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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

OIL INDUSTRY

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 18, the Canada Council for the Arts announced that Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois had won the 2014 Governor General's Literary Award and \$25,000 in prize money for his book titled *Tenir tête*. The Bloc Québécois wishes to sincerely congratulate him.

What is even more worthy of our congratulations is the fact that the author decided to donate his winnings to the “Coule pas chez nous” campaign, run by a group of citizens who are standing up to the oil companies that are threatening to turn Quebec into a highway for oil from the oil sands.

Since November 18, Quebeckers have donated more than \$300,000 to this cause. Why? Because Quebec civil society cannot count on the House to protect its interests. Quebeckers know that if they cannot count on their governments' support, they can count on one another.

The people of Quebec have been clear about what they want, but I will say it again: we do not want your oil from the oil sands if it is at our own risk and peril.

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[English]

DAVID BLENKARN SPIRIT AWARD

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituent from Barrie, Ontario, Rayner McCullough, has been named as this

year's recipient of the David Blenkarn Spirit Award. Rayner is a long-time supporter of the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre, which hands out this annual award. The award is given to people who impact the hospital and whose actions inspire others.

Rayner most recently established a special trust for the education of RVH staff, patients, and family members who look after youth and adolescents with mental health and addictions issues. The creation of a child and youth mental health program is a priority for RVH as no such service exists in the region. Rayner is a past chairperson of the hospital and foundation boards and was a force behind building the new hospital in the late 1990s.

Mr. McCullough is a very worthy recipient of this honour. His words about why he volunteers at his local hospital encapsulate the spirit of this wonderful man. Rayner says, “For me, volunteerism is the rent we pay for the space we use while we're here [at RVH].”

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[Translation]

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 1981, the white ribbon campaign has given us an opportunity to stand together to end violence in our society. The campaign reminds us that men must stand with women to condemn violence against them.

[English]

People have approached me in the past few weeks wondering why victims of sexual harassment do not share their identities or stories with the general public. I tell them that women still continue to be blamed for their actions; slut shaming and victim shaming are still prevalent in our culture, and this must stop. We need an open dialogue to heal. Sharing our stories, anonymously or not, allows us this healing.

[Translation]

I hope that in 2015, we will continue to work together to build a future marked by greater gender equality, a future in which women are free to make their own choices.

[English]

It is a woman's decision to choose. It is her decision.

[Translation]

The best way we have to end the violence is to reassert our commitment to human rights.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Let us use this as an inspiration for the coming year. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience, and should act toward one another in a spirit of togetherness.

* * *

MATERNAL, NEWBORN AND CHILD HEALTH

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents of Don Valley East, I am proud to support our government's efforts on maternal, newborn and child health.

For over four years, our government has identified this as Canada's flagship development priority. By 2015, our government will have provided \$2.85 billion in funding since 2010. This year, we announced Canada's continuing commitment of \$3.5 billion to improve the health of mothers and children for the period of 2015 to 2020, supporting the global efforts to end the preventable deaths of mothers and newborns, and children under the age of five.

I commend the efforts of Senator Asha Seth who has proposed a motion to establish an international maternal, newborn and child health week each year during the second week of May, in Mother's Day week. I look forward to the support of all members in the House for this initiative.

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ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November is a month to reflect on those who have given their lives and to honour all those who have served. Over 50 years ago, the Royal Canadian Legion launched a poster and literary contest open to all Canadian students to foster the tradition of remembrance among young people.

This year, two people from my riding won first place in the junior literary contest for students in grades four, five and six.

Roman Javorek of Kentville, a student at Northeast Kings Education Centre, won in the poem division for his poem, "I Hold Your Hope".

Lauren Gatto of Elmsdale, a student at Elmsdale District School, won in the essay division for her essay, "The History of Remembrance Day".

I congratulate Roman and Lauren on their incredible success in this national contest. Next year, their work will be displayed in the Canadian War Museum with the other winning entries and they will enjoy a trip to Ottawa for the Remembrance Day ceremony.

I want to thank the Royal Canadian Legion for its efforts to foster the tradition of remembrance among young Canadians.

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● (1410)

SASKATOON PREGNANCY OPTIONS CENTRE

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, founded 18 years ago, Saskatoon Pregnancy Options Centre is a community outreach that provides free pregnancy tests, counselling,

material assistance and references for prenatal medical care and legal services.

Led by director Marilyn Jackson, Saskatoon Pregnancy Options Centre assists Saskatoon area women and families dealing with unplanned pregnancies. It provides emotional and physical support to women who are going through an uncertain time of life.

It is for many women a safe, caring place to talk and share. Hands-on support is not neglected. Maternity clothes, baby clothes and formula are provided to new and soon to be new moms who need a loving hand. Parenting classes and educational assistance are a growing part of its outreach to the community.

Supported by donations and led by a volunteer board, it has made a real contribution to many lives in Saskatoon. I am sure many members of the House will want to join me in congratulating the centre on its fine work. Life, what a beautiful choice.

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HALIFAX CENTRAL LIBRARY

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are tweeting about it, posting sneak-peak photos, they are peering through the fence trying to get a glimpse. Everyone is talking about it in Halifax.

On December 13, people will actually be able to go inside and see for themselves. It is the new Halifax Central Library, an incredible civic landmark for the community.

This building is so much more than a library. It is an example of what can be achieved through federal, provincial and municipal collaboration. It is a building for our future that reimagines what a library can be.

This library will blend the best of traditional library services with new and innovative spaces, making it a vital centre for learning and culture in the heart of the community. It is a public building for all of us, an adaptable and flexible space that will meet the changing needs of the community.

Congratulations to everyone who participated in making this dream a reality. Please join me. I am going to grab a coffee, a nice book and I will see everyone in Halifax's new living room.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week at the Collider Centre in my great city of London, Ontario, the Prime Minister announced \$5.8 billion in new infrastructure that would go toward modernizing and repairing various infrastructure assets that would provide employment opportunities across the country, including the National Research Council in my riding, which will be expanding.

Many Londoners, including incoming London Mayor Matt Brown, heralded this announcement as good news for London. He said of the funding, “an investment of this nature is just fantastic news for our community, is fantastic news for our region.”

While the NDP member for London—Fanshawe continues to paint our community with doom and gloom after this great announcement, our government is busy taking action to put forward measures that will lead to job growth and a stronger economy.

I am proud to be a Londoner.

* * *

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is in this chamber a gentle giant. Appointed to his post by our Prime Minister, this titan took office in September 2006. Knowing that he only had a limited time to remain incognito, he worked his first week wearing the green uniform of a maintenance worker, shining brass railings, mopping the marble floor, studying human nature.

[Translation]

One week later, I was seated in the Speaker's chair when I noticed the same man wearing a different uniform and sitting at the other end of the chamber.

[English]

As a rookie, I could not help but think, “Boy, they promote quickly here.”

Kevin Vickers is the ninth sergeant-at-arms in our history. In the last eight years, we witnessed that he is a man who is gentle, yet firm. Today, I wanted to share with members that his strength also comes from his personal modesty.

Therefore, the ovation that we gave him last month was well deserved, even if it embarrassed him.

• (1415)

[Translation]

By paying tribute to him today, I am also thanking him for his whole team's professionalism.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been watching with deep concern the tragic events in Ferguson, Missouri. They remind us that racism and intolerance still exist and that we must be vigilant in our quest for a society of equality and justice.

Unfortunately, Canada is not immune to these negative forces. In Richmond, British Columbia, an organization called Immigration Watch Canada recently put up a sign at a major intersection that said “Fight Gridlock: Cut Immigration”. Worse, this group's spokesperson stated that there were “too many immigrants living in Richmond who are making it unbearable for the existing European residents”. With thinly veiled prejudice, he is calling for Canada to

Statements by Members

slash immigration levels by 90% and threatening further provocative actions.

Canada is a nation of immigrants from all over the world, and our country was and is built on the contributions of us all. We are also a society who prizes acceptance, equality and respect for every resident, regardless of origin.

I ask all members of the House to join me in condemning this racist group and its unacceptable behaviour.

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UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government remains steadfast in its support for a free and sovereign Ukraine. Last August, the Canadian Armed Forces transported a large amount of military supplies to the Ukrainian armed forces.

Today we are adding to that commitment. The Canadian Armed Forces will be donating 30,000 winter coats and winter pants, 70,000 pairs of Gore-Tex boots and 4,500 pairs of gloves. The first delivery will be made by a C-17 Globemaster heavy-lift aircraft before the end of this month.

Our government is also coordinating the purchase of even further military equipment for Ukraine. This includes: tactical communications systems, explosive ordinance disposal equipment, tactical medical kits, a field hospital and night goggles.

President Poroshenko has said that such shipments are saving Ukrainian lives. As the Prime Minister said:

Whether it takes five months or 50 years to liberate it, we will never, ever recognize the illegal Russian occupation of any Ukrainian territory.

* * *

[Translation]

LUCE LAMARCHE AND GERMANO PILLARELLA

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two extraordinary women from my riding passed away this fall.

Luce Lamarche, a distinguished member of the Cavalier-de-LaSalle historical society, wrote a column called *Les carnets de Luce* in the weekly newspaper *Le Messenger* for more than 52 years. As a member of Parliament, I read her column religiously to find out what was going on in the community and learn about local history.

[English]

Mrs. Germano Pillarella, a teacher at LaSalle Catholic High for many years, was the director of PICAI's Italian school until the age of 85. She contributed immensely to tell the stories of Italians in Ville-Émard and was also very active on social media having thousands of friends on Facebook.

[Translation]

I salute the memory of these two women from my riding who contributed so much to the wealth and culture of our community thanks to their enthusiasm, which never diminished, even in their senior years.

Statements by Members

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no government in Canadian history has a better record of putting money back into the pockets of Canadians than this Conservative government.

Under the strong leadership of our Prime Minister, we have cut taxes not once, not twice, but a whopping 180 times.

Under our new family tax cut, 100% of Canadian families with children will benefit with an average benefit of \$1,100. That includes low-income parents and single parents.

However, we know that if given the chance, both opposition parties would take back these benefits and force every Canadian to pay more tax. The Liberal leader does not want Canadians to be able to choose how to spend their money because he believes he knows better.

Canadian families know that they are better off under our Conservative government.

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NAVY APPRECIATION DAY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to Navy Appreciation Day held yesterday on Parliament Hill.

This event is an all-party celebration to recognize and thank members of the Royal Canadian Navy for their important work and their exemplary service to Canada. It is also an occasion to recognize navy heroes.

I was struck by the extraordinary professionalism and leadership of the six heroes who received certificates at the ceremony in the Senate chambers with Vice-Admiral Mark Norman.

Canadians are also very well-served by the Navy League of Canada and its thousands of volunteers who support maritime issues and all youth through the Navy League Cadets and the Canadian Sea Cadets.

A special thanks goes out to Mme Louise Mercier, national president, and her team for making the day and the well-attended evening reception a huge success, and for their work throughout the year.

Canadians can justifiably be very proud of the invaluable contributions of the members of the Royal Canadian Navy and, indeed, of all of our Canadian Forces. We thank them.

* * *

● (1420)

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has already said he could convince Canadians to accept new tax hikes and has promised to reverse our tax relief.

Our government believes that Canadian families ought to be trusted to spend their hard-earned money as they deem necessary. The family tax cut will help 100% of families with children by putting more money in their pockets and giving families the freedom to spend it as they want.

Moreover, with the enhanced universal child care benefit parents can expect to receive almost \$2,000 per year for every child under 6 and \$720 per year for every child between 6 and 17.

We are proud that over 4 million families will benefit by an average of over \$1,100 per year. Our Conservative government delivers on our promises, and we are proud to be the only party that stands up for and trusts hard-working Canadian families.

* * *

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion calling on the federal government to provide Radio-Canada with the funding it needs to carry out its mandate. Quebec elected officials are affirming once again the relevance of having a strong francophone public broadcaster and the importance of regional news. CBC/Radio-Canada is at the heart of Quebec and Canadian culture. The Conservative government cannot ignore this unanimous resolution or the motion moved at the committee yesterday to study the liquidation of Radio-Canada assets such as the contents of its costume department and the tower in Montreal. On Sunday, November 16, members of the public marched in the streets, and now the entire National Assembly is standing up to show its support.

Any heritage minister would be overjoyed to see such love for our public broadcaster. Instead, the member for Saint Boniface continues to think that she is still the parliamentary secretary for finance. That is a real shame. I am calling on the Minister of Canadian Heritage to get on her feet and support CBC/Radio-Canada.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party is the only party that believes in putting more money back into the pockets of Canadians.

Our historic family tax cut will benefit 100% of Canadian families with children. The average benefit is \$1,100 and the majority of benefits will flow to low and middle-income families. For instance, a single mother with two children, earning \$30,000, will benefit by a whopping \$1,500 per year.

Both the Liberals and the NDP would take this money away.

Perhaps the Liberal leader should explain why he thinks the spending schemes of the Liberal Party are more important than the priorities of Canadian families.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Auditor General revealed that the government provides \$3,200 in subsidies to families with two children living in northern Canada, where it can cost up to 10 times more to buy fresh food. However, yesterday, the Conservatives admitted that only \$110 of that money went to the families. My question for the Prime Minister is very simple.

Families received only \$110 of the \$3,200. Where did the rest of the money go? Who pocketed the other \$3,000?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the federal government is spending over \$60 million a year to help people in northern Canada deal with the cost of buying nutritious food.

[English]

As a consequence of this funding that we have given to Nutrition North, we have seen a 25% increase in the delivery of healthy foods to the north and a decrease of some 6%, about \$100 a month, in food costs for families.

The Auditor General has observed that there could be better information gathering on this program. The department has accepted those recommendations.

• (1425)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): That is what we are trying to do, Mr. Speaker, gather information.

For a family with two children, it costs \$3,200. Of that, \$110 went to the family. Who received the other \$3,000? That was the question.

Those are the government's own figures. That is abysmal management.

Worse, yesterday, as the Prime Minister's minister laughed here in the House, as he has a want to do even now, families in Rankin Inlet were foraging for food in the town dump. APTN reports that a lack of affordable food has some families in the north scavenging in landfills.

Does the Prime Minister not feel any shame that families in the north are getting their food in the town dump?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Seriously, Mr. Speaker, the only thing shameful here is that the government has provided massive funding to provide support for nutritious food in the north and that has been opposed every step of the way by the New Democratic Party.

The reality, as I have said repeatedly, is that we have put additional monies into this program. We have seen a significant increase in fresh food going to the north, as has been acknowledged. It has also been acknowledged that the costs of that are declining.

The government and the department will accept the recommendations for improvements in the program that are in the Auditor General's report.

Oral Questions

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in January, I wrote to the Prime Minister asking him to make mental health for our vets a personal priority.

Now that the Auditor General has exposed the gaping holes in mental health services for our vets, will the Prime Minister finally take action?

Will the Prime Minister make a personal commitment, do right by our military and fix mental health services for our vets once and for all?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General observed in his report yesterday that it is this government that has put in place most of the mental health services for our vets. He admits that these are very important support services that the government continues to expand.

He examined two programs in particular: the rehabilitation program, in which timely access is being held; on the disability benefits program, he observed that although 94% of eligible recipients are getting benefits, the process is cumbersome and complex.

The government and the department have accepted the recommendations to improve that.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the so-called universality of service rule, soldiers who disclose that they are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, for example, can be dismissed outright from the army. I have even personally met some soldiers who were dismissed just a few weeks before they qualified for their pension.

How does the Prime Minister expect our soldiers to get help if they can end up losing their job or their pension? That is a contradiction and he knows it. Why not take action? People are losing their pension just a few weeks before their 10 years are up.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not what the Auditor General said.

The Auditor General noted that this government has put in place significant mental health support services for our vets and employees of the armed forces. We are very proud of the support we are giving our armed forces.

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[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister proud of the fact that 250 Afghan vets were medically discharged before qualifying for their pension? Is he proud of that?

Oral Questions

There are 95 victims of thalidomide living in Canada. They struggle every day with tasks that most of us would take for granted, because of disabilities inflicted upon them by a drug approved and recommended in the past by the Canadian government.

Other countries are already providing compensation to those affected by thalidomide. Will the Prime Minister bring together all parties in this House and support ongoing compensation for thalidomide victims in Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the government has already said and as the minister has said, this is a terrible series of events that those of us who were raised in the 1960s remember very well.

There was a settlement in the 1990s, but we understand that there are ongoing needs. The department and the minister have been in discussions with the victims association. We look forward to moving forward on this matter.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the 25th anniversary of the Polytechnique tragedy, we are debating Bill C-42, which would allow dangerous weapons to be freely transported in a trunk of a car. Imagine if that car were broken into.

The bill also takes classification decisions on guns away from police and puts them in the hands of politicians.

Does the Prime Minister recognize how dangerous those clauses of the bill are?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the statements made by the leader of the Liberal Party are completely false. The bill does not authorize the carrying of concealed weapons.

[English]

On the contrary, there is no “conceal and carry” in this legislation. The fact of the matter is that arms can only be transported between specific locations, and they must be taken by the most direct route. The firearms must be in a trunk, in a locked case, and must be unloaded. Those are the facts.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-42 would allow handguns and assault weapons to be freely transported in a trunk anywhere within a province, even left parked outside a Canadian Tire or local hockey arena. Imagine if the car carrying these weapons were broken into or stolen.

The bill also takes classification decisions on guns away from police, and puts them in the hands of politicians.

Both of these provisions threaten Canadians' safety. Will the government remove them from Bill C-42?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said and I will repeat, the statements the Liberal Party leader has made are recklessly irresponsible and false. The fact of the matter is that under the current law and this proposed law,

firearms can only be transported between specific locations. They must be in a locked case, they must be in a trunk, and they must be unloaded.

Those are the facts, but we expect this kind of distortion from the party that brought in the long gun registry and is itching to bring it back.

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[Translation]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General told us that veterans deserve better services. We were all touched by the story of Jenifer Migneault, which we heard yesterday. It makes no sense that there is no financial support for people who, like her, have to quit their job to support their spouse.

Will the Prime Minister finally commit to helping our veterans, particularly those who are dealing with mental illness?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General looked at the veterans' mental health programs put in place, for the first time, by our government. He looked at two programs.

In terms of the rehabilitation program, he said that the department had implemented important mental health assistance mechanisms and that it was responding to veterans' requests under this program in a timely manner. As for the disability benefits program, he said that 94% of veterans are eligible for benefits, but that the process is cumbersome and complex.

The department will uphold those recommendations.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, distress levels among our veterans are a problem. According to the ombudsman, their suicide rate is 45% higher than in the general population.

Alarm bells are going off, but the government is dragging its feet. The Auditor General says that a quarter of veterans have to wait over eight months before receiving mental health care. That is unacceptable. Why is the minister trying to save \$1 billion at our veterans' expense?

[English]

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Auditor General for recognizing that Veterans Affairs does indeed have a robust mental health strategy in place, that we have put in place mental health support, that we provide rehabilitation to veterans in a timely manner, and that we are working to improve the consultation process with our veterans.

Again, it was our government that asked the Auditor General to review the services we are providing to veterans, so we can be better informed and ultimately make the process better.

•(1435)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Speaking of the mental health strategy, Mr. Speaker, in 2009 the government committed to develop performance measures to assess if the mental health strategy was meeting the mental health needs of veterans.

The Auditor General has now confirmed that the minister never followed up on that commitment. He did not even bother to collect data that would be helpful to make this eventual assessment.

Can the minister explain to Canadians why he refused to fulfill this commitment and ensure that veterans receive the mental health services they need?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday our government announced additional mental health support for Canadian Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families.

We are investing in a major new operational stress injury clinic in Halifax. We are also opening new satellite locations across the country, while expanding the current facility in the greater Toronto area.

Our government is committed to our veterans, armed forces members, and their families, and we will continue to work on their behalf.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): If it is so committed, then it needs to actually act, Mr. Speaker.

The universality of service rule has been called arbitrary and unfair by the Canadian Forces Ombudsman, yet the Conservatives insist on keeping a policy in place that discriminates against those suffering, leads to more dismissals, and robs Canadian Forces members of their pensions.

Given the outcry from members and veterans, will the Conservatives show some sense of compassion, and will they remove universality of service?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces work with ill and severely injured personnel who are no longer able to serve. They are provided up to three years to prepare for the transition to civilian life.

The armed forces members can also transfer, if they wish, to cadet organizations administration and training.

I should point out to the hon. member that we have invested nearly \$30 billion in delivering benefits, programs, and supports. None of this had the support of the opposition, but we will continue to support veterans and members of the armed forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they want us to agree that they are standing up for veterans. That is the difference.

The Conservatives are not doing anything to ensure that soldiers and veterans in distress have access to mental health services. Our soldiers have to serve for 10 years to be entitled to a full pension, but

Oral Questions

if they talk about their mental health issues, they risk being kicked out of the forces and losing their pension. They lose everything. The Conservatives are forcing soldiers to keep quiet or risk losing everything.

Will the minister finally change this policy so that soldiers can get help?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a complete mischaracterization of what takes place in the armed forces. They work with these individuals, as I indicated, and they work with them for up to three years to facilitate their transfer to civilian life, or if they wish, they can transfer to cadet organizations administration and training.

That being said, the hon. member spoke about mental health. He may have missed this, but we now have 25 operational stress injury clinics with front-line health care professionals and experts, right across this country, to work with our veterans.

New Democrats may have missed that, because they vote against all these measures.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): What we did not miss was that the Conservatives closed nine service offices across the country, Mr. Speaker.

Conservatives have shown no sense of compassion for veterans, just shallow talking points, more hollow boasting, and childish attacks on the opposition.

Can we have some sense of shame from Conservatives about their failure to meet the basic needs of veterans? Will the Prime Minister now admit to veterans that their closing of regional offices, their court battles with veterans, and their denial of benefits have been wrong? When will they finally take responsibility and apologize to our nation's veterans?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, we announced additional mental health support for Canada's veterans, armed forces personnel, and family members. There will now be 25 operational stress injury clinics across our country.

We are providing the benefits and services that our veterans so dearly need. When it comes to standing up for Canada's veterans, our government has a strong record, even though the opposition continues to vote against these measures.

*Oral Questions***CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have shown over and over again that they just cannot be trusted to safeguard our personal information.

This week, there was yet another privacy breach at the Canada Revenue Agency. This time, private financial information on hundreds of Canadians just got sent to the media.

The minister has a legal duty to safeguard this information, but time and time again at the CRA, there are misplaced laptops, unprotected websites, snooping employees, and the latest excuse, human error. When will the minister take real action to stop this endless loop of privacy breaches in her department?

• (1440)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this privacy breach is completely unacceptable. I said that in the House before, and I say it again. We are taking it extremely seriously.

The Privacy Commissioner was notified of the breach, and at my direction, the CRA has launched an internal investigation into the breach, with a review of security protocols. Following that internal investigation, appropriate remedial steps will be taken, including disciplinary action.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of remedial steps, this minister has had some spectacular blunders when it comes to losing the personal data of Canadians.

Help me understand this one. Her department gathers the personal financial information and home addresses of key Canadians, like former war crimes tribunal Justice Louise Arbour and diplomat Allan Gotlieb, tosses it in the mail and sends it to the media, and no alarm bells go off? How about a little accountability here?

Will she tell us this? Did she take any concrete steps after the last breach, because how is it possible that the information of these Canadians was so casually put at risk under her watch?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has a flair for taking disparate things and trying to put them into one question.

Having said that, this privacy breach is very serious. We do take it seriously. We are very proud of our record at the CRA overall. We have 129 million pieces of correspondence every year. We deal with millions of taxpayers and their personal information.

On this particular matter, I have directed an internal investigation. We are taking steps.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2010, a Revenue Canada employee lost a laptop containing the tax information of 2,500 Canadians. In 2011, a Revenue Canada employee secretly snooped through the personal files of hundreds of Canadians. Earlier this year, 900 people had their personal information stolen because of the Heartbleed bug. Most recently, private information about a hundred or so prominent Canadians was accidentally sent to CBC.

How many breaches will it take for the Conservatives to get serious about Canadians' privacy?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this breach of privacy is completely unacceptable. We are taking this situation very seriously. On my orders, the Canada Revenue Agency has begun an internal investigation into this breach of privacy and the agency's security protocols.

[English]

Following that internal investigation, as I have said, appropriate remedial steps will be taken, including disciplinary action. We are on top of this matter.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in just four months, there have been a hundred privacy-related breaches in various government departments. The Conservatives can no longer pretend that this is not a systemic problem. That is nearly one breach a day. This is serious. The personal information that was leaked this week is merely a drop in the Conservative bucket.

Instead of treating this leak like an isolated case, why are the Conservatives not redoubling their efforts to stop this massive hemorrhaging?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we are proud of our record at the Canada Revenue Agency overall in the handling of sensitive taxpayer information. We understand that it is our number one priority, and we take it very seriously when a breach does occur.

On this particular matter, we have an internal investigation that I have directed. When we determine the outcome of that, we will take both remedial steps and disciplinary action.

* * *

[Translation]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report outlines the serious problems that affect the disability benefits paid to injured veterans. Claude Rainville's wife, Jenifer Migneault, was desperately trying to speak to the Minister of Veterans Affairs earlier this year. He ran away from her. Jenifer was forced to quit her job to take care of her husband.

Why is this government dragging its feet when it comes to taking care of people like Jenifer and her husband?

• (1445)

[English]

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong record when it comes to providing benefits and services for Canada's veterans, which is precisely why we have spent over \$30 billion since taking office. That is \$5 billion more than what the Liberals would have spent in additional dollars.

Oral Questions

We will take no lessons from the Liberals over there. Canadians still remember that it was under the Liberal government that our men and women in uniform suffered a decade of darkness.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 15,000 veterans applied for disability benefits for mental health services since 2006. Nearly one-quarter were denied. One-third appealed, and 65% of them received the benefits they deserve.

What of those frustrated and hurting who did not appeal, veterans who fought for our country and did not expect to have to fight against it to get help? What is the government doing to help those frustrated thousands the Auditor General identified who gave up, even though many were entitled to the mental health benefits they were denied?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our commitments in the Veterans Affairs' mental health action plan are very clear. We are improving the disability benefit application process to reduce barriers to a timely access to benefits. We are strengthening our outreach effort to better inform the reserve forces of mental health care services, as well as reaching out to families and family physicians. We will measure and report on the effectiveness of our mental health strategy.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Gregory Matters was a long-serving member suffering from PTSD and released from the forces in 2009. In 2012, he was shot and killed by the RCMP in Prince George while he was acting erratically.

That very same day, Veterans Affairs had called Greg, saying that his claim for PTSD was finally approved but that he that still faced more hoops to jump through before any payment would flow, and this was after literally years without help or compensation.

In fact, Greg had been treated by a psychiatrist, but on his own dime. Why will the Conservatives not stop pretending everything is okay and fix this tragic mess?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has consistently increased its support for Canadian veterans. Last week, we announced an additional \$200 million investment to strengthen mental health services for members of the Canadian Armed Forces, veterans, and their families.

Our veterans' mental health is something our government takes very seriously, and we will continue to improve upon those services.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Labrador Inuit experienced the trauma of residential schools. They deserve an apology and compensation, like other survivors.

However, despite promising reconciliation with indigenous peoples, Conservatives are now saying the residential schools in Newfoundland and Labrador technically do not count.

Why does the current government always fight indigenous peoples every step of the way through the courts? Why not sit

down with them in good faith and provide survivors with the settlement and the reconciliation that they deserve?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the record is clear. Our government has demonstrated its commitment to addressing the legacy of the Indian residential schools. That is why the Prime Minister made a historic apology on behalf of all Canadians. We have provided nearly 4.2 million documents to the truth and reconciliation commission. We are abiding by the agreement that has been reached by all parties, and we will continue in that vein.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nearly 100,000 boxes are waiting to be archived, and in some cases, they have been waiting for over 10 years.

This massive boondoggle is preventing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada from carrying out its mandate. It cannot shed light on the injustices committed against aboriginal people because no one can find the necessary documents. Conservative incompetence is preventing families from turning the page and getting closure.

How could the minister have allowed such a mess to occur?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that our government has provided the commission with \$1.6 million to do research at Library and Archives Canada so that key documents will continue to be uncovered.

Several million documents have been found, and we will continue to discharge the responsibilities that Canada has taken on under the agreement that was reached between all parties.

* * *

● (1450)

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, frankly, the Auditor General confirmed our worst fears: the Nutrition North Canada program is a failure. Despite a \$60 million contribution, prices are not going down in the north. APTN reports that families in Nunavut are picking through garbage for food because they do not have enough money to buy groceries. That is happening here in Canada, in 2014.

If the Conservative program is not lowering the prices and does not cover every isolated or remote community, can someone then explain to us what the point of the program is?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government wants northern residents to have access to nutritious and high-quality food, just as other Canadians do. That is why we created the Nutrition North Canada program. As I said yesterday, the results are very clear. Through this program, 25% more healthy food was shipped to the communities during the first two years and, in fact, the cost of a food basket for a family of four went down by more than \$110 a month.

The hon. member cannot deny that.

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite the minister to come to Lutsel K'e or Fort Good Hope in my riding and repeat what he just said here.

Anyone trying to feed their families in remote communities will say that Nutrition North is not meeting their needs. Why has the minister ignored them for so long? Why did the NDP have to get the Auditor General to publicly embarrass him before he would agree to act?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the fact is that Nutrition North has resulted in an approximately 25% increase in the average annual volume of healthy food being shipped to northern and remote communities. A food basket for a family of four has gone down by \$110 a month, and this is only in the first two years. If that does not count, the further investments we just announced last week will see an increase of \$11 million a year, so that in the next two years we will spend \$130 million for subsidies.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the OECD reaffirmed that Canada has a sound fiscal footing under the leadership of our Prime Minister. Our economy is envied around the world, thanks to our Conservative government's low-tax plan, and over 1.2 million net new jobs have been created. However, the global economy remains fragile, and the constituents of my riding of Elmwood—Transcona know that we must stay the course with our low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

Can the Minister of Finance please update this House on what the world is saying about Canada's economy?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the International Monetary Fund's mission to Canada applauded our Conservative government for the progress we have made in eliminating deficits and for our actions to reduce taxes for hard-working Canadian families. The IMF also said that our measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of the housing market were effective. The report is further evidence that our economic action plan is doing very well. Canadians can be proud.

* * *

● (1455)

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that the Minister of Finance is no longer benched.

[Translation]

The Conservatives refuse to be accountable to Canadians about the assistance given to GM. The Auditor General informed us that out of the \$4 billion given to GM, \$1 billion ended up in the United States. Neither Industry Canada nor Export Development Canada had any records documenting the use of these funds, according to the Auditor General.

Can the minister tell us what that money was used for?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not at all what the Auditor General said.

[English]

My colleague is clearly asking the question, what was the purpose of the investment and what did it do? Well, it secured almost 500,000 jobs in Canada's auto sector. That is what it did. For the auto sector, and directly for these two firms, Chrysler and GM, it protected 52,000 jobs in Canada. That is what this investment did.

The Auditor General has put forward four recommendations. We have already implemented two of the four. We are going to follow through on the other two.

Let there be no doubt: we are very proud of the work that we have done to protect and build Canada's auto sector.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about \$1 billion that was not accounted for here and that went to the U.S. Maybe the minister should show some sense that he realizes this is a problem.

Even after rejecting Chrysler and GM's initial plans, the Conservatives never bothered to follow up and look at the automakers' final restructuring. There was a troubling lack of transparency, the kind the Auditor General has flagged again and again.

Can the minister even admit that there are problems?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, when she was out of politics a couple of years ago, worked at the Canadian Auto Workers. When she was working at the Canadian Auto Workers, the Canadian Auto Workers commended the federal government for its commitment to the Canadian auto industry, saying "This will ensure that the Canadian industry is protected. ... This is a very sound decision....", meaning the investment the member just chastised.

That is what she said just two years ago when she worked at the Canadian Auto Workers Union. That is what they said in praising our government, and we are proud to stand with Canadian auto workers.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with \$1 billion missing, one would think the government would have at least a little humility and show some contrition to Canadians.

Prince Rupert is a beautiful coastal British Columbia community with proud, hard-working Canadians. We can understand their surprise and total frustration that a ferry terminal upgrade at their port will be subject to Buy America policies on a Canadian port on Canadian federal crown land, where no Canadian steel or iron will be used.

This is a direct result of Conservative failure to stand up for Canada. Why will the Conservatives not, for once, defend our interests here in Canada?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned by this attempt to apply Buy America restrictions to a project at the port of Prince Rupert.

This is another example of how illogical and counterproductive it is to try to segregate our highly integrated economies. We have consistently opposed, and will continue to oppose, protectionist measures such as the Buy America restrictions.

We are exploring all options to address this absurd situation.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have never fought to protect Canadian workers from Buy America policies, and companies are tired of being shut out.

Now they are even being shut out of projects in Canada on federally owned lands. Because of Buy America policies, steel for a northern B.C. ferry terminal must be bought from the U.S., excluding Canadian steel companies from places such as Hamilton from even bidding.

How did the Conservatives let it get this far? What are they doing to fix the situation? When will they stand up for Canadian jobs?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, we are deeply concerned about this situation. We are weighing our options and we will respond appropriately.

However, it is odd to hear that question come from the NDP. It was the NDP member for Burnaby—New Westminster who, in 2009, called Buy America a perfectly logical policy. I repeat, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster said that Buy America was a perfectly logical policy.

On this side of the floor, we believe that Buy America is an illogical policy. We will continue to stand up for Canadians.

• (1500)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister clearly fell down on doing this job. He is fully aware of the fact that this B.C. ferry terminal was going to end up in the hands of Buy America policies, but what did he do? Why was he not faster on the job to prevent this from happening and to protect Canada's jobs, rather than standing back and abandoning Canada's jobs and Canada's industry?

Oral Questions

When did you know? What did you do? What are you going to do about it now?

The Speaker: Order. I just need to remind the hon. member for York West that questions have to be put through the Chair and not directly.

I think the hon. minister may be in a better position to answer the question, so I will give him the floor.

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat that we are deeply concerned about attempts to apply buy-American policies here in Canada. This is another example of how illogical, how counterproductive, these kinds of policies are.

I would also point out the appalling Liberal record on trade and promoting Canada's trade interests. For 13 long, dark years, they failed Canadians: 3 trade agreements over 13 years. This government, over 8 short years, has 38 new trade agreements. We are very proud of that record.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week local leaders from across the country were on Parliament Hill asking all of us to make hometowns proud.

The request of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities was dead simple. It needs funding for housing, for transit, and for water systems. There is a \$400 billion infrastructure deficit in this country, and what has this government done? It has announced a cobbled-together group of plans that essentially are scheduled state of good repair budgets for federal assets, with nothing for cities and municipalities and towns across this country—nothing. In fact, all they get is a 90% cut to their budgets this year.

When is the government going to make its hometowns proud? When is it going to make hometowns built perfectly again and fixed again?

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, the premise of this question is completely wrong. We already invested a lot last year in municipalities, and we will continue to do so. It is under the leadership of this Prime Minister that, finally, municipalities of this country have received money. It was not received when the Liberals were in government. We are doing our job.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence implied that the minister would finally reveal the cost of the Iraq mission at yesterday's defence committee meeting, but yesterday the minister was mum. Either his parliamentary secretary was misleading Canadians or the minister got cold feet. This is not a state secret we are talking about. The Americans have shared their costs with the American people, and the Australians have shared their costs with the Australian people.

The minister has been given these costs by the Chief of the Defence Staff, so when will the minister share the costs of the Iraq mission with Canadians?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the mission is not over. We are only into it a little over a month. We have indicated that we will report the costs in the appropriate way, through the parliamentary mechanisms.

I know there is one thing we can all agree on, which is that even spending \$1 fighting the atrocities of ISIL will not have the support of the NDP. At least we have that in common.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not true that we are going to give them a blank cheque.

The minister told us that he would inform us of the costs of the mission, and I quote, "when they are fully known". The problem is that he knows how much the mission is going to cost. The Chief of the Defence Staff, Tom Lawson, says that he has already forwarded a cost assessment to the minister.

The cost of the U.S. mission is \$7.5 million a day; for the Australians, it is \$500 million a year. Why do we know how much our allies spend, but not how much the mission will cost Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the no-defence party over there does not want to spend anything fighting the atrocities of ISIL. One of the things it might just want to focus on for just a little is the human cost of doing nothing, which is what it has been advocating. We will stand up against the atrocities committed by ISIL with or without the support of the NDP.

• (1505)

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting the people of Ukraine as they fight for a democracy they have sacrificed so dearly for, all in the face of the Putin regime's military aggression. As our Prime Minister has said, whether it takes five months or 50 years, we will not drop the subject and we will always stand stalwart along the side of the Ukrainian people.

With winter fast approaching, can the Minister of National Defence please update the House on the support that Canada is providing to the people of Ukraine?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce today that Canada will be making another delivery of non-lethal aid to Ukraine. There are 30,000 coats and pants, 70,000 pairs of Gore-Tex boots, and 4,500 pairs of gloves

deemed surplus by the Canadian Armed Forces that will be shipped out starting at the end of this month.

The government is also coordinating the purchase and later shipment of equipment, including tactical communication systems, explosive ordinance disposal equipment, tactical medical kits, and both night and thermal vision goggles. President Poroshenko has said that shipments like this have saved Canadian lives. We remain steadfast in our support for a free and—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one week ago, in an attempt to defend the government's income-splitting plan, the Minister of Employment and Social Development stood in question period and read what he claimed was a quote from Marlo Reynolds, the Liberal candidate in Banff-Airdrie. Sun News has since retracted its story and has apologized to Mr. Reynolds for claiming he said something that he did not say.

Surely the minister's standards of decency are as high as those of Sun News. Will he please get up, withdraw his misquote, and apologize for misleading the House?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that Liberal candidate, that Liberal member, and every Liberal member opposes tax fairness for families. The Liberals opposed the child care benefit. They opposed \$3,800 in benefits for single moms with two kids under the age of six. They opposed tax cuts for families. They voted against the ways and means motion recently. They want to take these benefits away from families, and they do so because they believe that Liberal politicians know better how to spend money than moms and dads. We profoundly disagree on this side.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the consensus and mobilization of the people in the Quebec City area is beginning to bear fruit.

The Minister of Infrastructure is beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, or at the end of the bridge in this case. He finally decided to pick up the phone and talk to his provincial and municipal counterparts in order to find a solution. Now he has to find the paint brush that Jean Lapierre and the Liberals lost.

Will the minister keep the Prime Minister's promise and ensure that the Quebec Bridge restoration is completed?

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, as we have already said, a legal process is under way and a ruling was recently handed down.

We will continue to have discussions with the different partners in this matter. The New Democrats believe that just because they think it is going to snow this winter, they can take credit for it.

They definitely cannot take the credit for the current talks being held.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in an increasingly globalized world, it is vital that Canadian businesses have access to dynamic and fast-growing markets in order to create jobs and long-term prosperity for hard-working Canadians and their families. Our Conservative government has a proven track record of opening new markets for Canadian exporters.

As we recently heard from the Minister of International Trade, our government has signed free trade agreements with 38 countries. Can the tireless and hard-working Minister of International Trade please update Canadians on our government's latest efforts to create jobs and prosperity through trade?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that the Canada–Korea free trade agreement passed third reading in the Senate. Canadian companies will soon have preferential access to South Korea, which will become a strategic gateway for Canadian businesses into Asia. This agreement will increase Canadian exports to South Korea by 32% and boost our economy by almost \$2 billion annually. Exporters from across our country asked us to support them as they compete in the global marketplace, and once again we are delivering.

* * *

• (1510)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for over 40 years my constituents in Castlegar, Blueberry, Genelle, and Rivervale have been able to sleep without being disturbed by trains at night. However, now CP has begun to run night trains without prior warning. The community has made its opposition very clear at two public meetings. Letters have been written, people are upset, lives have been severely disrupted.

Right now, there is no incentive for CP to find a solution or to work with the local community to find a compromise. Will the minister work with me to help convince CP Rail that a workable solution is possible and would benefit all?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, in the minister's place right now, I will not commit her to a specific action, but I will take this matter under advisement to her. Of course, in all of these circumstances we encourage railway companies to speak directly with municipalities and work on these issues.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, FD): Mr. Speaker, the truth behind TransCanada's energy east project is that the pipeline would have a serious impact on fragile natural environments and the people living around them.

All across Quebec and in Lanaudière, farmers are concerned about their land, peat bogs and the sensitive ecosystems that are at risk. As the project continues to take shape, more and more people are speaking out against the idea of more than a million barrels of oil crossing that land every day.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources acknowledge the opposition to the energy east project and stop claiming, as the leader of the NDP has done, that a pipeline next to the St. Lawrence River is a reasonable option?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the opposition, we will not take a position before the examination is complete.

The National Energy Board is tasked with hearing directly from the people concerned, who have relevant information or expertise in the field. We rely on science and facts to make decisions.

We have been clear. The projects will be studied only if they are safe for Canadians and pose no risks to the environment.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Randy Delorey, Minister of Environment and Minister of Gaelic Affairs for the Province of Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise on a point of order regarding question period.

The leader of the Liberal Party made reckless, inaccurate and false comments on an important safety and security issue, therefore misleading the House. The member is wrong about the common sense firearms licensing act and the facts—

The Speaker: Order, please. That seems like debate more than a point of order. The minister is free to make those points in a future question period perhaps or when the bill is debated.

I see the hon. member for Papineau rising. I am suspicious that this may not be a point of order either, but I will give him the benefit of the doubt.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): It is a response, Mr. Speaker. If that is not appropriate, I will sit down.

The Speaker: I do think this could create a great deal of disorder if we extend question period. It is already well past 3 o'clock. We will get back to that point of order.

I do have notice of a point of order from the hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, on November 9, in a symbolic vote, more than 80% of voters—2.2 million Catalans—voted on the independence of Catalonia. I seek the unanimous consent of the House to move this short motion: that the House of Commons recognize the right of the people of Catalonia to hold a referendum on its political future.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

• (1515)

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the following motion: That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the amendment to the second reading motion of Bill C-583, an act to amend the Criminal Code (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder), be deemed to have been withdrawn, that the bill be deemed to have been read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House for this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In question period the member for St. John's East suggested that I had committed the Minister of National Defence to provide cost estimates at the meeting of national defence committee. He took me out of context and—

The Speaker: We have 45 minutes every day for members to make these kinds of points. When question period ends, then so too does the debate on these issues and we move on to normally routine proceedings or orders of the day, and that is where we are at today.

If the member feels compelled to make that point, I am sure the subject matter will come up again tomorrow and he will be free to do so then. This is not a point of order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 38(6) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table, in both official languages, the Canada Revenue Agency's updated underground economy strategy entitled "Reducing Participation in the Underground Economy".

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in relation to Bill C-555, An Act respecting the Marine Mammal Regulations (seal fishery observation licence).

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to the supplementary estimates (B), 2014-15.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (B) 2014-15".

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (B) 2014-15". It includes votes 1b under Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, vote 1b under National Energy Board, and votes 1b, 5b and 10b under Natural Resources.

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BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, consistent with folks rising and not quite exactly on point, and further to last Thursday's statement, I am rising to confirm that Wednesday, December 3, shall be the seventh allotted day.

Routine Proceedings

It is not exactly a motion, but it is an important piece of information for the House.

* * *

PETITIONS

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions, this being the second day of 16 days of standing against violence against women and girls.

The three deadliest words in the world are “It’s a girl.” Over 200 million girls are missing worldwide through the practice of sex selection. Gynaecologists of Canada believe that this is very wrong and stand against it. A poll shows that 92% of Canadians believe that sex selection is wrong.

The petitioners call on Parliament to condemn this discriminative practice against girls.

• (1520)

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights that Kassandra Kaulius was killed by a drunk driver.

A group of people who have also lost loved ones to impaired drivers, called Families for Justice, believes that the current impaired driving laws are much too lenient.

The petitioners call for new mandatory minimum sentencing for people who have been convicted of impaired driving causing death.

GAZA

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions here, signed by constituents in my riding of Newton—North Delta.

The petitioners are very concerned about the state of the infrastructure in Gaza. They urge the government to support Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish's proposal to bring injured Palestinian children from Gaza to Canada for treatment.

They have a firm belief that in order to achieve peace, we must refuse to hate. Only in that spirit can we hope to bring people together to forge a just, secure and lasting peace.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is five years since a program aired highlighting a new theory that the venous system might play a role in multiple sclerosis. Five years on, Canadians are still waiting on the science.

The petitioners urge the Minister of Health to proceed with phase 3 clinical trials.

PENSIONS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table a petition with hundreds of signatures that were collected by the Hamilton chapter of CURC, the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada.

The petitioners are profoundly worried about the government's plan to allow the conversion of defined benefit pension plans to target benefit or so-called shared risk plans. Such a conversion would allow the government to strip pension benefits of legal protections and permit employers to reduce all benefits, including those earned through past service.

The petitioners call on the government to abandon this ill-conceived scheme and to focus its energy instead on improving the retirement security of the 62% of Canadian workers without any workplace pension plan by expanding the CPP.

While the rules of the House do not allow me to endorse a petition, I firmly believe pensions are deferred wages and employers cannot be allowed to break their promise to deliver those benefits to retirees. It is our job to ensure that this solemn promise is kept.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of many Canadians.

The petitioners ask Parliament to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a youth employment crisis in Canada right now. The rate of unemployed youth is twice the national average. Oftentimes, what young people are finding from employment is short-term contracts and part-time jobs. Some young people are working for free. Currently, there is a patchwork of rules that govern and oversee unpaid internships across the country.

The people who have signed this petition call on the government to enact a national urban worker strategy. They call for, among other things, increasing enforcement and strengthening labour standards to prevent the exploitation of workers, including young workers and unpaid interns.

FIREARMS ACT

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition which is signed by a number of people from Kootenay—Columbia.

The petitioners call upon the government to pass the common sense firearms licensing act.

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition signed by over 100 people from the Richelieu valley who are concerned about the government's lack of action on climate change.

Obviously, they support the climate change accountability bill, which I would like to remind hon. members was passed by the House after being introduced first by the late Jack Layton and then again by the hon. member for Beaches—East York. The petitioners are asking the government to support this bill.

Speaker's Ruling

[English]

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

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

The first petition is from residents throughout my riding as well as from Manitoba and parts of Ontario.

The petitioners call for the mandatory labelling of genetically modified organisms.

SENIOR POVERTY

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

The petitioners call for actions to address senior poverty, particularly to increase the guaranteed income supplement to assist seniors living in poverty.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

• (1525)

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

TIME ALLOCATION MOTION—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on September 15, 2014, by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands regarding the use of time allocation.

I would like to thank the hon. member for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the House leader of the official opposition for their interventions.

[English]

In raising this matter, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands contended that the limitation of debate occasioned by the government's frequent use of time allocation deprived members of the ability to debate issues adequately, thereby impairing their fundamental right and indisputable privilege, if not obligation, to

hold the government to account. She claimed that this undermined and obstructed members' ability to perform their parliamentary duties and that this consequence was disproportionately felt by members of smaller parties and independent members.

The government house leader replied that, as the rules of the House had been properly followed in the application of time allocation, the privileges of members had not been offended, nor did the Chair have the authority to intervene unilaterally with regard to the use of this procedure. Furthermore, he argued that the government's use of time allocation was merely a "tool for the orderly and predictable management of the legislative agenda." He also referred to my ruling of April 23, 2013, to point out that catching the Speaker's eye to be recognized to speak during any proceeding remained the ultimate and individual right of each member.

[Translation]

For his part, the House leader of the official opposition supported the views expressed by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that the present use of the time allocation procedure violated the rights of MPs to speak and represent their constituents.

As early as 1993, Speaker Fraser spoke of the limits of the Speaker's authority in relation to the use by the government of Standing Order 78. On page 17861 of the *Debates* of March 31, 1993, he said:

I have to advise the House that the rule is clear. It is within the government's discretion to use it. I cannot find any lawful way that I can exercise a discretion which would unilaterally break a very specific rule.

[English]

On March 1, 2001, Speaker Milliken confirmed that interpretation, stating at page 1415 of the *Debates*:

The rules and practices of the House established by this House with respect to time allocation leave the Speaker with no alternative in this matter.

Members of the House are also aware that it is not for the Speaker to judge whether an issue has been sufficiently debated. As recently as June 12 of this year, on page 6717 of the *Debates*, I stated:

With respect to the amount of debate a bill must receive before notice of a time allocation motion can be given, the Chair is being asked to render a decision on a matter over which there are no explicit procedural rules or practices and, thus, over which it has no authority. Rather, it is the House that retains that authority and, therefore, must continue to make that determination as to when and if a bill has received adequate consideration.

The body of precedents available to me all point in the same direction. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, succinctly sums up the jurisprudence on the matter when it states, at page 648:

[Translation]

When asked to determine the acceptability of a motion to limit debate, the Speaker does not judge the importance of the issue in question or whether a reasonable time has been allowed for debate, but strictly addresses the acceptability of the procedure followed. Speakers have therefore ruled that a procedurally acceptable motion to limit the ability of Members to speak on a given motion before the House does not constitute prima facie a breach of parliamentary privilege.

*Government Orders**[English]*

As the Chair can find no evidence that the ability of members, even the independent members, to perform their parliamentary functions has been compromised, I cannot find that this matter constitutes a prima facie case of privilege.

That said, the Chair does, however, intend to return to the House at a later date with a separate statement to address other elements raised by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

I thank the House for its attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

COMMON SENSE FIREARMS LICENSING ACT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC) moved that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code and to make a related amendment and a consequential amendment to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to start debate on Bill C-42, concerning common sense firearms licensing. Today is an important day because this is the first time in nearly 20 years that improvements have been made to our firearms licensing system. They are long overdue.

This bill is designed to simplify and clarify the firearms licensing regime while maintaining the system's reliability. The main goal is to protect the safety of Canadians. I would now like to describe how this bill will improve our licensing system.

Currently, there are two types of firearm licences: possession only licences—POLs—and possession and acquisition licences. The POL is the only licence available to new firearm owners. That is the licence I have held since January, and I took a course. After that, I went through various administrative processes to get the possession and acquisition licence, the PAL. As the name suggests, this licence allows people to possess and acquire a firearm.

The other licence, the POL, the possession only licence, was created over 20 years ago by the previous Liberal government. At the time, it was a transitional step for firearm owners who wanted to avoid the new licensing system. The average age of these licence holders is almost 60. They are all experienced and competent. These are people who know how to use these firearms, who use them and who can also borrow them and buy ammunition.

All we want to do with this bill is simplify the system and combine the two types of permits, which would give 600,000 law-abiding firearm owners the right to acquire a firearm. Naturally, after 20 years, it might be time for people to update their firearm.

People may remember that at the time, this initiative was put forward by the late Jack Layton, former leader of the New Democratic Party.

● (1530)

[English]

Second, we are addressing a serious issue that impacts every firearm owner. Currently, if individuals make a paperwork error and do not renew their licence on time, they are liable to face a minimum sentence of three years in prison.

Some people may be deployed or travelling abroad. They can be under medical treatment and be turned into a criminal overnight because they have not renewed their firearm licence on time. That is why the bill puts in place a six-month grace period at the end of a five-year licence.

[Translation]

I want to make it clear that people will not be allowed to buy new firearms or ammunition or to use firearms during this grace period. The grace period will simply protect people from being turned into criminals just because of an administrative delay in renewing their permit.

[English]

Continuing in the area of licensing, this legislation would improve the way the authorization to transport system works. I certainly invite the leader of the second opposition to read the bill, so he would not attempt to mislead the House as he has tried to do today.

Currently, an authorization to transport is required to take any restricted firearm between the owner's home and another location—

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member accused the leader of the third party of misleading the House. Let me spell out to the minister that during the briefing with staff from his office, we received confirmation that easing the transportation regulations means that transport between locations other than those—

● (1535)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

I was waiting to hear if the hon. member for Malpeque was going on some procedural question there. What I heard was that the hon. minister mentioned that there was “an attempt to”. That can be taken any number of different ways, but I think it is sufficiently opaque that we would not suggest that there was any direct suggestion of any unparliamentary language in that case. I do not think we have a point of order in front of us.

The member for Malpeque may be able to bring up those other points he mentioned in the course of debate on a question.

I will ask the minister to continue.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your decision. I understand that the time will not be taken from the time we have to debate this important bill.

Government Orders

While I am on my feet, let me clearly reiterate that, in no way, would the way to transport a restricted firearm in this country be impacted by the bill. Unfortunately, this is exactly what the leader of the second opposition has pretended.

However, as was mentioned, the truth will prevail and that is exactly what is happening right here as I am presenting the bill.

Let us move on to the bill and we will let our little Liberal friend yell over there and he will have his time to debate as well.

I was explaining that there would be a grace period for law-abiding citizens who, after five years, are willing to renew their licence. That is one improvement of the bill.

As I was interrupted, I was also indicating that we would be improving the authorization to transport. I would invite the member to listen because maybe then there will not be any more attempts to mislead the House.

As I was saying, currently, an authorization to transport is required to take any restricted firearm between the owner's home and another location. Each and every new location requires a separate form and application.

Are we changing the way to transport a restricted firearm in the country? No.

Are we cutting red tape for law-abiding citizens? Yes. This is exactly what we are doing.

Let us have an honest debate here. Let us talk about the truth, about the facts and about the fact that it is very important to keep our country safe, and to keep the measures this government is applying to keep Canadians safe.

Members have to know this red tape, those papers are not even shared with law enforcement. They are useless. This is a good example of red tape without any added value. I hope the Liberals will clearly understand what the bill is all about, and then we can have an open and frank discussion.

This information, as I just mentioned, not only is not shared with law enforcement but is second only to the registration of long guns. This process is the clearest example of needless red tape and burdensome paperwork brought in by the former Liberal government.

My question would be, at this point in time, what does the Liberal Party have against law-abiding citizens? This is the question I hope the hon. member will be answering as he will be given the opportunity to speak to the bill, which would be cutting red tape while increasing the safety of Canadians.

The bill would eliminate the need to apply for new authorization, new red tape, to transport a firearm for any lawful activity within the province where the firearm owner resides.

What are we talking about? We are talking about going to a shooting range. We are talking about going to a gunsmith to have a firearm repaired. We are talking, in some cases, about going to an exhibition where people can exchange and share their views, and their passion for their activity.

[*Translation*]

It is important to remind everyone that all restricted firearms must be unloaded, locked and in a locked carrying case while being transported. It is also recommended that they always be transported in the trunk of a vehicle.

[*English*]

Once again, we have an opportunity here to educate my hon. colleagues on the other side. Maybe the leader of the second opposition has a need to refresh his knowledge on the way in which one is to carry a restricted firearm in this country.

Let me be clear, this firearm has to be unloaded. It must be trigger locked. It must be in a locked case and, preferably, in the trunk of the car driven by the owner of a valid restricted firearm.

We will keep this because we feel that it is important. However, while doing this, we also feel it is important to cut red tape for those law-abiding citizens. That is why we are bringing those changes forward.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, anyone who is transporting a restricted firearm must take the most direct route to his or her destination. That provision already exists in the law. Those rules are not changing, because they are safe and they make sense. This is just common sense.

[*English*]

This is the common sense firearms licensing act. What will be eliminated is the needless paperwork that law-abiding sports shooters were previously required to complete in order to engage in their hobby.

While the crux of the common sense firearms licensing act is, as its name suggests, the licensing of firearms, there are two other important measures tackled by this bill. This is a federal law under the Criminal Code. Therefore, is it not logical that this law be applied the same way across the land? This is what this bill would accomplish.

Second, law enforcers would apply the law and legislators would set the rules. That is how we would ensure that the authority of the chief of firearms officers is clearly defined in law, so that it is applied in a standardized way and that there are no discrepancies from one region to another. After all, we are in the same country, and this is the same law and the same Criminal Code.

[*Translation*]

The gun laws are Canadian laws. I therefore firmly believe that there should be a Canada-wide standard for enforcing these laws, some degree of standardization. That is exactly what this bill aims to do. It aims to simplify and standardize how the firearms registry is enforced.

Government Orders

[*English*]

Earlier in my comments today, I alluded to decisions that created criminals out of law-abiding citizens overnight. Many Canadians were shocked to realize that some owners of legal firearms for years or decades were turned into criminals overnight. This is not acceptable. That is why we are addressing this issue in the bill.

The common sense firearms licensing act would end the ability of the Canadian firearms program to make a final decision on the reclassification of firearms without the oversight of an elected member of Parliament. We are doing this because the owners of the Swiss Arms and the CZ firearms are law-abiding citizens and should not be treated as criminals. This is why we are bringing this legislation forward for that specific part. Therefore, the government would have an oversight mechanism for decisions on the classification of firearms.

Let me once again be clear, these decisions would be made on the advice of technical experts who are knowledgeable about the workings of firearms. To that end, this is exactly what would happen to the CZ and the Swiss Arms family of rifles in order to have the original reclassification restored when the bill is proclaimed into law.

[*Translation*]

These important measures are meant to bring some common sense back to our firearms policies. As I said, my priority is to keep Canadians safe through common sense policies.

[*English*]

For too long, gun control in Canada has been about disarming all Canadians. It was about making hunting and sport shooting so onerous, so filled with time-consuming paperwork, that no one would be interested in pursuing these Canadian heritage activities.

Many members around here have grown up on a farm or have parents or grandparents who have grown up on a farm. This was part of their life. This was part of their way of living.

Many of our friends and colleagues like hunting and sport shooting. They are law-abiding citizens. Why should they be ostracized because they are doing those Canadian heritage activities?

We have a common-sense firearm licensing regime to ensure that they are abiding by the law, but in the meantime we are cutting red tape. That is what this bill is all about. That is what we are seeking to achieve with this bill.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

To ensure that all new gun owners have a basic understanding of how to safely handle a firearm, they will have to take the Canadian firearms safety course and pass the related test.

I met with many hunters and various organizations and everyone agreed that it just makes sense that anyone who wants to acquire, handle, use or possess a firearm should have to take training. That training was not mandatory in the past.

This bill makes training mandatory for the possession, acquisition and use of a firearm. While cutting red tape, this measure strengthens our system of registering and possessing firearms.

However, that is not all. We are introducing another measure that allows law enforcement agencies to share information regarding investigations into illegally imported restricted and prohibited firearms.

We want to make sure that the illegal weapons that are in our streets and used for criminal purposes are taken out of circulation. This is also included in the bill. Both the RCMP and CBSA will break down the barriers, the silos, that prevented the sharing of information.

What is more, importers will be required to report any gun imports into Canada. This measure will eliminate a loophole that existed before and will provide a significant tool for removing illegal handguns from our streets.

[*English*]

A study from British Columbia found that thousands of firearms had been diverted to the black market due to this loophole. It is time we closed that information-sharing gap exploited by criminals.

I hope the opposition will consider those sound measures in the bill and will certainly be interested in bringing this bill to committee, so we can discuss those very important measures.

However, that is not all. I must say, regarding the import of illegal firearms, that this issue has been raised with me by my provincial counterparts, and I am pleased to address it in this legislation.

[*Translation*]

We are tackling the criminal use of firearms instead of focusing on those who practise traditional activities and obey the law.

There is a third measure that I believe is important. We are going to establish orders prohibiting the possession of firearms for persons found guilty of domestic violence. In cases of serious domestic violence, those found guilty will automatically receive a prohibition order for life.

According to a 2013 report, Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends, spouses and dating partners were the most common perpetrators in violent crime against women.

[*English*]

Our legislation is clear. We are eliminating needless red tape while making our gun control regime make good common sense.

[*Translation*]

Let us be clear. From now on, a person found guilty of domestic violence on indictment will automatically lose his licence to possess a firearm.

[*English*]

We are putting forward safe and sensible firearms policies. That is why there is such strong support for this important legislation. We have spoken with people from all walks of life.

Government Orders

This afternoon, I am very proud to be here with the member for Yorkton—Melville, who was elected in 1993 and who has been a strong advocate of law-abiding citizens, while maintaining tough sentences for criminals. He is right here with us today.

We as a party have abolished the ineffective long gun registry, but we need to do more. We need to take another step. We need to streamline our processes, cut into red tape, and bring some improvements in through this bill to make our country safer. This is what this bill would accomplish.

The member for Yorkton—Melville has been an incredible advocate for law-abiding firearms owners. This place will lose an excellent legislator when he retires in 2015.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the committee members from my party, who gave me a lot of advice. We have former police officers, for example, who served with the provincial police or the RCMP. I also want to thank the members of the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee for providing me with valuable information and showing me the importance of handling firearms carefully and obeying the law.

I am thinking about Greg Farrant, president of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Alain Cossette of the Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, Tony Bernardo and Bob Rich, a former police officer. These individuals helped us arrive at a balanced bill that makes our country safer and reduces red tape for law-abiding citizens.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say I am always disappointed when I hear the minister adopting the rhetoric and the language of the gun lobby. It is revealing of who he talked to before introducing the bill. Even today, the only people he mentioned are those who have a direct interest in guns and members of his own party.

My question is for the minister. Who was consulted before this bill was drafted and presented in the House? It is very clear to me that law enforcement was not consulted until afterwards.

If this is such common-sense legislation, why did the minister not consult victims groups, including women's groups that work on violence against women? If it is such common-sense legislation, why has the minister not consulted groups working to reduce gun violence on the streets of Montreal and Toronto? If it is such good legislation, why was there such narrow consultation before it came to this House?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, in my speech, I mentioned studies that clearly show that violence against women often occurs in the home.

That is why there is a specific measure in this bill to remove firearms licences from people who have been indicted and found guilty of domestic violence. I am convinced that once the member examines the bill more closely, he will realize that it will make life easier for hunters.

What does my colleague have against hunters, fishers, farmers and people who like hunting rifles? I am wondering why we should make things more difficult for them.

Does my colleague agree that the firearms importation measures will reduce the number of illegal weapons on our streets? Does he intend to support the bill, which seeks to reduce the number of gun crimes, while making things simpler for law-abiding Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is certainly not much in the bill that would reduce crimes with illegal guns. However, I listened closely to the minister's remarks, and I will say there are some things in this bill that Liberals like and there are some things that we do not. I will be talking about that later.

It is interesting that the minister mentioned the member for Yorkton—Melville. I respect the member for Yorkton—Melville immensely. He worked hard here for all those years. He had an assistant by the name of Dennis Young. He recently made a statement publicly about this bill, saying that it leaves supporters of the Conservative government and gun owners feeling as if they are just used for fundraising. I listened to the minister try to attack the NDP and the Liberals and accuse the Liberal leader of misleading the House when he was not.

Is the real reason not all about this stuff and Conservative fundraising, not only Canadian twenties but American twenties, and maybe a little money from the Canadian rifle association as well? Is that not what it is about, to enliven that—

• (1555)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I think we can expect more from a former solicitor general of Canada.

I would like to clarify something extremely important. Canada has very strict procedures for the transportation of restricted firearms. First, a firearms possession and acquisition licence is required. A second training course on restricted firearms is also required.

The bill does not make any changes to the procedure for transporting firearms. The firearm must be unloaded and neutralized. This can be done in several ways. Then, it must be placed in a locked container, and it is recommended that the container be placed in the trunk of the car. Nothing has changed about that.

I am therefore disappointed that the leader of the second opposition party tried to mislead the House by suggesting that this bill could change this safe procedure. That is not the case. Restricted firearms will continue to be transported in the same way.

Government Orders

Our goal is to reduce red tape, simplify procedures and cut down on bureaucracy. The procedure for transporting restricted firearms in Canada will remain exactly the same.

[*English*]

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to ask a question for my colleague, the minister.

We know that originally we had the long gun registry. It was a \$2 million registry, according to the Liberals, but turned out to be \$2 billion-plus registry. It hurt farmers, it hurt ranchers, and it hurt sport shooters. I have a lot of friends in my riding of Medicine Hat who are passionate, safe gun owners, and this bill, I believe, would help those individuals.

I would ask the minister to comment further on how this bill would help hunters, sport shooters, farmers, and ranchers in my riding.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Medicine Hat, who is doing outstanding work in Parliament, for his question.

Let me answer by explaining what is also behind this bill. We want to increase public safety in this country, and I have alluded to the measures we are putting in place, such as mandatory training and reducing domestic violence by removing firearms licences from people who have been indicted and found guilty. It is now time that we treat hunters, farmers, sport shooters, and law-abiding citizens who possess guns with respect and dignity.

It is also time to cut red tape. What would the bill do? It would cut red tape. It would simplify the procedures. We will not turn them into criminals because a decision was taken overnight. There would be scrutiny and measures to make sure that those people are treated as any other Canadian is treated in this country.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, in a few minutes we will be given the opportunity to speak on the bill, and there are of course some good things in it, but I am concerned that the minister may inadvertently be misleading the House.

The minister said that the Conservatives are not changing anything in the transportation regulations. I wonder if the minister can tell us if he has talked to the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette who gave notice today of a private member's bill that he intends to introduce. The bill is entitled “an act to amend the Criminal Code, (firearms storage and transportation)”.

I am very concerned about the content of the bill that we will be seeing this week. It will be coming up in the next round of private members' bills.

The minister has just assured us that the Conservatives are not changing anything. Can he assure me that he has talked to the member proposing this private member's bill and that it would not alter the transportation and storage regulations?

He is a member of the minister's caucus. The minister said he had consulted the members of his caucus. Did the minister consult the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette about this attempted change to those requirements?

● (1600)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, one thing is certainly going to be sure at the end of the day: Bill C-42, the common sense firearm licensing act, would keep things the same for transporting restricted firearms, just as they are today. It is the will of the government to continue that way.

Let me be very clear. If one is to carry a restricted firearm, it has to be unloaded. It also has to be trigger-locked or neutralized technically. It has to be in a locked container that is safe. If one is to travel with a firearm, it has to be in the trunk of the car and with an owner of a valid restricted firearms licence.

However, the bill is not addressing this. I invite the member, when we debate the other private member's bill, to raise this issue. As he knows, these are not government bills.

I hope we will have a good discussion on Bill C-42 and that it can be brought to committee so that we can vote on the bill for what it would do. It is a common sense firearms licensing act that would increase the safety of this country and reduce the paperwork for law-abiding Canadians.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak against Bill C-42, the so-called common sense firearms licensing act. While this is not the most egregious short title assigned by the Conservatives to a bill, even in this session, the bill might better be titled “the special interest firearms licensing act”.

What we have before us is a bill that only looks like common sense when viewed from the point of view of the gun lobby. New Democrats believe that public safety must always trump politics when it comes to firearms licensing and regulation.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, have been promoting the dangerous ideas of the gun lobby, a small minority of Canadians, and perhaps even a small minority among gun owners. In particular, there is the idea that any regulations at all on firearms pit the interests of law-abiding gun owners against the government and the police, and that these regulations amount to nothing more than excessive red tape. New Democrats have a different view, one that clearly puts public safety first.

Government Orders

The Conservatives like to pose as the only ones here who understand rural Canada, but let me say, perhaps to the shock and surprise of some, that I actually grew up on a farm. My father and his father before him were hunters of quail, pheasant, duck, deer, and moose, and all but one of these later graced our table when I was a kid. I have to say that sometimes there would not have been much on the table without the hunting that went on in my family. I learned to shoot at a young age, an age that most now might consider inappropriately young, and yes, my grandpa always kept a shotgun behind the door for scaring away the coyotes. It must have worked because I never saw any. This was in the day before those proper storage regulations. When those came in, he changed his behaviour. He did not see these as unnecessary red tape. He saw them as good advice for keeping his family safe, and the shotgun disappeared from behind the door and into a locked cabinet.

Subsequently I lived in the Northwest Territories as a young adult. I was fresh out of university, and while there I was privileged to go hunting out on the traplines with my Dene friends. By that time I was not such a fan of doing the shooting myself. It was a great life experience I had there. None of them regarded safety regulations as red tape.

Now I represent a riding that stretches from the Victoria Harbour all the way out to the head of the West Coast Trail at Fort Renfrew, so I do know something about law-abiding gun owners and something about communities where hunting is much more than just a prop to use in arguments about gun registration and licensing.

When the Conservatives abolished the gun registry, we on this side of the House warned that it would be necessary to remain vigilant on the question of gun licensing and gun regulations. We all knew that members of the gun lobby would not be happy to stop at the abolition of the registry, that with their U.S.-influenced ideological viewpoint they would keep pushing to weaken all the other measures in Canada that place restrictions on firearms in the interest of public safety.

Like his gun lobby allies, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has fallen into the habit of using U.S. rhetoric in his comments on firearms. This was never clearer than on July 23, 2014, when the minister said:

To possess a firearm is a right, and it's a right that comes with responsibilities.

Here we have a minister of the crown, one of the government's chief legal ministers, directly contradicting the Supreme Court of Canada. In 1993, the Supreme Court found, in a case called *Regina v. Hasselwander*, that:

Canadians, unlike Americans do not have a constitutional right to bear arms. Indeed, most Canadians prefer the peace of mind and sense of security derived from the knowledge that the possession of automatic weapons is prohibited.

Therefore, the minister is in direct contradiction of the Supreme Court in the rhetoric he is using around gun licensing. The court could not have been clearer, nor could there have been any doubt about the precedent, since the *Hasselwander* case was precisely about the right to possess automatic weapons.

The court later reiterated in the 2010 case of *Regina v. Montague* that in Canada there is no right to own firearms. In that case, the Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal against an Ontario Court of Appeal decision rejecting the existence of such a right in Canada.

Like their gun lobby colleagues, when the Conservatives are challenged on the rights question, they often switch gears and try to argue that gun ownership is somehow a property right, which I would point out is another right that is not found in the Canadian constitution.

What the minister's comments last July clearly indicate, unfortunately, is that we have a government that likes to pander to the gun lobby. At least in this case, however, I would have to say that the Conservatives do so fairly transparently and in order to generate political support from their base.

• (1605)

When the Conservatives made their first appointments to the Firearms Advisory Committee, the committee responsible for advising the minister on firearms regulations, the appointees were drawn entirely from representatives of the gun lobby. It took until 2012 for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to prevail on the government to add three police chiefs to the nine gun advocates the government had already placed on the advisory committee.

This was only after the committee came forward with a set of extreme recommendations for the government, including such great ideas as extending the ownership licences to 10 years and, unbelievably, a proposal that the police should re-sell guns that had been seized rather than destroying them as is now the case. It is hard for me to even imagine the police running a garage sale of seized weapons. These are the kind of recommendations that came from the Firearms Advisory Committee, which was loaded with gun lobby advocates. When it comes to the specific firearms regulations adopted by the Conservatives, the influence of the gun lobby is quite apparent.

In 2011, the Department of Public Safety drafted new regulations for gun shows that would have required things that most Canadians would see as common sense. These included things like notifying the local police of gun shows to be held in their jurisdiction. That does not seem like red tape to me; that seems like common sense. It would have required the tethering of guns on display at a gun show. Cellphones are tethered at cellphone kiosks, so why not have this important public safety measure of tethering guns at a gun show.

These gun show regulations were to have been brought into force in 2012, but that did not happen. Instead, the Conservatives junked the proposed regulations altogether after complaints from the gun lobby that the new requirements were too onerous. I guess we should have seen this coming, because the Firearms Advisory Committee called for scrapping the gun show regulations in its March 2012 report.

I am worried about who was consulted, as I said in my question for the minister at the beginning of this debate. Who did he talk to? He says he talked to the hunting lobbies and to members of his caucus. He probably looked at the reports of the Firearms Advisory Committee. We see that the committee's slanted approach has influenced what the minister is already doing.

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Regulations were also due to come into force in December 2012 to require that each gun manufactured in Canada have an individual serial number. It is surprising to me that it is not a requirement, as it is actually required by the international treaties to which Canada is already a party. It is something that seems like common sense when it comes to the police being able to trace guns used in crimes or in the fight to combat illegal international trade in small arms.

In November 2013, for a second time, the Conservatives quietly implemented a regulation delaying the coming into force of this requirement for serial numbers on each gun manufactured in Canada. This time they delayed it until December 2015, conveniently after the next scheduled election date.

The connection to the gun lobby is not so clear in this regulation, but I have no doubt that it exists. Why else would the Conservatives have appointed a representative of the Canadian Shooting Sports Association as a member of the Canadian delegation at international arms treaty negotiations? A representative of the sports shooting association and a member of the Firearms Advisory Committee became part of the international delegation to debate the small arms trade treaty internationally. Now, at a time when 50 other nations have signed the arms trade treaty, why has Canada failed to do so? Why are we excluding ourselves from the important discussions about how to end the illegal arms trade? The minister in his speech made reference to the important role in public safety of stopping the smuggling of illegal arms into Canada, yet we have excluded ourselves from the very process that would make that possible.

When it comes to Bill C-42, I guess we should be glad that the government abandoned the most extreme recommendations of the Firearms Advisory Committee, the ones I mentioned a minute ago of 10-year licences and the resale of seized weapons.

Now we are seeing complaints in the media from the gun lobby that Bill C-42 does not go far enough. That is why I am worried about the private member's bill that was placed on notice today, which we will see later this week, and how it will relate to this bill. The minister can say all he likes that it is a private member's bill and that it has nothing to do with him, but we will see. We will see if it has nothing to do with this legislation. When I heard the gun lobby say that Bill C-42 should have gone further, I am concerned about the contents of this new private member's bill.

● (1610)

Let me turn to the contents of the bill we have in front of us. It is one that is still clearly a child of the gun lobby. I should point out, as I did in my question for the minister, that there is no evidence of broad consultations throughout the community. If this is such common sense legislation, I do not understand why such a narrow group of people were the only ones consulted on this bill.

For me, despite the short title, there is nothing common sense about the two major provisions in this bill. One of those would make the gun classification process a clearly political process. The other would remove the requirement for having a permit for the transportation of firearms in any vehicle carrying them. Neither of these provisions has any public safety purpose. Instead, they respond only to the explicit complaints from the gun lobby. All of the other things that the Conservatives want to address in this bill could be accomplished without these two provisions.

Let me discuss the first change that is proposed in the way weapons are classified.

Right now, recommendations on classification are under definitions contained in law, and those recommendations are made by firearms experts in the RCMP, who both the gun lobby and the government members have referred to as "bureaucrats". They are, in fact, the RCMP firearms experts.

The minister's signature is required on any reclassification, but there is no discretion for the minister, providing the recommendations fall within the scope of the existing legislative definitions. What Bill C-42 suggests is that the cabinet should be able to ignore the classification recommendations from the public experts and substitute its own wisdom about how weapons should be classified. The minister has already told us today that when the bill passes, he intends to use this political process to reclassify two individual types of guns. Therefore, by varying the definitions in the legislation, Bill C-42 would go even further by allowing the cabinet to grant exemptions for guns and ammunition that would otherwise have been prohibited.

Where did this perceived need for a change come from? It came from a single case of reclassification of a single weapon, the Swiss Arms PE 90, or Classic Greens, as they are sometimes called. These are military-style weapons that have been sold for nearly 20 years in Canada as semi-automatic weapons limited to firing five rounds. Before 2013, there were approximately 2,000 of these weapons in Canada, worth about \$4,000 each.

So why the reclassification? What we had in Calgary in 2013 was the sudden appearance of so-called "refurbished" models of this gun, which were now operating as automatic weapons. That meant that these weapons were now easily converted to automatic weapons capable of firing a long series of shots from a single trigger pull, exactly what the "prohibited" designation was designed to keep off the streets of Canada.

When there was an immediate outcry from the gun lobby, the Conservatives were quick to grant a two-year amnesty in March of 2014. It is an amnesty for which I believe legal authority is doubtful, at best. How can the government grant an amnesty on possessing a weapon that is prohibited by law in Canada?

Now the government has presented Bill C-42 as the solution, giving the Conservative cabinet the power to decide if these dangerous weapons should be allowed in Canada.

Quite apart from the danger of ending up with automatic weapons on the street, there is another principle at stake here. When we make laws, we make them in public after public debate, and they stay in force until there is another public debate about changing them. Public debate before changing law is essential to democracy and accountability. In fact, what we would have in Bill C-42 is the creation of a process whereby Canada could in effect change our gun classification system and the classification of individual weapons through decisions made behind closed doors and without any public debate.

Government Orders

The other major change in Bill C-42 would remove the requirement that exists in most provinces to have a permit in any vehicle transporting restricted firearms, and the bill would go further: it would prohibit any province from reintroducing such a requirement. Currently, permits must specify a reason for transporting the firearm and specify that the travel must be from a specific point A to a specific point B. This makes it easy for police to enforce the prohibition on the illegal transportation of firearms, since a specific permit and a specific route must be provided.

• (1615)

Bill C-42 rolls transportation permits into the licence to own firearms. This would automatically allow the transportation of firearms between the owner's home and a list of five kinds of places: to any gun range, to any gun shop, to any gun show, to any police station, and to any border post for exiting from Canada. This change would provide a vast array of excuses for having weapons in a vehicle along a myriad set of plausible routes, and it would make the prohibition on illegal transportation of weapons virtually impossible for police to enforce.

Again I want to say that is why I am concerned about the notice the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette has given about a bill to amend the Criminal Code on firearms storage and transportation. I am looking forward to having law enforcement representatives present in committee so that we can talk to them about the impact of no longer requiring permits for transporting restricted firearms to limit them to travelling from a specific place to a specific place. There is a great deal of danger here for Canadians.

We have some questions about some other provisions in this bill. Most of those questions will be about whether proposed changes, such as combining the two kinds of licences and creating a grace period after the expiry of a licence, would have negative consequences on completing timely checks as to whether owners remain authorized to own firearms after criminal or mental health incidents. We will be asking for assurances from the minister on these questions in committee. There is nothing more important to public safety than ensuring that the system works so that those who are convicted of criminal activity or those who have experienced mental health difficulties are no longer in possession of firearms. We have to look no farther than this Parliament Hill to understand the importance of those kinds of checks.

Does anything in this bill look good to New Democrats? The minister was asking me that question earlier, as a kind of heckle. Certainly measures that make prohibitions on gun ownership easier in cases of domestic violence are very welcome, as are expanded requirements for gun safety courses. In a sense, there are a couple of positives in this bill.

The minister might ask, "Why are we not trying to improve this bill in committee? Why have we said we will not support it at second reading?" I have to say I have become more than a bit cynical about this idea.

On Bill C-44 just last week, the minister assured me we could have full debate in committee on the bill expanding the powers of CSIS. He said it was up to the committee to make its own decision, as if the government does not have a majority on every committee and as if his parliamentary secretary did not move motions that

restrict debate in committee. It beggars belief that he would make this argument in the House of Commons. The Conservatives said they would like all-party support on Bill C-44, and we clearly were told by the minister that the public safety committee was the place for detailed debate. However, this afternoon, while we are here in the House, the committee is getting its only afternoon with opposition witnesses, its only two hours to discuss the bill that would expand the powers of CSIS.

That is why, even though there are a couple of good things in this bill, I cannot argue that we should support sending the bill to committee to try to fix the rest of it. The experience that we have in committee again and again is limited time, limited witnesses, and the absolute refusal of the government to accept even the best-intentioned, most non-political amendments from the opposition.

Clearly public safety is not the priority for Conservatives in Bill C-42. In fact, its two main provisions seem to me to present clear threats to public safety. Making political decisions about whether or not a gun is a prohibited weapon does not bode well for public safety. Introducing this grey area in terms of transportation of weapons does not bode well for public safety.

Let me conclude by saying that I find it both sad and insensitive on the part of the government to be discussing this bill in the lead-up to December 6. This is a national day dedicated to remembering the victims of the École Polytechnique massacre 25 years ago, and a day set aside to recommitting to the fight against violence against women. As well, I do not understand why the Conservatives want to proceed so abruptly with this bill to loosen gun regulations in the aftermath of the murder of Corporal Nathan Cirillo at the National War Memorial and the attack here in Parliament. I would ask the government to put off further consideration of this bill until well into the new year, a less emotional time for victims, and to give time for the air to clear after the October 22 incident here on the Hill.

Will the government show more respect for Canadians and our democratic process by delaying this bill? I doubt it. Instead, I expect the Conservatives to press on to the tune of a dog whistle played by their gun lobby friends. Unfortunately, I think Canadians already know the answer to this question. The gun lobby rules, and this bill will press ahead. That is why, as a New Democrat, I will be proud to vote against Bill C-42.

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•(1620)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an observation: criminals who commit gun-related crimes do not follow the law. What the Liberals did in their era was try to curtail crime by shackling and burdening law-abiding gun owners—gun owners who follow the law, like myself—with unnecessary, complicated, restrictive laws.

The minister has brought about a bill to ease that, because they are law-abiding gun owners. Unfortunately, the NDP has bought into the misguided Liberal logic that somehow criminals follow the law. They do not.

I am wondering if the member could just agree that criminals do not follow the law and that the intent of this bill is actually to respect law-abiding Canadians and the fact that they are allowed to own guns and should not be shackled and overburdened with unnecessary rules, regulations, and laws. There has to be a minimum amount of legislation in place, but not unduly so, as was presented by the Liberal Party in their day.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I have to start by saying that everybody is law-abiding until they are not, so the question does not make much sense to me. It is more rhetoric from the gun lobby.

Obviously there are legitimate uses for guns. There are legitimate reasons for having guns if one is a hunter or a sport shooter. We totally accept that on this side of the House.

What we are saying is that we have to have reasonable regulations in place to protect public safety. The first way we have to judge these laws is on whether they protect public safety, not on whether we have to fill out forms.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. friend. We sit on committee together.

The member raised a number of points in terms of some of the witnesses we would need to hear from at committee, including Canadian firearms officers, police, people who are involved with the transport of guns, et cetera.

Both the member and I are missing the debate on Bill C-44 because the government called this bill at the same time. Could the member share with Canadians his thoughts about the debate on this bill? We are having a debate here in the chamber that will likely have closure put on it at some point in time, while at committee our ability to hear the proper people we should hear from to deal with this issue is being curtailed.

One of the most important issues to deal with was raised by my leader in question period, the open-ended transportation of guns. Yes, they have to be in a locked trunk, but as the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture said, criminals do not follow the rules. Of course they do not. There will be guns in car trunks, and most of the guns criminals use are stolen from legitimate gun owners. Is that not a problem with the new transport rules?

•(1625)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I have two points. I am a former municipal police board member, and I have done a lot of international policing work.

It is very rare to come across police who believe that gun regulations are red tape. Police are very supportive of reasonable regulations. They do not want extra forms. They do not want extra time wasted. However, the police are quite often in favour of reasonable regulations.

I very much look forward to having the time in committee to hear from law enforcement officials on the question of transportation of weapons. However, I have to say, as I did earlier, that after my experience with Bill C-44, I have kind of lost my faith that we are going to have adequate time in committee.

I would ask the minister again, but I know his answer will be that it has nothing to do with him, his parliamentary secretary, or the government majority on the committee. These restrictions on time and on the number of witnesses just come out of the air.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since being elected, I have noticed, and so have all Canadians, that the Conservative government does not govern for Canadians but for its electoral base. Today, with Bill C-42, we see that it is working for the gun lobby.

We know that this government did not consult organizations responsible for applying the law, such as the National Firearms Association in Quebec, beforehand about the repercussions of the proposed changes on public safety.

Does my colleague not think that Bill C-42 runs counter to the concept of public safety and security?

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly my point. Public safety has to be our first concern in any of the changes we are making to gun licensing and gun regulations.

However, I would also like to remind the House that, when the gun registry was being eliminated, the Conservatives were saying that was all we needed to do. Now, here we are with another bill that would loosen licensing and regulation, and sometime later this week, we are going to have another private member's bill that says we have to do something else. We are on a very slippery slope, I would say, but it seems more like an express train to keep making more and more changes at the behest of the gun lobby, forgetting the importance of keeping public safety at the centre of what we do.

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[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for his speech. I would like to say that his family, like many Canadian families, has used firearms safely.

My question is very simple. The former leader of the NDP, Jack Layton, proposed one of the measures in the bill, and that is combining the possession only licence and the possession and acquisition licence into one licence.

Today, why have the NDP unexpectedly flip-flopped on what seems to be their party's policy? Why oppose this specific measure when it was proposed by the NDP? Is it because of ideology or partisanship? I invite the member to consider the value of the measure and judge it on its merits.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's reference to my family background, for once accepting that some people on this side actually have families with similar experience to those on the Conservative side.

With respect to why we are changing our position on the bill, what I would have to say is that the proof is in the packaging. Our leader may have had an idea or a suggestion in the past, but it was not this package that the minister is bringing forward.

I have said to him, very clearly, that there are a couple of things we like in the bill, but there are some things we are concerned about. If they are going to merge those licences, then we have to have the assurance that there are proper checks for criminal activity, for mental health incidents, for domestic violence in the home.

It is not just a question of picking out one idea and saying, "Why don't you support this one idea?" It is the whole package of measures in the bill that makes it impossible for us to support it.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is worthy to note that the bill would, in fact, if passed, allow for a more open-ended transportation of firearms. In Winnipeg, with a population of 1.25 million people, thousands of vehicles are stolen every year. One year, in excess of 13,000 vehicles were stolen. I suspect that there would be a great deal of concern in that regard. We know, quite often, that it is part of a gang initiation, to go out and steal a vehicle.

It seems to me that the government is not dealing with the issue of possession of illegal guns.

I wonder if the member might want to provide some comment, with respect to that particular issue.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I am concerned that there was not a broader range of people consulted about the impacts of the bill—in particular, in-depth consultations with the law enforcement community—on the very questions he raising.

However, there are also many groups working in Montreal and Toronto, in particular, which are trying to reduce gun violence on the streets.

I am very disappointed that the minister, clearly, has not talked to these people about the bill, because the situation of having most guns stolen is going to become much worse if we loosen the regulations on transportation of weapons. There is no doubt about that.

Again, I look forward to hearing what the minister has to say in committee and hearing from witnesses who represent those other parts of Canadian society that are also concerned about the presence of guns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, Environment; the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis, Health; and the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung, Public Safety.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on Bill C-42, an act to amend the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code and to make a related amendment and a consequential amendment to other acts. As it states in the bill, the short title is the common sense firearms licensing act. When the government calls something common sense, as we well know, it is time for all of us to look at the fine print, and that is what Liberals are going to do.

I am pleased to lay out today the position of the Liberal Party on this bill moving to committee. First and foremost, as we know and as I said in a question earlier, the bill is coming forward disguised as a law and order bill, but really it is designed to try to re-ignite support among those in the pro-gun community for the Conservative base and the Conservative Party. As such, as we have already heard, government MPs will try to allege that the Liberal Party would bring back the gun registry, which we heard from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture earlier. For any member from the Conservative camp to say that would be an absolute lie.

The leader of the Liberal Party previously, and again today, made it absolutely clear, to quote him, that we will not bring back the long gun registry. It was stated in the past and it was stated today at a scrum with the media following the caucus meeting. Let me repeat that, as there seems to be a lot of yelling opposite by government members. They might not like to hear it, but the fact of the matter is that the leader of the Liberal Party has committed that the Liberal Party will not bring back a gun registry.

To play the gun registry card in Conservative propaganda and in fundraising on the part of the Conservatives would be, as I said earlier, an absolute abrogation of the truth. Indeed, it would be a lie. Anybody who stands in the House and says that the Liberal Party is going to bring back the gun registry is lying. Members should get that straight.

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Let me turn to Bill C-42 as proposed. Simply put, there are good points that would be helpful to those who use guns in this country, and there are troublesome policy and legislative amendments, which would put public safety in Canada at risk and definitely, I believe, would make Canadian streets less safe as a result of some of the proposals in Bill C-42. Indeed, it would put lives at risk and, I would submit, police officers' lives especially. Therefore, the Liberal Party is asking the minister and the government that Bill C-42 be split.

We call on the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to split Bill C-42. We can support the following measures.

We can support creating a six-month grace period at the end of the five-year licence period, to stop people from immediately becoming criminalized for paperwork delays around licence renewal, which is in clause 14.

We can support streamlining the licensing system by eliminating the possession-only licence and converting all existing POLs to possession and acquisition licences, or PALs, which is in clause 11.

We can support making classroom participation in firearm safety training mandatory for first-time licence applicants, which is in clause 4.

We can support amending the Criminal Code to strengthen the provisions related to orders prohibiting the possession of firearms where a person is convicted of an offence involving domestic violence, which is in clause 30.

• (1635)

We can support authorizing firearms import information-sharing when restricted and prohibited firearms are imported into Canada by businesses. I do not have the list of where that clause is, but we can support that because it makes sense. The Canada Border Services Agency, the RCMP, and police forces of other jurisdictions should have that information.

To sum up, we therefore call on the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to split Bill C-42. We can support several elements, such as the provisions that streamline licence paperwork, that tighten safety requirements, that make it harder for people convicted of domestic offences to obtain a gun, the firearm information-sharing, and extending the grace period to six months. The bill should be split to assist lawful gun activity by activists, sport shooters, farmers, and hunters immediately. If the minister is willing to split the bill, we should be able to accomplish passage in this House of that segment. I think that even the New Democrats would support some of those aspects. We should be able to accomplish some of those aspects and get the bill through by Christmas, if that is really the desire of the government.

However, as we will find out, the government is really not interested in helping law-abiding gun owners. It is really interested in creating a fight to leave the impression that we on this side of the House do not like those law-abiding gun owners. That is the impression it wants to leave. Therefore, it has put in place a bill that has some good aspects in it for the law-abiding gun community but has a poison pill that I submit would damage public safety in this country.

Let me turn to those other aspects of the bill that we cannot support, because it does put public safety in this country at risk.

First, the bill would eliminate the need for owners of prohibited and restricted firearms to have a transportation licence to carry these guns in their vehicle. It eliminates that need for every time they are transported. This means they could freely transport handguns or automatic weapons anywhere within their province. It says in the backgrounder that they can travel with restricted and prohibited firearms to shooting ranges, practices, and competitions; when returning to an individual's home following a chief firearms officer's approval of transfer of ownership; going to a gunsmith, a gun show, or a Canadian port of exit; and going to a peace officer or CFO for verification, registration, or disposal.

There is such a mix of things that, when we give people a broad transport licence, it is an accident waiting to happen. Of course the guns would be locked. They would not be loaded. These are people who do not want to break the law. However, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture said earlier, criminals do not abide by the law and would break into those vehicles. They would take those weapons and use them for wrong purposes. With this aspect of trying to simplify the system, the minister is making the streets more dangerous. Therefore, we cannot support that part of the bill.

Second, Bill C-42 would take the power to classify firearms out of the hands of police, who are the experts at keeping Canadians safe, and put it into the hands of politicians like the current minister. It might even be the member for Yorkton—Melville or someone else over there at some point in time. However, the bill would take the power to classify firearms out of the hands of the police and put it into the hands of politicians. I will speak to that a little more in a moment.

• (1640)

Third, the bill would take the authority away from provincial chief firearms officers and imposes the federal minister's will upon those CFOs in the provinces by regulation. This is a point we have to strongly oppose.

I will explain those points in a little more detail.

The bill would enable the minister to assume the authority to designate firearms, which could result in currently designated prohibitive and restricted firearms receiving a non-restricted categorization. Effectively, an automatic handgun, or worse, could receive a designation the equivalent to a shotgun or a hunting rifle.

I would challenge the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to speak to this point. If Bill C-42 passes in its present form, the Conservative Minister of Public Safety will be empowered to designate any prohibited or restricted firearm to that of a non-restricted firearm.

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This is the conclusion of the Library of Parliament. I will quote its interpretation of Bill C-42, which states, “Bill C-42 would give the Governor-in-Council the power to carve out exceptions by way of regulations for firearms that would otherwise fall within the Criminal Code definitions of restricted or prohibited firearms. This power would allow the minister to render firearms currently classified as prohibited or restricted firearms non-restricted firearms, and to render firearms that are currently classified as prohibited firearms, restricted firearms.”

Quite literally, we would have a firearms registration system in Canada which would be open to lobbying pressure, political favouritism and, in short, a corrupted system of firearms classification.

The legislation would allow a politician, through the Minister of Public Safety, to override the recommendations of experts within our law enforcement community who have been empowered to determine which firearms should be restricted or prohibited from easy and ready access, as are rifles and shotguns, which are the firearms of choice for farmers, sport shooters and hunters in Canada.

What the minister wants to politicize is unique.

From a preliminary examination of other jurisdictions, which included the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany, the Library of Parliament found the following, “A review of firearms legislation in several selected countries has not revealed any jurisdiction in which a cabinet, a government department or even the police have the authority to override the firearms classification principles set out in the legislation.”

Therefore, this is unique. We are politicizing the classification of guns.

The question is on the politicization of firearms classification, which would allow Conservative politicians to work toward having full automatic firearms become the equivalent of a shotgun or hunting rifle. On this point, I look forward to hearing from certain members of the Conservative Party, specifically those who, in a previous life, were front-line police officers, because this clause could, if the minister is pressured, put police officers more at risk than they are today.

The primary motivation behind legislation that would empower politicians to classify firearms in Canada began when the RCMP did its duty. As a result of this, the *Montreal Gazette*, on August 30, stated:

● (1645)

The government came under a barrage of criticism...after the RCMP firearms program quietly changed the status of Swiss Arms-brand rifles and certain Czech-made CZ-858 rifles from restricted or non-restricted to prohibited.

The Conservative government, beginning with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, lashed out at “unelected bureaucrats” for having reclassified those firearms. He even put out a press release on the Conservative Party website as the member for Lévis—Bellechasse. He is the minister. In this press release of February 28, he said, “That’s why I was troubled to learn of a decision made by unelected bureaucrats.”

He was informed weeks earlier by the RCMP that this would happen. He is the minister in charge of those “unelected bureaucrats”. He is either the minister or not. He cannot be the minister one day and the MP for a riding the next. The minister should have accepted his responsibility and done his job. If he has a problem with the RCMP and how it does its job, which it did and for which he criticized it, and if he felt that way, maybe he should have fired the Commissioner of the RCMP.

It is unbelievable that the minister would go that far and attack the very people who he is responsible for in order to cater to the gun lobby in Canada.

The members opposite heckle me a little. They say that I might accuse them of politicizing, of facing political pressure and making decisions under political pressure. The evidence is right there. The minister caved into the gun lobby, and he knows it. That is, in part, why we have this bill today.

What is even more disturbing is that there are media reports saying that the Prime Minister was fully briefed on the need to reclassify these firearms in May, 2013. That is literally nine months prior to any public statements of reclassification.

In short, the Conservative government has sent a very strong signal to our front-line police officers and first responders across Canada. If there is any interference with any firearms issue, and it can sense some kind of political advantage, it will overrule any decision made on their behalf every time, with their safety and public safety taking a back seat to the government's political advantage. That is a fact.

A second concern with the legislation is the intention of the government to undermine the work of provincial chief firearms officers in this bill. What is the reason for the government challenging or trying to overrule chief firearms officers within the provinces? The reason may be in a *Guardian* article about Vivian Hayward, the Chief Firearms Officer in P.E.I. In the article, it says:

Vivian Hayward says she knows very little about the changes, as the province has not been consulted on the proposed federal Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act. But from what she has read in media reports, Hayward says she is concerned over the proposed easing of restrictions for firearms transportation.

“(It’s) just basically one step away from the U.S.-style having the gun on their hip authorization to carry, which people in this country don’t have,” Hayward said.

Is that part of the reason why the government is coming down hard on provincial chief firearms officers?

Let me conclude by saying that there are several good points that I outlined in the bill. We can support them. We can get those aspects through by Christmas, if we want to do that. Is the minister willing to split the bill? Let us deal with those issues that benefit the law-abiding gun community, and let us set the other ones aside and have a debate. Those are issues that jeopardize public safety.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because of the trust that the people of Lévis—Bellechasse and Les Etchemins have placed in me, I have the privilege to serve the entire country in my role as Minister of Public Safety.

Government Orders

I have two questions for the member for Malpeque, who appears to have read the bill, unlike his leader, who is talking nonsense.

First, will he ask his leader to apologize for trying to mislead the House by saying that the bill would change the procedure for transporting firearms, which is not at all the case? Will he make it clear that the bill does not change the procedure for transporting restricted firearms in this country? Will he have the courage to tell the truth?

Second, what happens when hundreds of law-abiding citizens are treated like criminals because the firearm they own changed classifications overnight? Yes, there are measures in place to avoid situations like that one.

Why does the former public safety minister oppose a measure to ensure that law-abiding citizens who have not broken the law continue to obey the law and are not treated like criminals?

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter: My goodness, Mr. Speaker, did the minister not listen at all? We have said that we support some of those aspects, such as the six-month clause to prevent individuals from being made criminals.

If the minister is talking about the Swiss army rifle, there are other ways to deal with that issue. People have not been made criminals yet because the minister has been able to take action under the current laws of the land. He does not need to turn the whole issue on its head and take the authority for the classification of guns, whether prohibited, restricted or non-restricted, away from the experts in the RCMP, who certainly know what they are doing, and turn that authority over to a political base of advisers appointed by the minister, probably from the gun lobby itself, and give the minister the authority to make the final decision based on political favouritism, political pressure and other things. Those are the facts.

The minister accused my leader of misleading the House. The minister in his comments misled the House. Here is what the minister—

• (1655)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

[Translation]

I would like some clarification. If a member does not tell the truth in the House of Commons, does that mean the member is misleading the House?

If that is the case, I want to repeat that the leader of the second opposition party tried to mislead the House. I demand an apology and a retraction. This is an important issue, and public safety is not something to play around with. Members should not mislead people or encourage them to act dangerously.

I demand a clarification.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would just caution hon. members on the use of the term “misleading the House”. Members will know that if one adds some motive in that kind of statement or intentional misleading, this is usually referred to as

being unparliamentary. I recommend members avoid that kind of language because it is very easy to cross the line.

At the same time, the points that have been discussed here are matters for debate and I am sure can come up in the time that the House has to debate the question before the House.

I will give the floor back to the hon. member for Malpeque.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, we certainly would not want to go beyond the parliamentary rules.

The fact is that during the briefing with staff in the minister's office on this legislation, we received confirmation that easing the transportation regulations would mean that transport between locations, other than those that were a condition of licence, would be possible with the passing of the bill. That would open up all kinds of problems, as the New Democratic member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca said earlier in naming all the areas that under the bill weapons could be transported.

Now it gets confusing. How can the police be sure that someone is going from point A to point B? How can we be sure that the individual, with that gun locked and no ammunition in the trunk, is not going to stop at a grocery store, or a Canadian Tire store or a service station to get gas? That is the risk and the Minister of Public Safety is willing to accept that risk. That is wrong in the interests of public safety for Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

We have a ten-minute period for questions and comments. We have one question down so far and we are about halfway through.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning, I was pleased to see the minister staying for the debate, but I wonder if the member for Malpeque thinks like I do that perhaps his extreme agitation is because of the shaky ground he is standing on with regard to this bill.

We heard the minister, during his remarks in the chamber, promise to change the classification of two guns. I wonder, as a former solicitor general, if the hon. member has ever seen anything like this, where a minister makes a political promise in the House of Commons about the classification of weapons.

Does this not really point to one of the severe problems with the bill, which is the politicization of classifications?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that it points to the politicization of classifications. I am pleased to see the minister here and I am pleased to see him get on his feet and raise questions.

Royal Assent

I would hope that he would encourage his parliamentary secretary and the members on the committee to give us ample time to have witnesses and to have the proper hearings on the bill at committee. I would hope that he rethinks overnight that maybe the bill should be split, so that we could pass those elements that I think a number of us could agree on, or even get all-party agreement for once, that would help law-abiding gun owners. It would be a good thing to get it through fast and then deal with those other issues that are of public safety concern.

However, I really find it remarkably strange when a minister of the crown, in charge of the RCMP, comes out with a press release as just an MP and puts it on the Conservative website, and attacks the very people he is supposed to be in charge of and minister of as unelected bureaucrats. I have never seen it before, but it is not becoming of the minister.

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member might want to expand on the idea that the Liberal Party is advocating that the bill, in fact, be split into two.

I am not overly optimistic, given the government's tendency to bring in time allocation to force legislation through, but I am wondering if he might provide some comment on how we would be able to have that quick passage by taking what is good in the bill and putting it aside, so it would actually pass before Christmas.

Why would the government not want to do that?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, it really would make us wonder why the government would not want to do that. The Conservatives claim to support law-abiding gun owners, farmers and hunters. This is their opportunity to do so.

My colleague would know that the leader of the party has a catchphrase, "hope and hard work". We are willing to put the hard work in and we hope that the government would come on side, so that we could get those five points through by Christmas for the gun owners, farmers and hunters.

That would be a good thing, but we need more time on the other aspects, the politicization of the classification of guns, the transport of guns. We need more time to hear witnesses properly to ensure that the Canadian public and police officers in this country are safe as a result of these amendments, which I do believe will damage public safety in Canada.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the speech by the member opposite is probably one of the most entertaining activities I have seen in 14 years. He is a young man at heart, I know, but he should be careful about the kinds of contortions that he twists himself into. He may never be able to get himself straightened up again.

The Liberals may have left the impression that they do not like gun owners. I wonder what could possibly have caused that impression. Perhaps it is the hated gun registry or 20 years of refusing to amend it, or their refusal to ever reconsider that they might have done wrong. Today they come here and tell us that they actually do not believe in a gun registry any more.

The hon. member has taken at least four positions. He was for it when it was brought in. He was against it, he told us, but then he voted for it. Now today he says that he is against it.

We have watched these twists and turns, and I think probably one of the reasons he is speaking to us today is because he is one of the people who is most likely to change his mind again.

It only makes sense and I will finish up here quickly. If one thing is going happen, it is that the Liberals will go further than they did last time.

Can he comment today as to whether they would actually go further next time and try to ban firearm ownership and confiscate firearms? Is that what they are really saying, when they say they will not support a gun registry any longer?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, what a line we are getting from the member who is probably as much responsible as the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for destroying the Canadian Wheat Board as a marketing institution in this country. As we know, that has cost farmers a great deal of money. Now we cannot even get any information on that Wheat Board.

Be that as it may, the member can try and exaggerate all the stories he would like. I am proud to have been here for 21 years. I have listened to the public. We know where the public stands on the gun registry. Our leader has made it clear that we are not going to bring back the gun registry. We want to ensure that Canadians are safe and we will do that by other means, and no, we are not interested in banning guns in this country.

The member can get on with all the exaggeration he likes. We know the Conservatives are really doing this for fundraising activities and they cater to that right-wing base that used to give them money and they need a little more from it. That is partly what this bill is all about.

Our party believes in public safety. We are going to speak out in the interests of: first, law-abiding gun owners and hunters, and we would like to pass those five recommendations; and second, we are going to speak out and ensure that there is public safety in this country and that guns are not an issue that would affect that.

ROYAL ASSENT

• (1705)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before resuming debate, I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received, which is as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

November 26, 2014

Mr. Speaker,

Government Orders

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 26th day of November, 2014, at 3:41 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace
Secretary to the Governor General

The bill assented to was Bill C-41, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Korea.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COMMON SENSE FIREARMS LICENSING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code and to make a related amendment and a consequential amendment to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Yorkton—Melville, a member of Parliament whom I consider a good friend, a mentor and whom I deeply respect for his work in preserving and retaining our hunting, angling and firearms traditions.

I am proud to stand today in the House, speaking in support of Bill C-42, the common sense firearms licensing act.

I first want to comment on the comments made by the member for Malpeque when he sneered at people who own firearms.

I am chair of the Conservative hunting and angling caucus. The mandate of our caucus is to preserve and protect a way of life. That includes hunting and angling, and is a strong measure of conservation. Hunting and angling groups are Canada's first and most effective conservation groups in the world.

I can see the members across laughing, but the waterfowl hunting community in North America created the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

The hon. member for Malpeque is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the member may want to misrepresent the House. We are not laughing over here, and no one smeared anglers and hunters. I will not take that from that member opposite. If he wants to exaggerate, he can do it, but tell him to stick to the facts if you would, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The member for Malpeque will know that members, when they have their time, are free to make comments and, as long as they do not cross lines into unparliamentary language, there is a great degree of liberty they can take.

It is true that there is a Standing Order that asks members to avoid references to the absence or presence of members in the House. I do not know if that was necessarily what the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette was really getting at.

However, we will let him continue.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, he was sneering at the people who hunt and fish in this country. Members across the way, Liberal and NDP, were laughing.

I was making the point that the waterfowl hunting community—

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order.

While the member may not be breaching a specific rule here, he is breaching the spirit of debate in the House and taking a complete departure from the reality of what is going on inside the House.

I heard no one sneer at hunters and fishers, and no one laughing at him, but if he continues in this manner, it is going to undermine his credibility as a speaker completely. It also shows an immense disrespect for the House.

• (1710)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Again, we are back to a situation which actually underlines why the Standing Orders, in fact, ask members to avoid references to other members in the House, either their absence or presence.

It really comes from the fact that characterizations of other members usually gets us into a spot in debate that we can quickly get to, for example, contravening the principles of, in particular, article 18 of the Standing Orders, which really calls on hon. members to refer to other members in a respectful manner.

These kinds of characterizations are really not very helpful. I would ask the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette to be mindful of that in the course of his comments.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, the way the member for Malpeque used the words “gun lobby”, it was obviously intended as an insult to the people I represent in my constituency. The gun lobby, so-called, is mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and uncles and aunts who hunt and fish in this country and who dedicate themselves to the conservation of our fish and wildlife resources.

The members opposite want to narrow the debate and we are enlarging it.

As the chair of the Conservative hunting and angling caucus, I travel right across the country and meet with hunting, angling, and conservation groups. As a group, they are genuinely supportive of the common sense firearms licensing act, and even more supportive of the conservation measures this government has brought in, such as the national conservation plan. I am making the point that because most of the firearms owners are hunters, the act of hunting generates a spirit of conservation and a caring for the earth that the members opposite are actually attacking. They do not realize it; they think it is all about the guns. It is not. It is about a way of life. Many of us view the long gun registry and the comments by the members opposite, including by the member for Malpeque, as an attack on a way of life. I know they do not want to think of it that way. They want to narrow it down to an NRA gun lobby kind of thing. That is so far from the truth.

Government Orders

Our message from the Conservative hunting and angling caucus is resonating right across this country when we say and point out and prove that this party and this government and this Prime Minister and this minister are standing up for a way of life that millions of Canadian cherish. We have the recreational fisheries program. We have the national conservation plan. We have our national areas conservation program, the habitat stewardship program, and the North American waterfall management plan—the most important program of all—a continent-wide conservation plan encompassing three countries to conserve North America's waterfowl. Guess who supported, created, and funds that? North American hunters. That what my community does, I am so proud of them for what they do.

They were quite right in the early days of the long gun registry, realizing that it was an egregious attack on their way of life. That is what it really was.

The members opposite can bleat all they want that “It's not about the hunting and angling. We really care about public safety.” No, they do not. They are attacking a way of life because they do not like the people who participate in this way of life.

In Canada, there are four to five million people who hunt, fish, and trap. It is our duty, at least on this side of the House, to help preserve and protect this way of life. Again, I am so proud to be chair of the Conservative hunting and angling caucus and am proud to see the member for Yukon, my co-chair, a former conservation officer and wildlife biologist, who deeply understands this way of life, in the House today.

Again, what the common sense firearms licensing act would do is help preserve and protect this way of life.

We know that criminals are not licensed gun owners and that licensed gun owners are not criminals; but, again, the logic of the old Bill C-68 the Liberal government put forward burdens people who are not criminals while letting criminals off.

We see how the members opposite vote. Time and again, they vote against our strong, tough on crime justice bills, looking for root causes. Do members know what a root cause is? Basically, when someone commits a crime, the root-cause-types look at those of us who are law-abiding citizens and work hard and own property and basically say, “Well, it's your fault. You're the person and the group who made this root cause that caused the criminal to commit the crime.”

On this side of the House, we know that criminals commit crimes because they are not good people. It is as simple as that. That is common sense.

Again, what is really interesting is that when we eliminated the long gun registry, the crime rate actually fell. In fact, the year after the registry was abolished, gun crime in Toronto decreased by over 80%.

• (1715)

I am not here today to claim that these two things are necessarily linked. In fact, it is precisely the opposite. It proves empirically that measures make left wing politicians, like all of them across the way, feel like they are tackling crime and are generally not worth the paper they are printed on.

There is more to directly address the matter that is before us today. As I said, as chair of the Conservative hunting and angling caucus, I travel across the country, meet with wildlife associations, rod and gun clubs, and everyday ordinary hunters. Without exception, the first problem I hear about when talking about the federal firearms legislation is that there was no common sense. We are bringing common sense in. It is clear that the early laws drafted by the Liberals were crafted by someone who could not tell a rifle from a shotgun.

Let me talk about the Manitoba Wildlife Federation and what it had to say about this bill. It stated:

We support smart, cost effective firearms policy that keeps Canadians safe, but treats gun owners fairly. We applaud the Harper Government's ongoing efforts to streamline firearms licensing in Canada to make it more effective and efficient.

This next one is very interesting. Pardon my Manitoba high school French, but it is by La Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, or the Quebec Hunting and Fishing Federation. They said that they were “...thrilled with this initiative. Quebec hunters are very pleased with this bill because it simplifies the licence issuing process for law-abiding users, while reinforcing the concepts of safety and education.”

There are 575,000 Quebeckers who own firearms and enjoy hunting. We are going to make sure that every one of those law-abiding Quebec firearm owners and hunters knows exactly what is in this bill, and we think that they will react accordingly.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, 100,000 strong, stated:

...the changes introduced...by the...government...strike a balance between the need to remove administrative burdens on legal, law-abiding firearms owners in Canada, and the government's intention to protect and enhance public safety. In our opinion, they have succeeded on both accounts.

I have quotes from hunting and angling conservation groups right across the country, so this notion of the member for Malpeque that there is some kind of narrow base we are appealing to is utter nonsense. These are regular, common folk who know something bad when they see it and are applauding our government's efforts to protect and preserve the grassroots hunting and angling traditions in this country.

I will say a quick word on the authorization to transport. It applies only to restricted and prohibited firearms. The member for Malpeque clearly does not understand the difference between firearms. When the reclassification happened, the Swiss Arms and CZ rifles were reclassified simply because of how they looked, not because of what they did. They were semi-automatic firearms. I own semi-automatic firearms and other people in this room do as well. They were reclassified because of how they looked, not what they did. No one is proposing that any restricted firearms ever be legalized, like fully-automatic firearms. I certainly would not support that.

Government Orders

In terms of the ATT, every single time that a law-abiding shooter went to the range, he or she had to get a permit every single day. We have made it so that once shooters get there, the first ATT is good.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was an interesting—albeit sometimes strange—speech. One thing stood out to me.

● (1720)

[*English*]

There was one thing from the speech that makes me want to say to my esteemed colleague in front of me is that Bill C-42 is anything but a tough on crime bill.

I sense that even the Conservative base is starting to feel a bit used and abused by the attempts to always parade them when the government brings forward anything that is gun related. I want to read something to him. Some party stalwarts were saying that they are starting to feel taken for granted. I quote:

Dennis Young is a former RCMP officer who was the Reform Party's regional coordinator for Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the 1990s and then spent 13 years in Ottawa as an aide to Conservative MP... Recently, when called by a Conservative fundraiser at his home.... Young told him not to bother calling back until the public safety minister responded to his letter about Bill C-42.

Young said he was “miffed” that after all his work for the Conservatives, he had received no real answer to his questions. “It all leaves us feeling a bit like we’re just being used for fundraising,” he said. “If they have that attitude they’re going to be disappointed”.

When he talks about tough on crime legislation, how does he respond to the minister of intergovernmental affairs from Quebec who said:

[*Translation*]

...this runs counter to the concept of public safety and security.

[*English*]

How does he answer that?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised for a minute that the member opposite would find my speech odd. She has no understanding of what I was talking about. I expect all of them to find my speech odd. Of course, the notion of hunters and anglers, and families enjoying the outdoor life as a family group with friends, eating wild game, and understanding what conservation is all about is odd to them.

In terms of the public safety aspect of the bill, the member referred to Mr. Young. I understand. I know him personally. Nothing is perfect in this room. In fact, perfect is the enemy. This is a very good bill.

In terms of public safety, we are strengthening the provisions relating to orders prohibiting the possession of firearms by a person who is convicted of an offence involving domestic violence. We are going to import information sharing of restricted or prohibited firearms into Canada.

This bill strikes the right balance between ensuring that needless paperwork is eliminated, that the rights of law-abiding citizens are protected, and that public safety is protected.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask a question about the common sense component of this

bill. When I started to read it, the only place it is actually mentioned is in the introduction. There is no common sense in the bill, which is interesting.

The question I have is a very simple one for the member. I am trying to figure out, and the House needs to know, how allowing people to drive around cities with a gun in the trunk, where I assume no hunting is being done, is a safe thing to do. We have some big raccoons, but they are really not that dangerous. Cars are stolen, and we have had reported and repeated incidents of people being followed home from gun ranges and being robbed.

How does allowing guns to be driven around a city more easily make cities safer? I am not speaking for the four or five million legal gun owners who are law-abiding citizens. I am talking for the 26 million people who do not own guns, many of whom live in those cities and are looking to the government to make their cities safe from the illegal use of guns, particularly assault rifles.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, under our watch, in Toronto, gun crime is down 80%. That result speaks for itself.

In terms of the authorization to transport, often called an ATT, it applies to prohibited and restricted firearms. A criminal will never register a handgun. A law-abiding citizen will. A criminal will never apply for an ATT. A law-abiding citizen will.

By streamlining the process so that once the owner of a restricted firearm, who is legally authorized to own it, gets an ATT, that person is allowed to use it over the time period that their license goes. I think that is strictly common sense.

We can safely see that the gun crime rate in Toronto continues to go down. Now, the knife crime rate in Toronto keeps going up. Perhaps we could ask the members opposite to help us with our tough on crime policies, but I doubt it.

● (1725)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, I will let him know that there is actually only five minutes remaining in the time permitted for government orders today. However, he will have that five minutes and the remaining five minutes when the House next resumes debate on this question.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, five minutes is hardly enough time for me to go over all the things I would like to go over, but I will begin and then finish at another date.

I am really pleased to be able to rise and discuss the common sense firearms licensing bill. I am pleased to see the government is standing up for the rights of law-abiding Canadians who enjoy and use firearms.

Private Members' Business

As members know, I have been fighting for the rights of law-abiding hunters, farmers, and sport shooters for two decades now. I fought the introduction of the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry from the time it was introduced by the Hon. Allan Rock under the previous Liberal government, and I was proud to stand in this place two years ago to support and pass the Ending the Long Gun Registry Act.

The gun registry was the epitome of political pretense. It pretended to protect us by reducing crime, but in fact it did just the opposite. The long and short of it is that criminals do not register their guns and they do not obey laws. It was about time people realized that spending \$2 billion of taxpayers' money to keep a list of property of individuals predisposed to obey the law was not a good use of resources.

Equally, I am glad to see that this bill today includes strong measures to focus the use of resources on that which actually prevents crime rather than simply seeking to disarm Canadians.

This legislation will streamline licensing and eliminate needless red tape for responsible gun owners, and it is something that I have advocated for many years. In fact, some measures in Bill C-42 can also be found in my 2009 private member's bill, Bill C-301. They are housekeeping items that will simplify procedures without reducing public safety and include items such as merging the possession only licence with the possession and acquisition licence, for instance, or making the authorization to transport a restricted firearm, more commonly known as ATT, a condition of a restricted licence.

Let me explain, for those in the House who are less familiar with firearms regulations, what an ATT is. An ATT is a document that specifies where a licence-restricted firearm owner may take their property. It may contain a variety of locations or it may be very specific. This is dependent on the whim of the provincial chief firearms officer. It is not in legislation.

If travel to a location outside of those previously approved is needed, more forms must be filled out and more approval must be sought. Some may say that this level of rigour is needed, as restricted firearms can be dangerous in the wrong hands, but the fact of the matter is that those with restricted firearms licences get a background check every day, and the application for an authorization to transport is not even shared with local law enforcement. It is the definition of wasteful paperwork.

It is frustrating for me to sit here and listen to people talk about this thing when they know very little about it. Hopefully, if we get to questions and comments, I can explain more about the lack of knowledge here in regard to this issue.

If the government trusts a restricted licence holder to have a restricted firearm in their home, the government should trust them to travel to appropriate locations to use the firearm. Some have said that this will allow for conceal and carry by the back door; that is absolutely false. All safe transport requirements remain in place, such as unloading a firearm, rendering it inoperable, and placing it in a locked case.

The logic that these ATTs, which are not shared with law enforcement, will somehow reduce crime is the same logic put forward by those who think that registering a firearm will somehow

reduce crime. At the end of the day, violent crimes committed with firearms are committed by evil people with evil intentions.

No amount of paperwork or regulation will divert them from their path of wanton destruction. What will stop them is being incarcerated for a lengthy period of time, which is why we passed mandatory prison sentences for those who commit crimes with firearms. As well, we created a specific offence for drive-by shootings.

These measures truly increase public safety and reduce the cost of crime. That is what we are focusing on: tackling those who are predisposed to break the law, rather than those who are simply trying to enjoy a way of life that has been part of Canada's heritage since Confederation.

The focus on safe and sensible firearms policy is the reason this bill amends the Criminal Code to establish firearms prohibition orders for those convicted of domestic violence.

• (1730)

Once this bill is passed, those convicted of serious domestic violence offences, which include offences against a spouse, common-law partner, or dating partner, would be subject to a mandatory prohibition from owning a restricted or prohibited firearm and from owning long guns for a minimum of 10 years.

I am sorry that I had to split this bill and speak to it at a later date, but I look forward to some healthy debate in this House, because there are some serious misconceptions that need to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville will indeed have another five minutes when the House next takes up the debate, and of course the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from November 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-583, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder), be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment from the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe to the motion at second reading of Bill C-583.

Call in the members.

● (1810)

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

(Division No. 287)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Baird
Barlow	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson

Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 147

Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Yurdiga

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Bélanger
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chan
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Pilon	Plamondon
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Trudeau
Turnel	Valeriote
Vaughan — 121	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment carried. The next question is on the main motion, as amended.

● (1820)

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

*Private Members' Business**(Division No. 288)*

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
 Aglukkaq
 Alexander
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambler
 Anders
 Angus
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Baird
 Bateman
 Benskin
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boivin
 Boughen
 Boutin-Sweet
 Braid
 Brosseau
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Butt
 Cannan
 Caron
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Chisu
 Choquette
 Cleary
 Côté
 Cullen
 Davidson
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dechert
 Dewar
 Doré Lefebvre
 Dubé
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Dykstra
 Fast
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Fortin
 Galipeau
 Garrison
 Genest-Jourdain
 Gill
 Godin
 Goldring
 Gosal
 Grewal
 Harper
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hawn
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Hughes
 James
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kellway
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Latendresse
 Laverdière
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Leitch
 Leslie
 Liu
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 Mai
 Masse
 May
 McColeman
 Menegakis
 Miller
 Moore (Fundy Royal)

Adler
 Albas
 Allen (Welland)
 Allison
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Armstrong
 Aspin
 Aubin
 Barlow
 Benoit
 Bergen
 Bevington
 Blanchette
 Block
 Borg
 Boulerice
 Brahma
 Breitreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Bruinooge
 Calandra
 Carmichael
 Carrie
 Charlton
 Chisholm
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Clement
 Crockett
 Daniel
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Devolin
 Dionne Labelle
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Dusseault
 Falk
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
 Fletcher
 Freeman
 Gallant
 Genest
 Giguère
 Glover
 Goguen
 Goodyear
 Gourde
 Groguhé
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hayes
 Hillyer
 Holder
 Hyer
 Julian
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lapointe
 Lauzon
 Lebel
 Leef
 Lemieux
 Leung
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Maguire
 Marston
 Mathysen
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Michaud
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)

Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Mulcair
 Nicholls
 Norlock
 Obhrai
 Oliver
 Opitz
 Pacetti
 Patry
 Pécelet
 Plamondon
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Ravnignat
 Reid
 Richards
 Rousseau
 Sandhu
 Schellenberger
 Seeback
 Shea
 Shory
 Sitsabaiesan
 Soppuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Toone
 Trost
 Truppe
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Williamson
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Yurdiga

Mourani
 Nash
 Nicholson
 Nunez-Melo
 O'Connor
 O'Neill Gordon
 O'Toole
 Papillon
 Payne
 Pilon
 Poilievre
 Rafferty
 Rankin
 Raynault
 Rempel
 Ritz
 Saganash
 Saxton
 Scott
 Sellah
 Shipley
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Stewart
 Sullivan
 Thibeault
 Toet
 Tremblay
 Trottier
 Turmel
 Valcourt
 Van Loan
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Skye)
 Wilks
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)
 Zimmer — 236

NAYS

Members

Bélanger
 Brison
 Casey
 Cotler
 Dion
 Easter
 Foote
 Garneau
 Hsu
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 McCallum
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Regan
 Sgro
 St-Denis
 Valériote

Bennett
 Byrne
 Chan
 Cuzner
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Eyking
 Fry
 Goodale
 Lamoureux
 MacAulay
 McGuinty
 Murray
 Scarpaleggia
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
 Term)
 Trudeau
 Vaughan — 32

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

CARE FOR VETERANS

The House resumed from November 25 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 532, under private members' business.

● (1830)

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

(Division No. 289)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Angus	Armstrong
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Baird	Barlow
Bateman	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blaney	Bloch
Boivin	Borg
Boughen	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Casey	Cash
Chan	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chisu	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Clement
Côté	Cotler
Crockatt	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Falk
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Footé	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Groguhé
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	James
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kellway
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Lauzon

Laverdière	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
May	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Michaud	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nash
Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Payne
Péclet	Pilon
Plamondon	Poilievre
Preston	Rafferty
Rajotte	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stewart	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toone
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	Trudeau
Truppe	Turnel
Uppal	Valcourt
Valerioté	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vaughan
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 268

NAYS

PAIRED

Nil

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 6.32 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

*Private Members' Business***DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT**

The House resumed from October 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-574, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am supporting this bill at second reading. It is important to refer the bill to committee because some amendments should be made to the bill, and the committee should hopefully take care of that and then bring it back to the House.

Let me just outline that very quickly with a little background.

The bill is a resumption of a bill that was tabled in 2010, which we also voted on at the time. The bill would require that before soliciting bids for the construction, maintenance or repair of public works, federal immovables and federal real property, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services give preference to the concept that promotes the use of wood, while taking into account factors such as cost and greenhouse gas emissions.

I say “amendments” because I am not entirely happy with the wording of the bill where it says “give preference to”. I believe there is a better way to say this, perhaps “compare materials” or something of the kind. I certainly hope there will be some amendments to the bill.

The important part of this bill is not only the use of wood, and I will talk about why that is important in Canada. The government could save money with this bill, using more wood in the construction and repairs of federal buildings.

A life-cycle cost analysis produced by the U.S. defense department some years ago demonstrated that wooden structures cost 40% less per square foot than steel or masonry structures. Construction cost was 37% less for wood. Operation and maintenance costs were 55% less for wood than for other materials. This would help not only our wood industry, particularly the specialty wood industry.

When we think of forest products and the use of wood, and a lot of people think of 2x4s and maybe pulp for pulpwood, and if we are to make our forest industry as diverse as possible, let us think of the construction of buildings, of beams, of curved beams, of the sorts of main parts of structures of buildings where we could find new uses for forest products.

I want to briefly mention what has happened to the forest industry in the last number of years. I will go through some facts and figures because it is very instructive. I will talk about direct employment in our forest industry, meaning those who actually work with the wood. It is usually indicated in the forest industry that for every direct job there are three indirect jobs, so we can extrapolate how important these jobs are, have been and were to Canada, and what we have lost in the meantime.

In general, since 2008, with the big downturn in Canada and the rest of the world, we have lost 30% of its forestry jobs. The hardest-hit provinces were: Quebec, where the losses were 32.3% in direct jobs, and I am not talking about indirect jobs because that would be

much more; Ontario, 34.2%; and British Columbia, 29.7%. All of the provinces had a loss. Newfoundland and Labrador had a net loss of 55.8% of its forest industry.

It is incumbent on us in Ottawa to ask how we can move forward with a very vibrant forest industry, which we have and have had, and help to ensure that forest products are used to their fullest extent and with their best possible uses. This bill would go a small way in that direction.

● (1835)

I like to think that the forest industry has perhaps bottomed out in terms of job losses. In my riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, in Fort Frances, the mill closed two years ago and is now going to be completely shuttered, and these losses still continue. In fact, in northern Ontario, if I remember my figures correctly, we lost 44,000 forestry jobs. That was more than half the forestry jobs that we had in northern Ontario. It was a huge loss. That is one of the reasons I am supporting this bill at second reading.

It is important to note that in Canada the national codes, the federal codes, allow for the safe use of wood while providing occupants appropriate protection from fire, earthquakes, or storms, so if people are thinking that wood will not do the job that concrete will do, for example, they should know that it can do the same job.

A bill with these amendments that I was talking about would just make sure that when there is a federal building project, wood would be considered. The bill is not binding. The purpose is really to establish that wood is one of the options available and should be considered.

Annual sales of Canadian forest products are about \$57 billion and represent about 12% of Canada's manufacturing GDP. Even with these huge job losses across the country, the forestry sector is still one of the country's biggest employers. It has activities in more than 200 forestry communities. Many of them are in northern Ontario, but others stretch right across Canada. Two hundred communities depend on forestry to provide their tax base, to provide employment, and to make these communities vibrant.

I want to talk about Quebec very briefly. The wood charter has been adopted so that managers of public projects can systematically evaluate the option of using wood in producing a comparative analysis of the greenhouse gas emissions of materials. I think it is important to note that wood compares favourably with other building materials, such as steel and concrete, which consume 26% to 34% more energy and emit 57% to 81% more greenhouse gases than wood. As well, on average each cubic metre of wood captures one tonne of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

We can think of it in environmental terms. I talked about cost and I talked about environmental terms, and wood just simply makes sense.

It is important for us in this place to show that we support forestry workers right across this country and that we support the use of local products, provided these products comply with the standards in effect across this country. We want the government to make judicious choices by giving consideration to life cycle and cost analysis when considering wood.

Private Members' Business

By the way, the government already has a policy on leadership in energy and environmental design. It is called LEED certification. It is a rating system recognized as the international brand of excellence for green buildings.

In any number of areas, the use of wood is something that should be considered. I will be supporting this bill at second reading, hoping to get it to committee where we will see an amendment or two that will make this bill even better and perhaps more palatable in this place. I will be following this bill very closely and, quite frankly, so will Canadians in 200 forest communities right across this country.

● (1840)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to this private member's bill.

It is not a long bill to read. It is fairly short, but I think it sends a strong message in terms of the importance of wood products and how the use of wood products could be enhanced by the industry as a whole.

We need to recognize that the forest industry is likely one of Canada's oldest industries, dating back to 100-plus years ago. When many communities first began to form, they relied on wood to sustain them. The member who spoke just prior to me made reference to 200 communities. I suspect that when he says 200, that is a minimum number of communities.

I know that in the province of Quebec, for example, there were likely 150-plus communities. An article that I can recall reading said there were many communities in the province of Quebec alone that are very much dependent on wood and recognize the value of our forestry industry. The Quebec provincial government has recognized that value, and now a member in the House from the province of Quebec has introduced this particular bill.

The forest industry goes far beyond the borders of Quebec. It includes all the different regions of Canada. British Columbia is very dependent on its forest industry, which contributes immensely to its economy. People who fly over, drive through, or take the train—which I have not had the opportunity to do to date, though I hope to at some point in the future, as it would be a wonderful experience—get a glimpse of the industry and the potential that is within the industry.

Liberals do not want to minimize the potential of the industry. When I think of the industry as a whole, I see opportunities. I would love for us to explore the potential of exporting our forestry products. I do not think we are anywhere close to reaching the export potential for some of our forestry products, including pulp and paper, the finished products, and even raw logs. I remember some representatives from the Philippines asking me a number of years ago about the export of logs and how they could be utilized in the Philippines. There are all sorts of windows of opportunity in exporting, and we need to explore how we can build upon the industry.

In terms of the raw numbers, the billions of dollars every year that are generated, I understand the contribution of our forestry industry to the Canadian GDP to be very close to half a trillion dollars. We are talking about billions of dollars and literally tens of thousands of

good, valuable jobs within the industry. Even though I made reference to Quebec and B.C., there are many provinces that receive the benefits, whether it is northern Ontario or my home province of Manitoba.

Perhaps I can give a sense of the importance of the forest industry to Manitoba. During the 1990s, for example, there were between 5,000 and 7,000 jobs. A significant number of jobs were being created by the hundreds of millions of dollars in exports. At that time, Manitoba's contribution was probably closer to \$1.15 million, and today it is \$1.25 million. At the end of the day, the province of Manitoba has done exceptionally well with a very strong and vibrant forest industry.

● (1845)

It is an industry that provides a lot of pulp and paper. I would not necessarily want to be quoted on this, but I believe in excess of 50% of our forest industry in the province of Manitoba, maybe even close to 60%, is driven by pulp and paper.

This is something I did look up. In 2008, we had in excess of \$450 million in terms of exports. That is why I made reference to the potential that exists in exportation. In Manitoba back in 2008, 85% was being exported to the U.S. Next to the U.S., Europe is a much smaller percentage. When we look at Asia and other countries, it is that much smaller. I would argue that is something in which there is great growth.

Today, it is estimated that we have somewhere in the neighbourhood of 7,000 people in my home province who are employed within the forestry industry. Perhaps that is in pulp and paper, where we have seen an overall decline in demand for the product. There are many different ways in which we can develop our forest industry, especially when we talk about the final product. We can look at ways in which we can take a tree and convert it into something like furniture and then sell the furniture as a consumable item. I look at my own province and the way wood is being used. We have manufacturers of fine, wonderful furniture. We have building supplies. I cannot help but think of prefabrication, whether it is cottages, mobile homes, or windows. There are all sorts of things being prefabricated in my home city of Winnipeg and other communities in Manitoba.

As has been pointed out, there is great consumption of wood in the province of Manitoba for the construction of homes. Depending on the province and location in Canada, we might find that some provinces have a higher per capita usage of wood than other building products. I suspect Manitoba might be at the higher end with respect to the use of wood products. I do not know that for a fact but just from general observations I have made in my travels in Canada.

The economy and the industry is doing relatively well in the province. Having said that, it is important that we recognize the ways we can support our industries in an economic way, keeping in mind that we have many municipalities. We have many municipalities that are fairly dependent on the direct jobs from our forests. If we see any continuation of a downward spiral in the forest industry in certain areas and communities in our country, it can have a devastating impact on our economy, especially when we have one-industry types of town or community that are so dependent on forestry.

Private Members' Business

That is why, when we see private member's bills such as this, we should at the very least be talking about the importance of the forestry industry. It has a wonderful, lengthy history in Canada. It is important that we do what we can to protect and promote that industry going forward and that we do not take it for granted, because everything I have talked about generally has been with respect to those direct jobs. The indirect jobs easily go into the hundreds of thousands. It is an industry that needs to have more attention from the House.

It is with pleasure that I conclude on that comment.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we said during the previous debate on this bill, the government is sympathetic with respect to the intent of this bill, and we appreciate the vital importance of the forestry industry to communities not just in Quebec, but across Canada.

[*English*]

We are also happy with the forest sector's contribution to our country's international trading activity, making Canada the second largest exporter of primary forest products in the world, which is why we do not in any way take this legislation or this debate lightly.

[*Translation*]

This discussion is an important one because thousands of Canadians in communities from coast to coast rely on forestry for their livelihoods. As my father said, forestry as an industry is part of the fabric of our country.

[*English*]

As many hon. members have already noted, the forest sector has been facing a number of challenges over the last few years. For example, today most of us get our news online rather than from reading newspapers. This impacts the demand for newsprint.

A weakened global economy and, until recently, the high dollar have also hurt the international sales of our various forest products.

[*Translation*]

For these reasons, the government has supported, and will continue to support, Canada's forest sector by continuing to encourage market diversification and the expansion of global markets while providing support to fuel innovation.

• (1855)

[*English*]

In fact, since 2006, the government has provided over \$1.8 billion through a number of initiatives to support both the economic competitiveness and the environmental sustainability of Canada's forest sector. That is \$4 million a week. Let me list a few examples.

There is FPInnovations, which the Minister of Natural Resources helped to create and which in just seven years has become the world's largest public-private forest products research institute.

There is the \$197 million provided over four years under the 2012 and 2013 economic action plans for the forest innovation program.

This program is designed to foster innovation and the adoption of emerging technologies by forest companies.

[*Translation*]

Then there is the \$105 million over two years under economic action plan 2012. This is money allocated to support industry sector innovation and market development.

[*English*]

There was also another \$92 million dedicated in the economic action plan of 2013 to develop innovative new products and diversify markets.

While speaking of the trade front, the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement has been extended until October 2015, and the new Canada-EU trade agreement will provide Canadian wood products with preferential access to the massive European market.

[*Translation*]

Considering this is only a partial list of projects, programs and other measures the government has taken, we are proud of its record support to the industry.

Therefore, while we sympathize with the intent of this legislation, this bill has several fundamental flaws which make it impossible for us, in good conscience, to support.

[*English*]

This bill would require the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, before soliciting bids for construction, maintenance, or repair work, to give preference to the use of wood as a building material. On the face of it, this might sound like a good idea to some, but, as outlined in the previous debate, this proposed approach has several problems.

Some procurement principles dictate that solicitation requirements cannot be biased in favour of or against particular goods or services. This includes goods or services related to construction contracts or in favour of or against the suppliers of such goods and services.

[*Translation*]

These principles of fairness are fundamental to the government procurement process. While giving preference to a particular good or service would certainly provide an advantage to certain suppliers, would we really want the federal government to be seen as blatantly biased in its procurement processes?

Private Members' Business

[English]

These same principles are also reflected in the trade agreements our country has signed. Including a preference for wood products in tender requirements would contravene Canada's trade obligations under a number of agreements, causing us to run afoul not only of international rules but domestic rules as well. In fact, if tenders indicated a preference for the use of wood in construction, it is almost certain that the Department of Public Works and Government Services would quickly find itself before the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, whose mission, in part, is to ensure fair and transparent government procurement processes.

[Translation]

The practical effect of this bill is that it would prevent the Minister of Public Works and Government Services from fulfilling her mandate as stipulated in her own legislation, the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act.

By giving preference to the use of wood in the construction and renovation of federal buildings, the bill indirectly promotes one sector over other, also essential, sectors of the Canadian economy.

[English]

In essence, if adopted, the bill would favour the economies of some regions over others, in direct conflict with the mandate of the Department of Public Works and Government Services, which has procurement processes in place to ensure openness, fairness, and transparency in order to obtain the best value for the crown.

I would be remiss if I did not remind that House that the bill mimics another bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois almost five years ago. Members who were here then will recall that the previous incarnation of the bill was soundly defeated at report stage in December 2012.

● (1900)

[Translation]

It is interesting to note that at that time, both the official opposition and the third party could not agree on a unified position when it came to this bill. The votes were split along regional and provincial lines, and many opposition members could see that this bill was fundamentally flawed and did not support it.

[English]

I admit that 101 opposition MPs voted for it. Their reward? Sixty-nine of them are gone. They remind me of the turkeys who voted for an early Christmas.

Of note, during consideration of the previous incarnation of the bill, my distinguished friend from Winnipeg Centre and the current official opposition critic for Public Works, said:

We really shouldn't be seized of the issue of what kind of flooring we're going to put into the next public building.... I mean, are we going to have a private members' bill to dictate what kind of curtains we put in the next building we build?

To sum up, while we laud the intent of the bill, the bill is fraught with problems. The reasons we cannot support it go to the very core of our responsibility as a democratic government to run procurement processes that are fair and transparent. They also reflect our country's

standing as an international trading partner that respects the trade agreements to which we are signatory.

[Translation]

In closing, I am proud of the government's strong support for the forest industry in this country. Our significant investments in the forest sector provide clear evidence of this robust support.

[English]

And while we are sympathetic to the intent of this proposed legislation, the bill's fundamental flaws make it impossible for us to support it.

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this evening to participate in the debate on this bill because this is a very important issue in the Pontiac. I would like to congratulate the member who decided to introduce it.

It goes without saying that I represent a forestry-oriented riding, and we have been exploiting that resource for a very long time. As soon as the region was colonized, settlers began cutting down trees to provide masts for use in building the British Empire's naval fleet. One of those people was the wood baron, Mr. Bryson, who bestowed his name upon a municipality in my riding. Over the years, the industry gradually switched its focus to pulp and paper.

In the Outaouais, the pulp and paper industry still employs 1,300 people and remains one of the pillars of manufacturing. However, there is no hiding the fact that in my region as in the rest of Quebec, the industry is in crisis. I have a quote here from "2012-2014 Sectoral Outlook — Outaouais" by Marie-Chantale Parent, a Service Canada economist:

...in spite of the erosion of its share of traditional markets. Like printing, it has been affected by competition from electronic media and reduced demand for printed products. In spite of major technological changes introduced to increase productivity, cut unit costs and meet environmental standards, it is unable to withstand competition from emerging countries in foreign markets. While there seems to be no way out of this situation for newsprint producers, the outlook is better for makers of specialized papers, but given the technologies in use, the employment gains are not enough to offset the losses in other segments of the industry. So it is that some 100 jobs are expected to be lost over the outlook period.

That being said, the wood industry has growth potential in the region. As subject matter expert Guy Chiasson wrote in "L'attractivité des territoires ruraux en Outaouais: quel espoir?", his analysis of the future of rural parts of the Outaouais:

Even though it has been high graded, like many others, the Outaouais forest still has a great deal of development potential, especially because of its vast diversity (presence of many hardwood tree species). As a result of a poorly diversified development model based on primary processing (sawing) for export and dominated (in the case of public forests) by forestry companies and the state, local communities are by and large still not maximizing this potential. The result is that even though they are close to a rather abundant forestry resource, local communities remain in a state of dependency regarding the forest. In other words, they are not really benefiting from it that much in terms of development, and they have little say in how it is managed and developed.

Private Members' Business

It is therefore crucial to my region and the forestry workers I represent that the government take a serious look at the crisis in the forestry industry in Quebec. The government should be helping sawmills and plants to transform themselves and become more competitive. The funding earmarked for this in the last budget was simply not enough. Compared to the subsidies this government gives to big oil, it is shameful. It is not clear that funding will reach the vast majority of small sawmills like the ones in Pontiac.

● (1905)

However, the industry will need to develop new markets to grow, when our industry becomes competitive again.

Obviously, developing an internal, domestic market for wood products would be very welcome in the region, which is very close to the national capital region. I am not just talking about international markets gained through free trade agreements where it is not very clear whether the Canadian forestry industry can compete with foreign industries. Creating a larger domestic market for our forestry products is the main purpose of this bill. That is why I support it.

Under the bill, before soliciting bids for the construction, maintenance or repair of public works, federal immovables and federal real property, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services would be required to give preference to the concept that promotes the use of wood while taking into account the factors of cost and greenhouse gas emissions. That is excellent: the use of wood is required.

For example, a life cycle cost analysis prepared by the United States Department of Defense showed that wooden structures cost 40% less per square foot than those made of steel or masonry. The cost of construction was 37% less for wood, and the operating and maintenance costs were 57% less for wood than for other materials.

The use of wood could also prove to be more environmentally friendly. Increased use of wood can benefit all related areas with the development of biomaterials. We could efficiently reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop higher value-added wood products.

Today, composite biomaterials are a remarkable advance that combines the two different types of materials. Export markets and other markets, such as pipelines, can help absorb any changes resulting from the selection of materials that Public Works and Government Services Canada would make. We should remember that PWGSC only represents a small percentage of the crown's portfolio.

I will begin my concluding remarks. I support the position of the stakeholders in this file. I support, for example, the Canada Green Building Council, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, the Quebec Forest Industry Council, the Canadian Wood Council, the Government of Quebec's wood charter and the Forest Products Association of Canada. Like them, I support forestry workers. I support the use of local products, and I am calling on the government to make better choices for the forestry industry.

● (1910)

[English]

The reality is that the forestry industry is in full crisis mode in the Pontiac. It needs to transform itself to become more competitive

internationally and to offer products that are different from the products that were offered before. To do that, it fundamentally needs a head start.

When we are looking at all of the free trade agreements that the Conservative government is putting in place, has it done the basic work of looking at the weaknesses of our forestry industry? Is it looking at those weaknesses vis-à-vis other forestry powers in the world? I am thinking about the Scandinavian countries. Alternatively, is it just going to basically let products flood our market?

The intent of this bill is welcomed. The creation of a domestic market, albeit a small one, but still part of a domestic market, for the consumption of environmentally-friendly wood products for Public Works projects. It is clear that this would help, but we also need, fundamentally, an investment to allow our industry in Quebec to change. We need capital investment to change in order to become more competitive internationally.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given that I live in Mauricie in the riding of Trois-Rivières, I could hardly turn down the invitation to participate in the debate on Bill C-574. This is an important bill that we are debating because it promotes the use of wood in the construction and renovation of federal buildings and emphasizes the role that the Department of Public Works and Government Services can play in meeting this objective.

To begin, I would like to say that I support Bill C-574 at second reading because it gives us the opportunity to promote an economically viable renewable resource that can both help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stimulate the economy in my region and my riding. It is a perfect example—as if we needed further evidence—of how economic development and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive but go hand in hand.

That being said, Bill C-574 could have gone much further had it been part of a national strategy for the wood industry. I will come back to that a little later.

Wood is much more energy efficient than steel or concrete. The world's population is increasing as quickly as the demand for resources, so a renewable resource like wood is a responsible choice for consumers and society as a whole.

Furthermore, applied research shows that much less energy is expended to manufacture wood products than to produce concrete, plastic or other materials. A study conducted by a research institute in the United States compared the environmental effects of houses framed with wood, steel and concrete. As one might expect, steel or concrete frame houses produce 26% more greenhouse gases and release far more atmospheric pollutants.

Private Members' Business

Wood is energy efficient and economically efficient. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, wood structures cost much less than steel or masonry structures.

Environmentally speaking, concrete or steel structures can emit up to 81% more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. In other words, concrete and steel are energy guzzlers, while much less energy is used to build largely comparable structures out of wood.

I would also like to point out the importance of the national building code in the development of multi-level wood frame buildings. When the right technical conditions are in place, the national building code authorizes the construction of wood frame buildings as tall as four storeys. It even authorizes some exceptions when justified by the standards. That is a first step in and of itself.

However, the government could also learn more from the national building code and should even take a look at international experience and expertise in this area. Norway, for example, is often cited for the work it does in combatting inequality, and it is also exemplary with respect to the use of wood in construction. In the city of Kirkenes there are plans to build a 17-storey wood frame building. That is far higher than the 4-storey buildings that are permitted under our national building code. I believe it would be worthwhile to at least look at that project.

Countries such as Germany and Sweden do not limit the height of wood frame buildings. Assessing the environmental impact of wood demonstrates that it is, by far, the most environmentally responsible choice, as well as the most economically viable and energy-efficient one.

In addition, the national building code offers options that the minister could use as the basis for increasing the use of wood in the construction of federal buildings. However, after looking closely at this bill, I think—and I said this at the beginning—it could have gone much much further, and the NDP goes further.

● (1915)

My colleague, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, moved a motion calling for a national strategy for the wood industry. As we all know, the drastic drop in demand for construction wood and international competition are the main reasons for the decline of the forestry industry.

According to Forest Canada, the closure of 80 mills resulted in over 11,000 layoffs. It is hard to quantify the human tragedy behind those numbers. Despite the seriousness of the situation, I think that our forestry industry's potential remains largely untapped, just like the potential of Bill C-574.

I would like to point out that Canada has 10% of the world's forest cover and 30% of the world's boreal forest. Those are major natural assets that we can leverage to support a sustainable and competitive economy. In light of that, it is clear that there should be a comprehensive strategy for Canada's forestry sector so that it can achieve its full potential.

I would like to focus for a minute on my riding, Trois-Rivières, which is at the centre of this debate. Just last summer, Kruger launched the first cellulose filament demonstration plant.

I just want to add that the Conservative government is not investing enough in the recovery of the forestry industry, nor is it investing enough in conducting, funding and supporting the basic research required for projects as important as the one I just mentioned.

This new biomaterial, cellulose filaments, is revolutionary. It has huge potential for the Canadian forestry industry because it can be combined with a number of other materials to create high-value products. More importantly, cellulose filaments are becoming indispensable to the Canadian pulp and paper industry.

One can therefore understand my enthusiasm for our local jewel, because it will produce diversified high-value products that are highly sought after by Canadian and international industries. Thanks to this innovation, the pulp and paper industry in Trois-Rivières could recover and fuel the region's economy once again. What is more, the Forest Products Association of Canada could succeed in international markets.

The creativity of the people of Trois-Rivières knows no bounds. I could also talk about UQTR, a university known for its pulp and paper industry research centres, which is also contributing to research and the economic recovery of my region.

Patrice Mangin, a professor in the chemical engineering department, said:

We have 650,000 tonnes of wood waste in Mauricie alone, which could be used to make diesel. Imagine the jobs this could create—1,500 to 2,000 jobs in Mauricie alone.

With the motion moved by my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, we could achieve three objectives that go further than Bill C-574. First of all, we could improve our competitiveness in order to compete with international industries; second, we could diversify our export market to be less dependent on the U.S. housing market; and third, we could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In closing, and for once I think I have managed my time almost perfectly, I would remind the House that wood is a renewable resource that is efficient in several respects. Industrial, academic and environmental stakeholders all agree on the merits of wood, and I hope the House can reach the same consensus.

I therefore support the bill at second reading, and touch wood, I hope the government will support it too.

● (1920)

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since I have only three minutes, I will get right to the heart of the matter.

I am going to support Bill C-574 on the use of wood at second reading.

As the deputy environment critic, I moved a motion on energy efficiency at the request of my constituents in Drummond and many other people across the country. In addition to being good for the environment, energy efficiency also creates jobs and lowers energy bills.

Private Members' Business

The use of wood provides economic benefits to the regions—as my colleague from Trois-Rivières so clearly explained—as well as environmental benefits. For example, from an environmental perspective, wood compares favourably to other building materials, such as steel and concrete. Steel uses 26% to 34% more energy and emits 57% to 81% more greenhouse gases than wood.

I am pleased to rise in the House to talk about the importance of using wood in construction. This bill would allow the Minister of Public Works and Government Services to give preference to the concept that promotes the use of wood, while taking into account the factors of cost and greenhouse gas emissions, before soliciting bids for the construction, maintenance or repair of public works, federal immovables and federal real property.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives voted against my motion on energy efficiency, when it would have been a good starting point with regard to the use of wood as well.

The motion that I moved on energy efficiency stated:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should implement an energy efficiency program to encourage owners of houses, residential buildings, shops and businesses to reduce their energy consumption, with a view to: (a) combatting climate change; [we will soon be attending the International Conference on Climate Change in Lima and we need to be ready] (b) lowering the energy bills of Canadians; and (c) creating jobs and stimulating the economy.

This motion would have covered all of the good points. Unfortunately, the Conservatives did not understand that because they voted against it.

This bill is similar in that it is good for the economies of the regions and job creation.

I did not have very much time, but I would like to thank the House for allowing me to speak to this bill.

● (1925)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Jonquière—Alma now has a five-minute right of reply.

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all my colleagues of every political affiliation in the House of Commons for participating in the debate, whether or not they support Bill C-574. This bill was introduced in the House in 2010 and was defeated at second reading.

The forestry sector has been devastated by massive job losses across Canada and Quebec, caused mainly by the recession, the global economy, the stronger Canadian dollar and the structural decline in the demand for paper documents. These no longer exist today because newspapers are going online.

Why did we introduce this bill? It is because in my area, many sawmills and plants have closed and many paper machines have been shut down. In Chambord, a plant has been closed for years. That is why we brought back this bill.

Today, there are many things on the market that promote innovation, new products and new technologies. I realize that the Conservative government has helped the forestry industry, but it could do more.

If the government has given many millions of dollars to this sector, why have so many plants in Canada closed? I do not see how

Bill C-574 would violate Canada's obligations under national and international trade agreements such as NAFTA, the WTO Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Canadian wood was never specifically identified in the bill, because we did not want the bill to be prejudicial to anyone. Today, we want to use it to construct buildings that are less than seven storeys high and to repair federal buildings.

For example, if the House of Commons chamber were renovated, I would like wood to be used instead of steel. That is the goal of our bill: we want to use wood.

On the weekend I went to watch a hockey tournament in a building made of steel, concrete that had beautiful wood ceilings. All three materials can be used together to build nice buildings. Back home, such buildings are built for tourism and industry. People who come to La Baie on cruise ships can see these beautiful concrete and wood buildings. The materials can be used together.

We never asked that the government be required to choose wood during the bidding process. We simply want it to choose the least expensive option from among wood, steel and concrete. If steel is the least expensive, the decision will not be a hard one.

Back home, a lot of buildings have been built using all of the materials. This has created jobs for a number of employees of plants that were shut down. This contributes to sustainable development. The government should take into account costs and greenhouse gas emissions when Public Works and Government Services Canada solicits bids.

The Conservative government said that it would oppose the bill, but I would like to quote from a 2011 interview with my colleague from Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, who is also a minister. He said that he wanted to promote the use of wood in the construction of public buildings. I will quote the whole paragraph:

In the coming months, it will be important to introduce bills to encourage the use of wood in public buildings, while also ensuring that current federal and provincial codes can fully meet requirements. That way, our engineers and architects can take wood into account when doing their calculations and the professionals already in operation will have the means, tools, software and techniques to safely carry out these projects using wood.

The Conservatives are opposing the bill, but in 2011 the minister said that the government needed to encourage the use of wood.

We need to encourage the use of wood throughout Canada and Quebec. The plants that have closed could reopen, there could be renovations and the industry could get up and running again. Instead of investing millions that only translate into closures, the government should require that people use wood for their repairs. Anything is possible. The bill's wording may not be very broad, but that was our intention. The same bill was introduced in 2010. MPs rejected the bill at second reading, but in any case, I am pleased to have discussed this topic with my work colleagues.

● (1930)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Adjournment Proceedings

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 3, 2014, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a question that I put to the government back in October I felt was very important and merited another go.

The question arose from a concern identified by the federal Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. In her report, she said she had heard testimony from first nations that the federal government is ignoring its duties. First, it is failing to engage first nation and Métis peoples in the environmental impact assessment and monitoring of their oil sands; second, it is ignoring its duty to collect important traditional ecological knowledge; third, it is failing to consult first nations, thereby making it harder for first nations to participate in decision-making on projects that potentially impact their rights and interests.

It is important at the outset, in reviewing this matter, to give the government the opportunity to again consider the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that it has endorsed.

Article 27 of that UNDRIP says:

States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

Article 29 says:

Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources.

We noted the announcement of the government, particularly by the Minister of Natural Resources, of the new MPMO office to be based in Vancouver, supposedly to engage aboriginal peoples in major projects, more specifically major projects for energy development proposed by external parties, but what about the duty

to consult and engage first nation and Métis peoples on their own plans and priorities for their peoples and for their lands and resources, including traditional harvest, medicines, knowledge of wildlife, and land use?

Frankly, it is unclear how an office in Vancouver will facilitate improved consultation with Alberta first nations and Métis in consideration of their traditional knowledge and customs, despite the fact that the government has claimed this office will enable better engagement of first nations in both provinces.

It may be noted that the Federal Court, some years back, held that the former federal minister of the environment, Jim Prentice, erred in law in determining he had no duty to consider the rights and title of first nations in making decisions on critical habitat for species at risk. This case particularly had to do with the right of the first nation peoples in northern Alberta to the protection of the habitat of the caribou and bison, which is part of their traditional harvest.

Sadly, it appears the court directive is not being observed or respected, and the Alberta and B.C. first nations continue to be forced into the courts to uphold their constitutional and treaty rights, or, in the case of the current National Energy Board review on Kinder Morgan, being forced to resort to protest and ultimate arrest.

I am looking forward to hearing a more extensive and detailed response from the government on how it is going to respond to this concern that was raised by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

● (1935)

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to respond to the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona regarding the government's engagement of aboriginal peoples throughout the environmental assessment process.

Since the coming into force of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, this government has focused its resources on realigning processes to most effectively fulfill its roles and responsibilities associated with responsible resource development, including its responsibilities for consulting with aboriginal peoples.

When responsible resource development was first introduced, this government indicated its commitment to streamline the environmental review process to support economic development while simultaneously strengthening environmental protection and enhancing consultations with aboriginal peoples. Under Canada's modernized environmental assessment regime, this government has an approach that integrates consultation with all aboriginal peoples into the environmental assessment process.

Meaningful consultation occurs throughout the environmental assessment by identifying groups that may be impacted by a project early in the process, listening to their concerns at key stages of the process, and accommodating those concerns where appropriate.

Adjournment Proceedings

The information and views provided by aboriginal groups are reflected in the environmental assessment findings and can be helpful in identifying mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate the effects of the project on the environment and on aboriginal areas of interest.

Aboriginal traditional knowledge is recognized as an important part of project planning and resource management. Project proponents are encouraged to work with aboriginal groups and communities to gather traditional knowledge for consideration in the environmental assessment.

The commissioner's report indicated that some aboriginal people have concerns about their capacity to participate effectively in the environmental assessment process. With regard to this capacity, I want to make it clear that funding is available for aboriginal peoples to participate in the environmental assessment process. Between April 2013 and March 2014, approximately \$1.6 million was distributed to 90 recipients to enable consultation with aboriginal peoples and participation in the environmental assessment of some 27 projects.

I want to assure hon. members that this government is working closely with aboriginal groups and is engaged in meaningful consultation with them. Our government has also increased funding and opportunities for consultations throughout the environmental assessment process.

We will continue to protect our environment while supporting economic growth.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would have to say right off the bat that I am surprised that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health is responding to my question. However, this gives me the opportunity to speak of other failings of the government.

I have risen in the House countless times, making a plea on behalf of the first nations in northern Alberta for the Minister of Health to finally deliver the long awaited health impact study of the oil sands. To this very date, the government has refused to do any health analysis of the impacts of the oil sands.

When I look at the amount of money that the hon. member has said is committed, and if we divide that by the number of projects and the number of first nations, it is about \$15,000 per project. That is laughable. If we look at the amount of money that is spent by the proponent for appraising a vast array of highly technical information, it is shameful.

I hear no response and no recognition of the serious concerns raised by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

● (1940)

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, quite to the contrary, for every proposed project that our government reviews for environmental impacts, we assess the adequacy of our consultation to ensure that we are fulfilling the crown's duty to consult.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is actively engaged in conducting consultations in communities across the country. It is committed to look continually for ways to improve

opportunities for aboriginal participation in environmental assessments.

This government will continue to work with aboriginal communities throughout the environmental assessment process and build on lessons learned to best meet the needs of aboriginal peoples.

We will continue to protect our environment while supporting economic growth.

HEALTH

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a glaring lack of federal oversight exists in a little known but nonetheless important aspect of our health care system. I am referring to the reprocessing and reuse of medical devices designed and intended for single-use only.

The federal government has undisputed jurisdiction for regulating the manufacture of both pharmaceutical products and medical devices. I have already asked the government why it has been remiss in regulating drug compounders, those entities that are not strictly speaking drug manufacturers or pharmacies as the oversight and regulation of the latter is the responsibility of the provinces and the former of Health Canada.

In regard to the reprocessing of single-use medical devices, in 2004 the Auditor General urged Health Canada to consider regulating these devices in the same manner as it regulates new medical devices. However, the department concluded that the Food and Drugs Act, from which the medical devices regulations derive their authority, was not intended to apply to the use of a device after its sale.

The issue was subsequently raised by a witness at the health committee last spring during the committee's hearings on Bill C-17, Vanessa's Law.

Suddenly, this past July, Health Canada announced that it was encouraging, although apparently not requiring, reproprocessors to apply for and obtain a licence for reprocessed single-use devices in Canada. The government went on to say that one reproprocessor had, in fact, obtained a licence from Health Canada for one reprocessed single-use device out of 200 or so in commerce in Canada. This device was a non-invasive device, an inflatable compression sleeve, which is clearly not an example of the riskiest reprocessed single-use device.

Why will the government not act decisively and follow the Auditor General's 2004 recommendation to begin strict regulatory oversight of the market for reprocessed single-use medical devices?

What prompted the government to move away from its earlier view, that it lacked jurisdiction in the matter, to a more confused position that reflects a half-hearted commitment to ensuring the safety of patients undergoing invasive procedures with reprocessed devices?

Adjournment Proceedings

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not begin by highlighting our government's recent passage of Vanessa's Law, which received royal assent just a few weeks ago. It will help quickly identify dangerous drugs and ensure the quick recall of unsafe drugs. It requires the reporting of serious adverse reactions so we are aware of new risks.

I would also like to point out, and this is critical to the hon. member's debate, that the purchase and use of single-use medical devices are part of the practice of medicine and thus fall under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, not federal jurisdiction. I simply cannot agree that the federal government is absent from regulating this activity. In fact, I am pleased to report that Health Canada has licensed its first reprocessed medical device.

Health Canada received an application from a reprocessor to sell a reprocessed device and authorized it under the existing federal Food and Drugs Act and medical devices regulations. Our government will apply this regulatory framework to incoming licence applications from commercial reproducers of single-use devices that wish to sell reprocessed instruments to Canadian health care facilities. In doing so, we will obviously hold reprocessed devices to the same standards of safety and effectiveness as brand new devices.

We will also, obviously, hold commercial reproducers to the same regulatory requirements as new device manufacturers. This means that commercial reproducers seeking market authorization in Canada must meet requirements for licensing, labelling, maintaining distribution records, investigating and handling complaints, conducting recalls, reporting problems to Health Canada and informing Health Canada of any changes to the information in their device licence application, and being subject to quality system inspections or audits.

Under the existing regulations, devices are classified into classes based on the type of risk they pose. The evidence requirements to support a given licence application are proportional to the risk of the device. On the label of the reprocessed device, Health Canada will request that the single-use symbol be removed and replaced with clear instructions, for example, on where to send the device for reprocessing to ensure the appropriate safety oversight.

The department itself began raising awareness of the reuse of medical devices in 1985. Since that time, it has taken steps to mitigate the potential risks. For example, it issued letters to the health care facilities, established a scientific advisory panel on the reprocessing of medical devices, and co-chaired a federal-provincial-territorial working group of infection control specialists that reviewed safety data and developed a pan-Canadian framework statement.

The framework provided direction to the provinces and territories, and was used to help inform the development of their respective policy or regulatory positions on single-use devices. Traditionally, medical device reprocessing was done in-house by hospitals. More recently, reprocessing models have evolved to include greater use of commercial reproducers and service providers to hospitals. Health Canada has been closely following this business model evolution and actively engaging on this with its partners in the health care system.

Canadians can be assured that we have a rigorous regulatory framework in place to oversee the activities of commercial reproducers seeking to sell reprocessed single-use devices to Canadian health care facilities. While Health Canada applies existing regulations to incoming licence applications from single-use device reproducers, we continue to encourage medical device manufacturers to design devices according to their intended use. It is the responsibility of the manufacturer to provide the necessary safety information to Health Canada for review, as required by regulation.

• (1945)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, this is all very confusing. We understand that the practice of medicine is a provincial jurisdiction, yet the government has accepted a licence application for a reprocessed device. Therefore, it is clearly involved in the regulation of these devices at some level.

We know that Health Canada has jurisdiction over new devices. Quite frankly, I do not see the difference between jurisdiction for regulating new devices and for regulating reprocessed devices. I would also suggest that these devices are being reprocessed in the United States exclusively, as far as I can understand. Therefore, the federal government would derive some jurisdiction from the fact that it has jurisdiction over international trade.

In 2004, the Auditor General recommended some federal jurisdiction over this matter. I would hope the government will listen to the Auditor General's report from that period.

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments. Clearly, he is concerned about this issue, and I know Canadians, obviously, share a deep concern for health care.

I would be pleased to make officials from Health Canada available to the hon. member to provide to him a fuller explanation than can be offered through a late show debate, just to offer a full reassurance to him.

In a nutshell, having the appropriate regulatory oversight of medical device reprocessing is important to this government. For this reason, Health Canada will apply the existing federal Food and Drugs Act and medical device regulations to incoming licence applications from commercial reproducers of single-use devices. In doing so, it will hold reprocessed devices to comparable standards of safety and effectiveness as new devices, and will subject commercial reproducers to the same regulatory requirements as manufacturers of new devices.

The recent passage of Vanessa's Law has also strengthened Canada's already strong drug and medical device safety system.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1950)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the investigation into the collapse of the Algo Centre Mall in Elliot Lake revealed many things, including an assertion that this tragedy could have been avoided altogether.

The report touches upon the essential role of heavy urban search and rescue teams and the importance of federal funding in supporting these teams—funding that has recently vanished. It is gone because the current Conservative government cut the joint preparedness program entirely, which may limit the ability of the teams to respond and also threatens their very existence.

The final report of the Elliot Lake commission provided a clear recommendation, to which the government should listen.

It stated:

The need for public security and safety requires the reinstatement of federal funding for HUSAR/TF3, in particular, considering its trans-border responsibilities. It seems unfair that provincial and municipal taxpayers should bear the entire burden of this valuable national asset.

This recommendation comes two years after the joint preparedness program was axed, but there were already warnings in place about the necessity of federal money to support and maintain heavy urban search and rescue teams when the cuts were made. Those warnings came from a 2007 Public Safety Canada evaluation, which found that, without federal funding, there was a risk that some or all of the heavy urban search and rescue teams would actually not survive.

However, the government is not receptive to this argument. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness says:

...the majority of emergencies in Canada are local in nature and are managed by local or provincial governments.

What is lost in that argument is the nature of the events these highly specialized teams—and I will reiterate, these highly specialized teams—respond to, which is not applicable to most emergencies.

These teams respond to extraordinary events like the one we saw in Elliot Lake. With only five teams in all of Canada, they work out of province when needed.

The 2007 Public Safety report noted that the provinces consider heavy search and rescue to be a federal government initiative and that regional municipalities do not have sufficient budgets to maintain a nationally deployable heavy urban search and rescue capability and capacity, especially one that has largely been built using federal funds.

We do not want to be discussing this after another tragedy, especially if Public Safety's predictions of teams lost to a funding vacuum come to pass.

Will the minister learn from Elliot Lake's experience and stop cutting programs that help ensure the safety and security of Canadians?

Once again, I remind members that this is an issue of public safety. We need to ensure that we are ready when crises such as this one occur.

Again, I will reiterate. Will the minister learn from Elliot Lake's experience and stop cutting programs that help ensure the safety and security of Canadians?

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the concerns raised by the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing regarding the federal government's commitment to heavy urban search and rescue in light of the recent report into the tragic collapse of the Algoma Central mall in Elliot Lake on June 23, 2012. I was born in Sudbury, Ontario, and so this tragedy certainly weighs heavily on many of my former neighbours and us.

Our government is committed to keeping Canadians safe. The untimely deaths of Ms. Doloris Perizzolo and Lucie Aylwin resulting from the rooftop parking deck collapsing into the mall should be a constant reminder regarding this important role, including the role the government must always play at all levels toward ensuring that events such as at Elliot Lake are never repeated.

The majority of emergencies in Canada are local in nature, and managed by local or provincial governments. As a former councillor and a former acting mayor, I was well trained in emergency preparedness, including for whether disaster would hit at our airport, Canada's largest airport, or we were preparing for a large public health outbreak. That being said, our Conservative government will continue to invest in programs that keep Canadians safe and is always available to assist the provinces and territories if necessary.

The joint emergency preparedness program was closely examined. The original objectives of this program, namely to enhance local emergency preparedness and response capacity, have been met. As this is a provincial responsibility, we encourage communities to invest in emergency preparedness. Our government has also invested \$200 million in disaster mitigation. We will always take appropriate action to keep Canadians safe while ensuring fiscal responsibility.

• (1955)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, clearly, this government does not understand anything. The final report of the Elliot Lake inquiry underlined the critical importance of having quality heavy urban search and rescue teams in Canada. Since there are only five such teams in the entire country, it is pretty unrealistic to assume that they will all be located in the same province.

Unfortunately rather than improve these services, in 2012 the Conservatives cut funding for the program that supports these units across the country. We know that budget 2012 was full of indiscriminate budget cuts in order for the Conservatives to accumulate surpluses to fund a pre-election spending spree. If Canadians had to choose between pre-election goodies and heavy urban search and rescue teams, I am sure they would make the right choice.

I will ask the question again: will the minister take into account the recommendation that came out of the Elliot Lake inquiry and restore funding for heavy urban search and rescue response in order to save lives in the event of a disaster?

[*English*]

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, the primary responsibility of any government is the safety and security of its citizens. Recognizing this critical role and the importance of having the appropriate resources and training to support municipalities, provinces, and territories during emergencies such as the mall collapse, the government has supported enhancing the capacity of the urban search and rescue teams across the country. Over a 10-year period, the Government of Canada invested over \$30 million to enhance these capabilities. During this period, most of the goals established by the program had been met.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Bélanger report into the Elliot Lake mall collapse articulates a number of concerns regarding the use or activities, which are being assessed by the government. However, much of the report focuses on the preventable nature of this incident and whether fundamental measures had been taken to address engineering concerns. Preventing accidents through sound mitigation programming is critical if tragedies such as the one at Elliot Lake are to be prevented.

To this end, the government, through economic action plan 2014, announced the establishment of \$200 million in funding for the creation of the national disaster mitigation program. Working with our provincial and territorial partners, this program focuses on identifying and mitigating priority risks that may impact Canadian families and the communities in which they live.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:59 p.m.)

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