenge as parliamentarians to ensure that the full range of what the government does for Canadians is run in an accountable and transparent way. It is a big job, and we could not do it without the support of agents of Parliament.

• (1735)

The government has taken steps to strengthen and enhance the role of agents of Parliament in recent years, in particular through the 2006 Federal Accountability Act. The act strengthened the powers of the Auditor General, toughened the office of the ethics commissioner, expanded the reach of the Access to Information Act, and tightened lobbying rules, among other measures. Thanks to such reforms, Canada has one of the most accountable and transparent systems of government in the world. This is something all Canadians can be rightly proud of.

The bill before us today gives us an opportunity to further enhance our accountability regime. It includes measures to help maintain the principle of merit and non-partisanship in the offices of agents of Parliament. For example, it would require every person who applies for a position in the office of an agent of Parliament to make a declaration with respect to past engagements in political partisan positions. Specifically, this declaration would state whether in the 10 years before applying for that position the person had occupied certain specific politically partisan positions. The declaration would indicate the nature of any such position as well as the period of time during which the person occupied it.

The bill would also require every person who works in the office of an agent of Parliament and who intends to occupy a politically partisan position while holding the position in that office to provide a written declaration of their intention to do so. The declaration would indicate the nature of the politically partisan position as well as the period of time during which the person intends to occupy it.

In addition, the bill would require persons who work in these offices to provide a written undertaking that they will conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner in fulfilling the official duties and responsibilities of their positions.

This bill would help to ensure that we continue to benefit from a system of government that is based on non-partisanship, an essential element of both a professional public administration and a responsible democratic government. It is for this reason that I urge all members to join me in supporting this legislation.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was hoping to be able rise to say that the previous speaker had persuaded me, but unfortunately he has not, and I will be opposing the bill.

I would like to start with a frame of reference that situates Bill C-520 within the whole question of the democratic functioning of this Parliament. I have four main points before I get to what are the specific problems with the bill in my view.

The first thing is that we cannot forget how central parliamentary officers—we often say parliamentary agents—have become to the functioning of this institution, but the House of Commons in particular. One only has to note the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Privacy Commissioner, the Information Commissioner as being among the officers to know how incredibly important their roles are.

*Private Members' Business*

It also speaks to why the leader of the official opposition, in a bill the Conservatives voted against, would have wanted to elevate the position of the Parliamentary Budget Officer to that of an officer of Parliament, as well.

Why am I mentioning this? The way in which our system has evolved, the incredible degree of influence, if not direct control, that the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's Office, to an extent ministers have in the way in which this very legislative institution functions makes it all the more important that there are other avenues of accountability than the traditional ones that Parliament, the House of Commons, relied on for centuries.

That is why it is so important that the parliamentary officers have evolved in the way they have. Without the annual report of each of these officers, without the role of the Auditor General, we would be a much poorer institution. I believe most members across the way would agree with that.

However, my concern is that, directly or indirectly—and I honestly fear, despite my respect for my colleague who is sponsoring this, it is more directly than indirectly—this amounts to an attempt to almost intimidate, if not undermine, those institutions. If that at all is either the intent or unintentionally the result, then I think this is a huge problem from a democratic perspective.

The second point is that this is a private member's bill, among so many that we have seen. I am not going to guess whether it is one of the many examples we have seen of private member's bills that are, in effect, government bills. I am going to assume it is a pure private member's bill.

However, the concern is that we have no charter compliance mechanism in the House or in legislation for private member's bills. The only thing that might happen is that the subcommittee of the procedure and House affairs committee may actually, on occasion, look at the charter issue as being relevant to votability but, frankly, I do not think that happens.

The Minister of Justice's duty to vet, supposedly vet, the compliance of legislation being tabled in the House is limited to government bills and it does not include private member's bills.

Now, my colleague may well have sought advice from the law clerk, or others, about the compatibility with the charter of this legislation. However, the fact is that it is before us, with me at least having serious concerns about whether or not the questions around how it affects freedom of expression, because there is forced expression here, and how it affects discrimination or arbitrary treatment of one sector of public servants versus other sectors of public servants, how whether or not that actually does implicate the charter.

It may well be that, if the case were made that parliamentary officers are very different institutions from government departments and, therefore, their staff must somehow be subject to this new regime and others must not, if that case were really well made, then it might be saveable under section 1.

The fact is that I have not seen that analysis and I do not think it was even looked at in any serious way, if at all, by the committee.

The third thing is, unfortunately, I think this reveals, yet again, the general weakness of our legislative process when it comes to the work of committees, especially, in majority government situations.

I believe the bill is fact challenged. There has been no sign at all of a problem of partisanship of the staff, let alone of the parliamentary officers. Therefore, there is this issue of a solution in search of a problem.

If I am not mistaken, and I can be corrected on this, the committee did not hear from a single witness to support the bill.

● (1740)

Basically what we heard was all kinds of evidence, external and in the committee, about why this was unnecessary and potentially harmful. The harm includes confusion with existing regimes, and the broader harm of whether this in fact would act as a form of intimidation of either the agents of Parliament themselves or their staff.

Therefore, in my view the committee ultimately did not do its job, because, at a minimum, it should not be bringing this bill back unless there are very clear reasons that it should support it. Apart from collegiality with the sponsor, which I can understand as one motivation, there almost seems to be no reason the committee should not have basically killed the bill.

The fourth and final point is the democratic functioning point. I think I was a bit generous earlier and I will stay that way: I am going to assume that this bill is the pure emanation of the priorities of my colleague.

Nonetheless, private member's bills have often been used as extensions of the government's agenda ever since I arrived almost three years ago. I believe this to be an abuse, at least to the extent that they are not then subject to the kinds of scrutiny and caveats that government bills are. They get to committee in a very short period—two hours—and they are not subject to charter review, as I already suggested.

I still remember almost being floored two weeks ago when a Conservative member of Parliament whose private member's bill was before us stood up and had as his very first words something of the following sort: "When I first saw this bill, I didn't think I liked it." However, gradually he read the bill and he began to decide that he could support it.

It was the first clear admission I have ever seen in the House of a member saying he had been given a bill.

I am not saying at all that this is the case here, but I wanted to put this in the context of the frailties of our system when it comes to private members' bills.

Why can I not support the bill? My colleague has just adequately summarized three main points.

First, it is a problem in search of a solution. There has never been a proven or recorded incident of a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest involving partisanship. No evidence whatsoever was brought forward in committee.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Second, it duplicates already-existing provisions that were adequately outlined earlier by my colleague, especially in part 7 of the Public Service Employment Act and relevant codes of conduct for at least two of the parliamentary officers' staff. At minimum, there is going to be this overlap-duplication-confusion issue with respect to how the two regimes apply. There is no mechanism in the bill for resolving that.

Even if I left it at an untidy piece of legislation, that would be a reason to vote against it, but the fact of the matter is that it is redundant, because the question of the admissibility of civil servants engaging in political activity is already covered in the rules of employment for those public servants. What it really amounts to is singling out with a very heavy-handed regime public servants of a certain kind: those who work for officers of Parliament.

This brings me back to my concern, the third problem with the bill, which is that there has been no analysis of charter rights and whether this could be upheld under section 1. The only way it could be upheld is if they made a really strong case that these civil servants are in a position that is different from that of all other civil servants, and I do not think we have come close to seeing that argument.

The fourth point is that whether it is intended this way or not by my colleague, it is turned into a Conservative talking point tool, in order not actually to seriously pursue transparency but to actually attack or undermine the offices of the agents of Parliament because of the central premise that there is a problem with partisanship. Why would there be a need for this bill unless there was a problem of partisanship?

• (1745)

I do believe that some of my colleagues on the other side believe there is a problem. They certainly did not prove it.

In that optic, despite a fairly fierce resistance from the NDP in committee and two amendments, this bill is not worthy of our support despite those amendments.

[*Translation*]

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

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

• (1750)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 2 to 7 and 9 to 11.

[*English*]

Normally at this time the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill. However, pursuant to Standing Order 98, the divisions stand deferred until Wednesday, October 22, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

### SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, back in June, I asked the minister a question concerning the Social Security Tribunal backlog, where it was discovered that some 10,000 cases of Social Security Tribunal work had been piling up, that the government had not yet filled all the positions at the tribunal, and that the backlog did not seem to be going anywhere. In fact, in the first year of operation, with a 10,000-case backlog, only 450 cases had been heard by the tribunal. At that rate, the backlog will never end. That is what I wish to raise again tonight with the minister.

What we have heard since June, when this was raised with the minister, is that the backlog is not getting any better and, in fact, some of the Social Security Tribunal members have quit, apparently because the government has refused to give them benefits, which is strange, given that is what the tribunal is looking after.

This 70-member tribunal replaced the 1,000 persons who were looking after these cases in the past. All of this was done purportedly to save taxpayers \$25 million. Maybe it saved taxpayers \$25 million, but what it has done to the persons with disabilities who are looking for answers to their cases is a disgrace.

We have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and that convention says in part that we should do no harm, that we should make the lives of persons with disabilities better at each step of their progress through society. In this case, we have made that much worse.

In one case, an individual, just this past month, finally heard that an appeal would be heard by the tribunal. The application for the appeal was made in January of 2012. That is now two and a half years since the application was made. The individual is now dealing with a delay of two and a half years, plus the amount of time it will take to actually schedule it, plus the time it takes to get a decision. It may be four years before that person hears. What is that person supposed to do in the meantime?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

This is money that belongs to the individuals; it is not money that belongs to the government. Canada pension belongs to the people who have paid into it, and the people who have paid into it deserve a way of getting that money out quicker.

Imagine if someone had a car accident and the car insurance company said there were not enough adjusters to handle the person's claim, so the individual should call back in four years, at which time it would see if it had enough adjusters to deal with the claim. People would not wait for four years to get their claims done. They would change insurers, number one, but number two, they would get the work done and then sue the insurer.

That is not an option that is available to these individuals, who are among the poorest in the country. These are people who, through no fault of their own, have found themselves to be disabled and have fallen through a crack in the system, and that crack appears to be getting wider with every passing day.

I would therefore ask the minister what these people should do, given this delay. These are not people with huge portfolios of money that they can survive on for four and five years. These are people, generally, who are living paycheque to paycheque and are now unable to survive. Does the government think they should now beg on street corners? Should they stand outside the minister's office and ask for handouts while they wait for this tribunal to actually get around to their cases?

This is a disgrace and it needs to be fixed. We should not have taken a system that was slow but not broken, and then broken it. I would ask the minister to respond as to what the government intends to do for the thousands of individuals who are waiting for way too long.

• (1755)

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to address the question by the hon. member for York South—Weston regarding the Social Security Tribunal.

The tribunal began its operations on April 1, 2013. It was created to simplify and streamline employment insurance and income security appeal processes by offering a single point of contact for all cases.

The new appeal system operates from a different legislative and regulatory basis than the four former tribunals and includes two levels of appeal: the general division, which includes the income security and employment insurance sections, and the appeal division.

The income security section of the general division is responsible for old age security, the Canada pension plan, and CPP disability appeals, of which the latter represents more than 90% of the division's caseload.

On April 1, 2013, 7,224 appeals were transferred from the Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals. Approximately 3,500 new cases were received at the general division during the tribunal's first year.

During the first year, parties to all these cases were allowed a new 365-day period, provided by the regulations, during which they

could file additional documents. Only if both parties signalled that they had no more documents to submit and file would they be able to proceed, and the tribunal could then, and only then, hear the case.

The good news is that in 2013-14 there was an 85% decrease in appeals to the SST compared to what was received by the Board of Referees previously.

Generally, the oldest cases are assigned first, and parties no longer need to confirm their readiness to proceed with a case. As well, parties are provided an opportunity to continue to file new documents closer to the hearing date, and all new documents received are shared with the other parties for a response.

All cases are assigned and dealt with by the 38 tribunal members who are dedicated to making quasi-judicial decisions on income security cases. These members can decide to hold a hearing through written questions and answers, teleconference, videoconference, or in person, or they can make a decision on the basis of the documents and submissions filed in the first place.

The decision is based on the particular case, with consideration of a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the complexity of the case, the number of anticipated parties and participants who will be involved, whether credibility is a prevailing issue, and any accommodation needs that have to be met to support the claimants. This flexibility in the choice of the form of hearing ensures that the parties will benefit from a fair and efficient appeal process that is convenient for all parties.

The new tribunal also continues to develop and improve its systems and operational processes to address all cases as fairly and as expeditiously as possible.

The Social Security Tribunal and its members are working hard to process the backlog as well as process the new cases that are coming in.

Our government believes that social programs such as employment insurance, CPP, and OAS are important to Canadians. That is why a faster, more streamlined approach to the process was introduced on April 1, 2014.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Speaker, I heard the words “convenient for all parties”. I had to wonder what that really means.

It is faster and more expeditious. That is clearly not the case. We are now talking about legacy cases that existed prior to this new tribunal taking place. There are still 6,000 of them, and at the rate this tribunal is dealing with them, they will never be finished dealing with the legacy cases.

To suggest that one could take 1,000 umpires, referees, and others and drill it down to 70 people and that those 70 people would be able to work just as fast or conveniently or expeditiously as in the previous system is just absolute—well, I cannot use the word, because it is unparliamentary.

The parliament secretary has not answered the basic question, which is this: What are these individuals supposed to do for the period of time they are now forced to wait in order to live, survive, put a roof over their heads, and eat?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

•(1800)

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Social Security Tribunal is streamlining its processes and the operations it has in place. It continues to develop and improve these processes in order to review cases as fairly and expeditiously as possible. We want a system that treats all people fairly and operates quickly for both taxpayers and the recipients and claimants for these appeals, but we have to make sure we get the job done right.

Since April 1, 2013, when it began its operations, the income security section of the general division has concluded more than 1,500 income security cases. As of April 1, 2014, in order to better manage the IS caseload, the tribunal implemented a new process to ensure that all appeals are treated fairly and efficiently, and that generally gives priority to the older cases. The ones that have existed the longest are going to be dealt with first.

Members have flexibility in choosing the form of hearing, which ensures that the parties will benefit from a fair and efficient appeal process that is convenient for all parties. There are 38 tribunal members dedicated to making decisions on IS cases alone, and the SST expects to achieve significant progress by the end of this fiscal year.

The SST is committed to providing a fair, independent, credible, and impartial appeal system for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:02 p.m.)

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