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(HANSARD)

Thursday, December 4, 2014

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 4, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*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 36 (8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to seven petitions.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association concerning a conference in London, England, the International Parliamentary Conference Growth for Development, November 18-20, 2014.

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[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to Bill C-21, An Act to control the administrative burden that regulations impose on businesses.

[*English*]

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

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[*Translation*]

VIA RAIL CANADA ACT

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-640, An Act respecting VIA

Rail Canada and making consequential amendments to the Canada Transportation Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill would give parliamentarians far more control over the decisions made concerning VIA Rail. It would also allow for a partnership to be established with the communities and industries involved in VIA Rail service. This bill is designed to create the legislative framework that VIA Rail has never had.

In the U.S., Amtrak was in rough shape without a legislative framework. Now, with that framework, Amtrak is on the right track. This company serves far more communities than it used to. We hope to learn from that and improve service in Canada.

VIA Rail is in crisis. Ridership is down and many routes have been cancelled. It is time that Parliament took this seriously. Do we really want passenger rail service in Canada? We must not forget that passenger rail service and the rail system built our country. We hope to maintain it for future generations.

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

* * *

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-641, An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and privilege of introducing this bill to ensure that federal laws are in harmony with the declaration. When the declaration was adopted in 2007, the Secretary-General of the United Nations called it the path of reconciliation between states and indigenous peoples. Now more than ever, that is the path this country must take.

[*English*]

I am very honoured to stand here today to introduce the bill, an act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

When the declaration was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, Ban Ki-moon had qualified it as the path to reconciliation between states and indigenous peoples. Indeed, more than ever, that is the path we need to take in the House and in the country.

Routine Proceedings

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

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CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-642, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (high profile offender).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce my very first private member's bill in this House. I feel confident that my colleagues will see the wisdom of these amendments to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. The amendments are meant to address the concerns of any community that is home to a halfway house that houses high profile offenders after their release.

In my riding of Saint John, a situation arose last year when three such offenders were released to a halfway facility without warning to the community. This prompted a wave of fear throughout the community that I am sure is not unique to Saint John, but it was nonetheless unsettling.

This bill asks that an offender's name and photograph be posted on the Correctional Service website, along with any previous convictions, date of release, destination, and any conditions attached to the statutory release.

The bill also requires that Correctional Service Canada provide communities with notice of the proposed release of any high profile offenders, hold public consultations with community representatives, including police, and take into account the views of the host community.

I look forward to hearing the views of my colleagues on these proposed amendments to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. I also hope that it addresses the concerns raised by my constituents in Saint John.

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

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PETITIONS**SPECIES AT RISK ACT**

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions from constituents in my riding as well as that of my colleague, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, with respect to SARA, the Species at Risk Act. The petitioners request that the House of Commons rescind the Species at Risk Act and replace it with something that encourages voluntary implementation.

●(1010)

PROTECTION OF SAGE GROUSE

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the other petitions are with respect to the sage grouse. They are signed by residents in my riding and in Cypress Hills—Grasslands. The petitioners are asking that the House of Commons rescind this strategy and replace it with something that ensures strategies are created with formal input from landowners. The same applies for the third petition.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by many Canadians pointing out that gendercide has created a global crisis of gender imbalance, resulting in violence and the human trafficking of girls. The petitioners are calling upon members of Parliament to condemn the discrimination of girls that is occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD DAY

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today. The first petition calls upon the House of Commons to introduce a national sustainable seafood day. It calls upon the government to designate March 18 as national sustainable seafood day. The petitioners are concerned about overfishing and destructive fishing practices in Canada.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, with thousands of signatures, petitioners call upon the government to immediately adopt a ban on the importation of shark fin to Canada.

CANADA POST

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by hundreds of constituents in my riding concerning the reduction of Canada Post services. The petition calls upon the government to reverse these cuts to Canada Post and look instead for an option to fill the void, such as postal banking.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions.

The first petition is from a number of individuals in St. John's and other communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons and Parliament assembled to ensure that the Government of Canada takes action in allowing individuals to have access to all different professions and not be limited by their physical appearance. The petitioners state that the citizens of Canada have a right to be accepted for their physical appearance whether or not they exhibit body modifications, have disabilities, or are minorities in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also signed by a number of individuals in St. John's and other communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. The petitioners state that Canada does not recognize transpersons who identify as a particular gender without genital reconstructive surgery or persons who identify as neither male nor female, and that the effects of denying correct gender markers to transcitizens denies them the freedom to fully express who they are. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons and Parliament assembled to ensure the Government of Canada takes action to ensure equal rights for all citizens by allowing all citizens to identify truly to themselves.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, about 50% of all workers in Toronto cannot access a full-time, stable job. What does that mean? They are working part time, they are working freelance, they are self-employed, many are working for free as unpaid interns, and they have no access to a workplace pension, benefits, or job security.

The folks who have signed this petition come from all over the greater Toronto area, and they are urging the government to support a national urban worker strategy that would build up a broader and stronger safety net for precarious workers in Canada.

PENSIONS

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition calls for the improvements to retirement security of the 62% of Canadian workers without any workplace pension.

The petitioners call for expansion of the Canada pension plan and specifically for the government to reject any changes that would allow employers to renege on existing defined benefit pension promises, and to refrain from allowing the conversion of defined benefit plans to so-called shared risk plans that would permit the subsequent reduction of pension benefits paid by retirees.

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from people in my riding, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who are concerned about agriculture, specifically, the freedom to use seeds to grow any variety of grain or vegetable now that more and more of those seeds are being patented and controlled by the agri-food industry. These people are concerned about the fact that in some countries, using, saving and exchanging seeds may now be considered illegal and punishable by law.

I am presenting this petition in the name of biodiversity and small farmers' ability to do their work.

• (1015)

[*English*]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by hundreds of my constituents of Burnaby—Douglas and across Canada.

The petitioners note that we have an obligation to protect animals in care from needless cruelty and suffering. They are calling on the Government of Canada to recognize that the use of electric shock collars on household pets is barbaric and unnecessary.

The petitioners also want the government to ban the sale and use of electric shock collars in Canada, as has been done in other countries. I have had many articulate and well-meaning constituents come into my office and talk to me about this issue, so I would urge the government to take this petition seriously.

Speaker's Ruling

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 755 and 761 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 755—**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:**

With regard to the Federal Internship for Newcomers Program: (a) how many applications did Citizenship and Immigration Canada receive, (i) in total, (ii) by year, (iii) by month; (b) how many applications were approved, (i) in total, (ii) by year, (iii) by month; (c) how many applications were rejected, (i) in total, (ii) by year, (iii) by month; (d) how many positions were available, (i) in total, (ii) by year, (iii) by month; (e) how many applicants have remained in Canada today; (f) how many applicants have found full-time, permanent employment; and (g) what was the budget allocated to this program, (i) by year, (ii) by city?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 761—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency, for each year since 2004 inclusively: (a) how many Reminder Letters has the Charities Directorate issued to charities; (b) how many formal complaints have been received concerning the political activities of charities; (c) how many political-activity audits have been commenced, (i) of those audits, how many have been concluded, (ii) how long did each audit last; and (d) what has been (i) the total expenditure on the political-activity audit program in each fiscal year since the program was established, (ii) the total expenditure on each completed audit?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley concerning the economic and fiscal update by the Minister of Finance on November 12, 2014.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for raising this matter, as well as the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the hon. House leader of the official opposition for their interventions.

Government Orders

[English]

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley explained that on November 12, 2014, the Minister of Finance delivered the government's official economic and fiscal update to a private audience of financial professionals rather than in the House. This, he argued, obstructed members' access to that critical information, which is required to fulfill their parliamentary functions, thereby constituting contempt of Parliament if not a breach of members' privileges.

The hon. government House leader responded that since the economic and fiscal update is not the budget, it is not governed by the Standing Orders. Consequently, the minister was not obligated to deliver that statement in the House and, in fact, there is a long-standing practice of the government making announcements outside the House on a range of policy issues.

The release of and accessibility to information is, of course, a matter of importance to all members since it touches the role of members as legislators. The Chair shares Speaker Parent's views when he indicated on November 6, 1997 at page 1618 of *Debates* that this role should not be trivialized. In fact, we should take every opportunity to underline its significance in our system of responsible government.

That is not to say, however, that every proceeding or activity related to delivering or accessing information by members implicitly involves their parliamentary duties.

For instance, in 2009, Speaker Milliken was asked to determine whether the public release of the government's third report on the economic action plan made in Saint John, New Brunswick, was a breach of privilege.

In a ruling on October 5, 2009, Speaker Milliken stated:

Matters of press conferences or release of documents, the policy initiatives of the government, are not ones that fall within the jurisdiction of the Speaker of the House unless they happen to be made in the House itself.

[Translation]

It is very difficult for the Chair to intervene in a situation where a minister has chosen to have a press conference, or a briefing or a meeting and release material when the Speaker has nothing to do with the organization of that [event].

[English]

In fact, a review of economic and fiscal updates delivered by the Minister of Finance has revealed that, since 2009, the minister has provided this update to a business audience in various provinces, with last year's being delivered to the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce on November 12, 2013. Furthermore, the Chair can find no cases of questions of privilege or points of order in relation to these updates.

[Translation]

In addition, Speakers have consistently ruled that there are certain fundamental conditions that must exist in order for it to constitute a matter of contempt or privilege. As O'Brien and Bosc states at page 109:

In order to find a *prima facie* breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions and that the matter is directly related to a proceeding in Parliament.

[English]

Based on the precedents established by previous Speakers, I cannot find evidence that members were obstructed in the performance of their parliamentary functions. Accordingly, I must conclude that there are not sufficient grounds to arrive at a finding of a *prima facie* breach of privilege in this case.

I thank the House for its attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1020)

[Translation]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 2

BILL C-43—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That in relation to Bill C-43, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and one sitting day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the said bill; and

That, fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on the day allotted to the consideration of the report stage and on the day allotted to the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

[English]

The Speaker: There will now be a 30-minute question period. I will ask members to keep their questions and comments to around about a minute and responses to a similar length of time.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sadly, it is no surprise that the government has chosen to shut down debate yet again. I guess the only surprise is that the government House leader has not memorized the actual statement he has made, because he has made it 83 times. The government has shut down debate 83 times on important pieces of legislation, more than any other government in Canadian history in wartime or in peace.

On this one, a budget implementation bill of 460 pages, in the few speeches we have heard from government members, they have cited all sorts of things that do not even exist within this budget implementation bill. What does exist, in a time of economic fragility, is a rip-off of the employment insurance program of \$550 million that may create as few as 800 jobs, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That is more than half a million dollars per job.

It would also rip social assistance away from refugee claimants. That does not affect the federal treasury whatsoever. That is contained in this bill.

Is it because there are so many terrible things in this bill and there is so little to help the Canadian economy at a time when it needs the help that the government is shutting down debate? Is it because of outright embarrassment for the lack of ambition and foresight contained in this massive omnibus bill?

Government Orders

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

This budget was brought down in February of last year. We have had ample opportunity to look through the budget. The budget implementation act no. 2 came in this October, and again, we have had debate in the House on that.

The member referenced the economy. Since forming government in 2006, and even going into the global downturn, we have had the strongest economic growth of any country in the G7. Our economy has been managed. We have come forward with economic action plans and a strategy. When we moved into a global downturn, we said that it was going to be a difficult time, but we had a strategy.

Whether it be by the OECD or the IMF, Canada is recognized as the place to be. There have been 1.2 million jobs created since the downturn. The second part of the budget is part of that plan.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the government House leader. He is the instrument that is used to bring in time allocation.

As has been pointed out, this majority Conservative/Reform Party government has now brought in time allocation a record high number of times. No other government in the history of Canada has brought in time allocation or used it in the manner the current government has. That is not to mention the huge budget implementation bills that have ramifications for numerous pieces of legislation. The Conservatives almost sneak a legislative agenda into these budget legislation bills.

Why is the government House leader being so disrespectful to basic democracy in the House of Commons?

•(1025)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, again, Canadians expect their government to govern. They expect their government to make decisions. They expect their government to be transparent in the strategy and the plan we had in this budget in the early spring and again with the budget implementation bill in October. They expect the government not only to make promises and commitments but to take action on those promises and commitments, which is exactly what our government is doing with the budget implementation bill, no. 2. We are going to continue to keep those commitments to Canadians by introducing and advancing important legislation.

The hon. member from the Liberal Party who just asked the question knows that it is common practice to include various other measures in a budget. His party did it. It is common practice. It is nothing new. It is nothing groundbreaking. It simply reflects the central role of the budget in a government's agenda.

The bottom line is that this budget implementation bill supports our low-tax plan. It supports plans to increase jobs and also increase skills within our workforce.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we often discover that there are things we would really like to talk about, but the problem is that time allocation does not allow us to do so.

The best example is that the government took \$500 million that could have gone to the unemployed. I am sure that during the holidays, the unemployed would have liked to share \$500 million. It is the holiday season. There are presents to buy and special groceries to get. Now, apparently, we cannot talk about it.

One important thing that is not in this legislation is a rationale for taking \$500 million and giving a credit to businesses. The problem is that the Conservatives are referring to a document prepared by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. That document does not exist. The federation itself said that the minister is referring to a document that it never wrote.

Can my colleague explain to me how it is that the government is taking \$500 million away from the unemployed based on a non-existent document?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the best programs for unemployed individuals. Part of what we do in Canada is encourage people to go back to work. In fact, we have seen that. We have seen this country have one of the lowest unemployment rates during the recession, and we have been able to create 1.2 million net new jobs. The majority of these jobs are in the private sector, and they are full-time jobs.

My hon. friend asks why we do not just give more money to the unemployed. When we speak to those individuals who are looking for work, they are saying that they want to be certain that they can find jobs. They want the government to invest in areas where they can increase their skills, enhance their jobs, and help them find jobs. That is exactly what we are doing.

Again, we are focusing on the issues that matter most to Canadians. We are seeing that our job growth is very positive, but we are also seeing people having more hope in being able to enhance their skill levels.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. minister of state, who has been in my riding talking to my constituents many times.

I would like to correct some of my colleagues. Under the strong, stable majority Conservative government we have had, Canadian democracy and the Canadian economy have been something other nations have marvelled at and have tried to duplicate. We are one of the top nations in the world. When we look at the opinions of our national colleagues, we see that.

One hundred per cent of the families in Etobicoke Centre with children under the age of 18 will benefit from our government's new family tax-cut plan. Parents in my riding of Etobicoke Centre will be pleased with this new money. They know that families should benefit from the surplus, not the government. They also know the numerous positive social and physical effects of keeping their kids active in sports and fitness.

Government Orders

Could the Minister of State for Finance please tell us how BIA no. 2 is going to help parents get their kids involved in fitness activities? Could he tell us specifically how it will help low-income families put their kids in sports programs?

• (1030)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Etobicoke Centre for the good work he does as a member of Parliament. He asks difficult questions in caucus. He advocates not only for his constituency but for Ukraine and for groups he has a real interest in. He works hard.

With respect to economic action plan 2014, no. 2, I am pleased to tell the House that the government will be doubling the children's fitness tax credit, increasing the maximum amount from \$500 to \$1,000. We are also making it refundable. We are delivering on the commitment we made in 2011. In addition, making the credit refundable will increase benefits to low-income families who want to see their children involved in sports and fitness activities.

We understand the importance of organized sports, such as hockey, gym, and those types of things. People on low incomes cannot afford that. Doubling the child fitness tax credit is good news for families who want to see their children involved in fitness activities.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when we had officials from Citizenship and Immigration Canada before committee on the measure in the BIA that would allow provinces to implement residency requirements for refugees, they said that there was no data to suggest that this measure would act as a deterrent or save any money.

Why would the government want to implement a measure it says would do both of these things and then limit debate? Why not pull that measure out and have it as a free-standing bill?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping all newcomers to Canada, including genuine refugees. We want to see newcomers to Canada integrate into our country and into our society and fully contribute to our economy and to our communities.

Make no mistake. Canada has the fairest and most generous immigration system in the world. I think the Canadian public understands this, and I want to make sure that the New Democratic Party also understands this. We can have great confidence in Canada's values and compassion. Many people from around the world aspire to come to Canada, because they recognize that this is a country of opportunity and hope.

We also recognize that it is the provinces' jurisdiction to deal with these social programs. We want to make certain that they understand that they have the ability to provide benefits through a timely process. It is a provincial decision.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we are about to impose time allocation on report stage debate in the House, I have a couple of questions that I would like to ask about the committee's work on this bill.

The first point is that it does not seem to me that the committee properly considered the fact that there is very little for veterans in Bill C-43. I would have thought that the committee would have spent

more time on omissions in the bill as well as the things that are wrong about the bill.

The second point I want to make is about something that is a little more detailed and that I do not believe the finance committee considered. Bill C-43 contains some changes to the Industrial Design Act. Budget 2014 said that there would be legislation to implement certain treaties, and one particular change in the Industrial Design Act says that a design is registerable if the design is not contrary to public morality or order.

My questions to the minister are as follows: why did the finance committee not consider this bill in more detail, how is the government intending to regulate the industry based on this line in the Industrial Design Act, and is that change related to a treaty?

• (1035)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of elements of this budget implementation act that deal with industry. Intellectual property is an example. There were certain amendments made to this bill that deal with intellectual property. These come out of amendments that were included in budget implementation act 1. These amendments are intended to move us forward in the Madrid protocol, in the Singapore Treaty on the Law of Trademarks, and in the Nice agreement.

Amendments in BIA 2 would implement the final two international agreements, the Patent Law Treaty and the Hague agreement relating to patents and industrial design. When he talks about the Industrial Design Act, as far as I understand, those are the measures that he is talking about.

Our government understands that reducing red tape, especially for small and medium-sized businesses, is central to Canada's economic growth. Reducing red tape makes certain that our businesses can compete abroad and are not on an uneven playing field. When we recognize these international developments and sign on to them, it helps industry. Signing on to these protocols is part of what this budget implementation act would do, and that is why it is so important that this bill gets passed through the House.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very curious about his definition of transparency. The bill is 460 pages long and amends dozens of laws, including some that have nothing to do with the budget

For example, not so long ago, the House was studying Bill C-585, which would have left refugees without a dime for months upon their arrival in Canada, which was not very encouraging. Furthermore, debate was cut short. The bill was withdrawn and, even though it has nothing to do with the budget, included in this budget implementation bill. Moreover, debate on the budget, and therefore on the bill, is being limited. Is that transparency? Is that his definition of transparency?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, these measures are transparent. They have been in the media. The budget was released last February and the budget implementation act was released in October. There has been a month and a half of transparency when members could look at the budget and see what is in this bill.

The member talked about welfare for refugees. I wish that the NDP would stand in the House and recognize that Canada is the most fair and generous country in the world to refugees, and certainly to immigrants. Canadians have no tolerance, however, for those who would abuse the system. When refugees come to this country from refugee camps, for example, we give them as much as we can to give them a good start here in Canada. That very well may mean health care that some of us do not receive, but if they are not genuine refugees but bogus refugees trying to beat the system, we want to be certain that they do not receive better health care services than the average Canadian.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong record of standing up for the interests of consumers. Every consumer benefits from our GST cut, and more than 10 million Canadians have opened a tax-free savings account. We believe Canadian consumers also deserve access to credit on fair and transparent terms. That is why we have taken action to protect Canadians who use credit cards by banning unsolicited credit card cheques, requiring clear and simple information, providing timely advance notice of rates and fee changes, and ensuring prepaid cards never expire.

My question is to the Minister of State for Finance. How will this budget help the consumers in my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming?

• (1040)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming for the question and also for his hard work for his constituents and for the whole northern part of Ontario, whether it be the Ring of Fire or other areas. In caucus and in meeting with him, I know the member has a real passion for his riding and for the industries up there.

The member brought forward a very good point, and that is the point on consumers: consumer conduct, a consumer code, a consumer agenda. That is the brand that this government is very pleased to be under, the brand of looking out for consumers.

While both opposition parties advocate for higher taxes, taxes that are going to affect every consumer and every family and every mom and dad, we are the only party that is standing up for consumers. We want to do that by lowering taxes and by making sure that we can put money back into their pockets.

We have also taken action to improve low-cost bank accounts and expand no-cost banking options for more than seven million Canadians.

As we go forward in the next budget and as we look to this budget implementation bill, Canadians can be assured that we will do all we can to better the plight of consumers, of Canadians, of families, of pensioners, of seniors, and of all those people who keep our economy strong.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we live in a funny world. In recent years, we have seen lots of trends, including speed dating, as though people needed to date in a hurry. I have the impression that something like “speed parliamentarism” is emerging, because they are trying to sell us all the extraordinary measures that are supposedly in this bill in about 15 minutes and we cannot debate them. That is the purpose of this measure.

The debate should revolve around the reasons why the government is bulldozing the parliamentary system, which gives each member the chance to speak on behalf of his or her constituents on such an important and sizeable bill. Nothing is being said about that. I would like to hear what the government representative has to say about that. What is the basic reason for bulldozing the parliamentary rules for the 83rd time?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to comment on speed dating. I will leave that up to the New Democratic Party or the Liberal Party.

Let me be very clear that a budget implementation bill allows us to implement the budget. A budget implementation bill is brought forward in two different parts, number one and number two. Canadians understand that this budget implementation bill is part of the plan that the Conservative Party of Canada has been rolling out, calling it the economic action plan.

It is one that the OECD, the IMF, and all countries around the world recognize as being a leader plan. When we go to G7 and G20 countries and encourage other countries to come to up to a level, whether it be in banking or in increasing employment, they look to Canada.

That is why Bloomberg, for example, says that Canada is one of the best places to invest and is the second-best place to start a business. Of all the countries in the world, Canada is where we want to be. That is because we have a Prime Minister like ours, it is because we have a finance minister like ours, and it is because we have a plan like ours. The opposition wants to stall this plan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member opposite talk in the last few days about this extraordinary transparency and how most of the measures in this bill were announced months ago. In fact, a couple of provisions were neither announced months ago nor had any consultation.

On the provisions related to the port authorities, not a single port authority in this country has been consulted, not a single municipality with a port authority in this country has been consulted. When we asked questions at the technical briefing, this was confirmed by staff. Why did the government not consult with anybody before bringing these measures forward?

Government Orders

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, the consultation process is one like we have never seen before in Canada, because we are active. We are already consulting on the budget for next year. We go across the country. The Minister of Finance began in Toronto a number of weeks ago. This week I will be in the west, consulting with Canadians in regard to what they want to see in the budget next year. There have been consultations throughout the entire process.

Canadians tell us this. They thank us for allowing them to appear before the Minister of Finance or the minister of state or the finance committee. They thank us for the good work that the member for Edmonton—Leduc is doing. They thank us for giving them a consultation process like they never had when the Liberal Party was in power.

We are listening to Canadians. That is why we see measures being brought forward in budget implementation acts. It is not because some backroom party hack is developing policy. That was the old way. We listen to Canadians and we implement the measures that they want to see implemented.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed to rise to talk about a time allocation motion and to tell the House what I think about the Conservatives. I say “Conservatives” because even my colleague spoke about the Conservative Party of Canada rather than the Government of Canada. He spoke as though the Conservative Party was the government when that is not really how the country should be managed.

The Conservatives see Parliament as something useless that gets in the way of their ideology. That is why they are always trying to pass their decisions as quickly as possible in the House without taking Parliament's opinion into consideration. They have been doing this for three and a half years. The Conservatives have no consideration for parliamentarians' opinions; yet, those opinions should be a primary consideration. The executive should take Parliament's opinion into account. These two things should be separate, but with the Conservatives, they have basically become one.

I do not think that is good for our democracy. They should consider and respect Parliament's opinion. In order to do so, they have to give parliamentarians the opportunity to speak and express their opinions. That is not what they do, so I am asking the Conservatives why they do not have any consideration for Parliament.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, we are encouraging debate. Members of Parliament have had, at different stages, ample opportunity to stand in this House and debate. They have had ample opportunity to bring this to committee and to debate. The budget was brought down in February, the budget implementation act no. 1 came shortly after that, and then no. 2 came in October.

The member talks about the number of things in the budget. We obviously are bringing forward measures that we have made

commitments to in elections and platforms and we are acting on recommendations that have come out of committees.

However, there is other legislation that would be amended by this bill. For example, there is the Auditor General Act. The Auditor General has brought forward certain measures, and we have incorporated some of those into the budget implementation act. There is also the Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada Act. Different acts would be changed because recommendations come forward that we can implement. There is the Broadcasting Act and the Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador Additional Fiscal Equalization Offset Payments Act. These acts will be amended because of parliamentary recommendations in many cases. In some cases it is as a result of parliamentary reports or because they are just good practices. In fact, we have accepted some measures from the opposition parties as well.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members will know that I have the honour of representing the riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, which is both an urban and a rural riding. I have many farmers in the riding. I am really proud of the work that our government has done in support of farmers. In the past, we have introduced the agricultural flexibility fund, we have offered support to hog farmers to restructure their debt, and we have allowed grain farmers to have marketing freedom. In every one of those cases, the New Democrats and the Liberals have opposed those measures.

This particular bill has a technical amendment in it that would extend the lifetime capital gains exemption of farm property. Basically, this would make it easier for farmers to pass their farms on to the next generation.

I know my colleague, the Minister of State for Finance, has done a lot of consultation over this period. I wonder if he has been able to figure out in his consultations why the New Democrats and the Liberals oppose measures that would improve the chances of our farmers to succeed in this country and produce some of the best-quality food in the world.

• (1050)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to applaud our Minister of International Trade for the very good work he has done in enhancing trade agreements around the world.

The budget implementation act deals with issues with respect to the Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement, an agreement which we have had for a number of years, but which needs some amendments.

My hon. member brought forward the issue of agriculture. As a member of Parliament representing an agricultural constituency, and being a farmer myself, I recognize that many of these free trade agreements are driven by agriculture. There has never been a government in our country that has done more for agriculture than this government. Whether it be new markets, or giving farmers the freedom to market their grain, one thing has been constant. The New Democratic Party time after time has stood here and voted against farmers. We have defended supply management and agriculture in Canada.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense. The government says that it listens to Canadians but the Minister of the Environment does not even want to put down her newspaper to listen to the questions about her riding in question period. What is more, the Minister of Veterans Affairs has completely botched his file.

Next year, in 2015, people should remember the number 15, because the NDP listened to Canadians. We are proposing a minimum wage of \$15 an hour and child care that costs a maximum of \$15 a day. Meanwhile, this government is proposing to cut taxes for 15% of the richest families in Canada. It is completely ridiculous.

Will the member opposite support the NDP's measures to help Canadian families?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, we heard the member list a litany of things that the New Democratic Party has brought forward. I would suggest maybe that this is part of the reason why the New Democratic Party is in the difficulty it is today.

The first measure she brought forward was a minimum wage. Everyone in the House recognizes that as being under provincial jurisdiction.

She also talked about the Canada family tax package. Every family with children under 18 will benefit from our tax breaks. The majority of those benefits go to low and middle-income Canadians with children. The NDP wants to take it away. The average cash into the pockets of most middle and lower-income families Canadian families, only through that one measure of the family tax package, will be \$1,100.

We bring these measures to keep money in the pockets of Canadians. The opposition parties would take those away. Families understand that. That is why families are supportive and know that the Conservative Party of Canada is the best bet for them as a government.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

● (1055)

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

● (1135)

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

(*Division No. 300*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Barlow	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Calkins
Cannan	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Nicholson	
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson

Government Orders

Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Williamson
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Wilks	Young (Vancouver South)
Wong	Zimmer — 136
Young (Oakville)	
Yurdiga	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Bélangier
Benskin	Bevington
Boivin	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brison	Byrne
Caron	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseauult	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jones
Julian	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Stewart
Sullivan	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriotte	Vaughan — 108

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I declare the motion carried.

* * *

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

BILL C-40—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That in relation to Bill C-40, An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the third reading stage of the said bill; and

That 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on the day allotted to the consideration of the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period. I would remind hon. members to keep their interventions to around one minute. That goes for the questions as well as the responses. I remind hon. members that this 30-minute question period is predominantly for questions by opposition members, although time will be provided for government members, albeit shorter in length.

Questions, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, next year at this time when the government is history, it will still go into the history books for two sad records. The first will be for having had more pieces of its legislation rejected by the courts than any other government in our nation's history. Half a dozen times now courts have said that its legislation is badly botched work and have thrown it back to the Conservatives. The second, perhaps even more important, is the sad record of having some 84 time allocation and closure motions. That has never been seen before in Canadian history.

There has never been such a lack of respect for parliamentary debate and dialogue, with the results that I have mentioned earlier, of more bills being rejected than of any other government.

The questions really are why this bill and why now? First, despite the laudable principle in creating the bill, it undermines the National Parks Act. Obviously the government wants to hide that fact from the Canadian public, which is why it is shutting down debate.

Second, why now, why this morning? Of course, we have Bill C-586 that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has brought forward, and there were five witnesses scheduled to speak at the procedure and House affairs committee: Samara Canada, Fair Vote Canada, Friends of the Reform Act, Democracy Act, and Professor Nelson Wiseman, all wanting to speak on reform and to get their message across.

Obviously the House leader disagrees, so the real question is, why are the Conservatives trying to disrupt the procedure and House affairs committee and trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the Canadian public on Bill C-40?

● (1140)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I will start by answering directly a couple of questions.

First, why this bill? It is because this bill would establish Canada's first urban national park, something that is very, very strongly supported, I believe in the last poll I saw, by some 88% of the residents in the affected area, and in fact overwhelming supported, I believe, by residents across the greater Toronto area who will benefit from Rouge Park being in place.

Government Orders

Why now? It is because the opposition has made it clear that it will do everything to stop the establishment of Canada's first urban national park.

Finally, I feel a bit like a broken record because I am always reminding the hon. opposition House leader that time allocation is not a device for limiting debate, but a scheduling device. In fact, compared with the British Parliament, even with our use of this scheduling device, we provide more than double the amount of debate on bills in this Parliament than in Britain on similar respective bills going through the process and becoming law.

With this motion in place, the bill will have, at a very minimum, eight times the amount of debate at third reading stage that a similar bill would have in the British Parliament. There is ample debate. There is a significant amount. The real reason is that the NDP just tries to stop anything being done by this government.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, another day, another time allocation motion. The hon. member said these now total some 84 motions. I am not keeping track because I have lost track.

This must be a record on a record, because it is time allocation on a park bill, for goodness sakes, which started out with a broad-based agreement in the House where it went on a voice vote to committee, and then it just went south.

What is amusing to me is that we can fix the bill with a very small amendment. However, in its classic governing style, where everyone else is wrong, whether the Queen's Park government, the thousands of petitioners living in and around the area, the environmentalists or even the farmers, the government believes everyone else is wrong and that it is right. As a result, the Conservatives are just jamming the bill down the throats of folks, and they will have a national Swiss cheese park.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood rose to speak to this, but of course the process of this park being jammed down the throats of Canadians was initiated by the Hon. Pauline Browes when she was Minister of State for the Environment. She initiated the idea of having an urban national park back under the Brian Mulroney Conservative government. The hon. member who asked the question was here for 13 long years in government, a long, long time, and had the opportunity to make something happen to advance that process to allow an urban national park to be established, and what happened under that Liberal government? Nothing, not one thing in over a decade was done to advance the process.

Finally, our government is making things happen and bringing this to a conclusion. The hon. member says they are supportive of it, but something happened along the way: they changed their minds. Perhaps it is because their friends at Queen's Park decided there was political hay to be made. Nonetheless, the fact is that even if the Liberals oppose our government establishing Canada's first urban national park in the Rouge because they did not do it and made sure it did not happen for a decade, we will go ahead and get this done and delivered for Canadians, for the people of Scarborough and the people of the greater Toronto area.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, something absolutely did happen, but the government House leader

is completely wrong about what happened. What happened was that the government took a process where there was consensus at the beginning and managed to lose two-thirds of the support in the House for the bill because it is inflexible and not willing to listen to some reasoned amendments.

Everyone in Scarborough, some 88%, as the House leader mentioned, want this park created. Every single Scarborough MP in the House wants this park created. This is going to be the first national urban park and a template for future urban parks, whether they be in Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria, Quebec, or the Northwest Territories, wherever there is an urban setting. Of course, 80% of Canada's population lives in an urban setting. The government is losing support because it is not willing to make the necessary changes to improve ecological integrity and the rules that currently exist.

I hope the minister will finally speak to this bill for the first time in the House to show that she has been paying attention to the file. How many times since the September 2 letter from the Ontario minister of the environment has the minister met to discuss problems? How many times have staff met? Have there been any meetings or discussions between the Ontario provincial government and the federal government since that September 2 letter to see if we can come to a reasonable agreement and reach consensus on this issue after the government lost it all?

• (1145)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I have noticed the province backpedalling from the position that the provincial minister took initially when he came out against it. His position was that the current protection under Ontario law was what the province preferred. Let us look at what that meant. That meant it would allow hunting on the land, something that our bill would prohibit. Under the provincial law there would be no protection under the Species at Risk Act, but there would be under our bill. There would be no effective way of enforcement against waste dumping under existing provincial law, whereas in our bill we would have enforcement via dedicated officers. There would be no fines for illegal activities, such as poaching or the equivalent, which take place in national parks, whereas in our bill we would have that protection under the law.

One of the most significant differences is where the member talked about the efforts to change this via the notion of ecological integrity by those who are opposed to the bill. This is an urban park. There are over 80 heritage designated buildings and structures that are worthy of protection. They are very important cultural resources. That protection would be lost were those amendments to be made. Should a forest fire occur, we would not be allowed to stop it from burning down that valuable cultural heritage, a critical part of what is there. That is what the opposition is talking about.

Urban national parks reflect not just nature, but important cultural history, archeological history, and the history of economic activity in the form of agriculture. All of those things would be protected by this bill. They are all things that the province wanted to take away. We are not going to put those valuable heritage properties at risk the way the opposition would like us to.

Government Orders

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister being here to explain many of these things today. Earlier I heard some comments by a Liberal MP who said this was being pushed down people's throats. It is my understanding that there was extensive consultation before this bill was presented in this place. I would ask the minister to please comment on that extensive consultation with stakeholders so that we could have a bill that I believe all Canadians can support.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, of course there has been extensive consultation. As I pointed out, it was initiated under the Brian Mulroney government and, indeed, was very much a grassroots community effort that continued to be led by the hon. Pauline Browes after she left public life. She has been very involved up to this date in making it happen. In the preparation of this particular proposal, over a hundred organizations within the community participated in the consultation, so it has been broad.

What is really critical as we stand on the precipice is the opportunity to actually establish Canada's first urban national park. We have the ability to make it happen and the opposition is standing in the way of the establishment of Canada's first urban national park. It is a very difficult position to explain. I understand why opposition members keep writhing in contortions, but when we examine their criticisms, they are empty too, and they reveal that the only motive is to keep the Conservative government from establishing Canada's first urban national park.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that time allocation motions are objectionable not simply because they interrupt debate and thorough consideration in the House; they also constantly interrupt committee work.

This is a government that is constantly saying how important committee work is, yet it is constantly making sure that committees cannot do their job. I am supposed to be in the procedure and House affairs committee right now listening to witnesses on the bill from the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, Bill C-586, Reform Act, 2014, and hearing from Nelson Wiseman, professor at University of Toronto; Democracy Watch; Fair Vote Canada; Friends of the Reform Act; and Samara, but our committee has been cancelled because of this House leader.

I would like the member for Wellington—Halton Hills to ask his House leader at some point whether this was on purpose.

• (1150)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that I do not manage the business affairs of committees and do not even look at that when I deal with this, because we are dealing with the question of getting this important piece of legislation through the House.

I would love to not have to resort to measures like this. I would love to have an agreement with the opposition. However, as I indicated, no agreement could be reached, so this is the measure we take.

It is important that this happen, that we do get to the point where we actually establish Canada's first urban national park. The Rouge park will be a tremendous asset for this country and in particular for

the greater Toronto area. It is something that has been long anticipated.

I can understand that there might perhaps be some partisan motivation in opposition members from Scarborough or Durham wanting to be able to go on the hustings in the next election and be able to say that the government could not get it done, but we can get it done.

That is one of the watchwords of this government. We are business-like, we get the job done, we are hard-working and orderly, and this is an example of that approach at work. We are delivering on the commitments we have made to Canadians, in this case for Canada's first urban national park.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have spent most of my life fighting for parks and protected areas and I created quite a few.

I really wanted to vote for the Rouge park. An urban park is a great idea. I was intending to vote for the bill, until I brought amendments to committee that were dismissed out of hand.

Every conservation group—every single one—is now opposed to this bill. This bill would actually weaken the protections that were put in place by the province. It violates the memorandum of understanding with the province. Ontario now opposes this bill.

A few simple amendments could have made the bill better and fixed it, but committee members were busy on their BlackBerrys, mindlessly voting against every amendment without even listening to them. The arrogance of the government on this bill is unspeakable.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I think I have articulated fairly well some of the reasons the existing protections under provincial law fall far short of the protection that would be in place under this law.

Would the current provincial law directly prohibit mining on all lands here? No. Of course, under this statute, under the proposed bill to establish the Rouge national urban park, it would be prohibited.

Is there a prohibition on the removal of native plants and fossils on all lands under existing law in Ontario? No, there is not, but there will be, once we have this bill that establishes the Rouge national urban park in place.

I could go on and on, whether it has to do with hunting, protection for species at risk, or the question of dumping waste. All of these things are better protected under this bill. That is why it is such a mystery that people would take a position on the contrary.

When members look at the facts, they will see that getting to the finish line not only increases and significantly enhances protection for these lands over the protection they currently enjoy under provincial law, but it will also be a major milestone in establishing Canada's first national urban park, something that is very eagerly anticipated by the people of Scarborough and the people of Durham.

Government Orders

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will save you and the House the painful verbosity of a long, self-serving preamble. I have but a plain question for the government House leader.

Will the proposed new act provide better protection than what is in place now for the existing park?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the answer is clearly “yes” on any of a number of items of straightforward protection.

However, there is something more significant: the funding. It is the funding that would establish trails within the park and establish four discovery centres within the park to make it usable, interpretable, and understandable to the people of the community. It would not be just an idea, as it is now. It would not be just a bunch of land, as it is now, but something that could be used and enjoyed. People would be able to walk through it, travel through it, hike through it, and learn about it, and people could learn about the history of our first nations people there through a discovery centre.

Is any of that, one penny of that, on the table from the provincial government? No, there is not one penny, and we know why: the provincial government has no money. We have put forward significant commitments to fund those things and to make them happen, but the opposition wants to stop that from happening. We are not going to let that happen. We are going to make sure we deliver on this asset, which is environmentally and culturally so very important to this community.

• (1155)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really confused by the minister because he says that the people of Scarborough want this tiny park. No, the people of Scarborough want a 100-square-kilometre park. What the government is offering is 40-something.

It is already protected right now by a patchwork system of protective measures and by people who have built the park, activists who have stopped development from happening, and people like myself who go and plant trees and bushes and remove invasive species six times a year. The park is protected by us, the people who are there on the ground and who have been working so hard to create it and protect it.

There is a patchwork system of about 12 or 13 different policies and agreements protecting this land. It is not just a piece of land, as the minister says.

Why is it the minister is moving time allocation on the bill when clearly there still needs to be more discussion? Why has the minister responsible not spoken to this bill? Why will they not just do what the community wants and protect the Rouge Park, rather than chopping it up into this tiny piece and not even providing the protective measures that are already in existence with the patchwork system of protective measures that we, the activists on the ground for the last 35 years, have put together?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments from the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, and she does have some understanding of the issues. That would have been a superb question had it been placed in the Ontario legislature.

Everything she said was an indictment of what the Ontario government has done on this file. It was the Ontario government that pulled lands out of the park. It was the one that reduced the size of the proposed protected lands. It was the one that has not actually put any park protection in place for those lands. We are the ones looking to create the urban national park; it is the province that has resiled and broken the memorandum of understanding and the agreement on creating a park of significant size and scale. We are the ones going ahead with doing it, and we still invite and encourage their participation. We welcome them in.

We think that is what is best for the people in the greater Toronto area. York region, Durham, and the cities of Toronto and Scarborough in particular would benefit from this park and from the millions of dollars to establish all the elements that would turn it from an imaginary vision into an actual, real park, finally there on the ground, that people can use.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, the minister professes to being confused. It is a mystery to him how all of these people and governments could be opposed to the park when they were in favour of the park just six months ago. Apparently it is just all politics: when all of those thousands of petitioners are saying not to support the bill, it is just politics; when all of the park people and all of the knowledgeable NGOs in the country who started out in favour of the park are now opposed to the park bill in its present form, they just do not know what they are talking about. It is quite remarkable.

Apparently the telephone system only works one way. It only goes from Queen's Park to here. It does not actually go back the other way.

It is simple. It is a simple fix. The minister should honour what the people of Scarborough and York regions want done.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing. Having rules in place that would allow 80 valuable heritage buildings to burn down instead of being protected may be his approach, but it is not ours. He may want to wipe out 75 farms that have been in operation on the site for some two centuries and represent an important part of the cultural heritage. That may be what he wants, but it is not what we want to see happen.

We want to see an urban national park that reflects the history, environment, and culture of that area. That is what we are looking to do. We want it to be as large as it can be. We want everyone to participate fully.

We are going to protect all those assets. We are going to protect those heritage buildings, and there are over 80 of them. We want to see that they enjoy some protection. We also want to ensure that there is funding to make it understandable and interpretable. That is what the bill would do.

The member had a decade in government to make something happen. They did not get a thing done. We are getting it done.

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•(1200)

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, there the House leader goes again with the campaign of fear that somehow everybody else wants to get rid of farmers. We do not have to pick between the environment and farmers. We can bring them both together. We can protect the farms and the environment at the same time. This is not about picking or choosing.

The minister in charge of this still will not get up to speak to this bill and the House leader never answered my first question. I asked how much communication has happened between the minister's office and the Ontario government since that September 2 letter when the province announced it would not support the park bill in its current form.

It is important for us as New Democrats to not just simply be in opposition, but also to make substantive propositions. We will propose a new bill that will fix all the crazy things that the Conservative government will do with this bill, which has managed to lose two-thirds of support for the bill.

When will the minister answer the question with regard to how much communication has happened between the minister and the provincial government to see if they have tried to solve this problem?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, communication and discussion has been going on for decades. It has been going on throughout the time—

Mr. Dan Harris: Since September 2, how much?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, if the Province of Ontario decided on September 2 that it wanted to back out of its memorandum of agreement after years of supporting the establishment of this park, after us following the terms and direction that it set out, after providing a lot more protection, then it is the Province of Ontario that has to account for its change in position and for deciding to do that.

We have been clear that this is an important objective. An urban national park in the Rouge is critical. It has to happen. We want to deliver on it. We want to deliver on the environmental protection that would go with it. We will not allow that to be held up by political games. We have put in place a proposal that would balance all interests, that would protect agricultural interests that have been there for centuries, that would protect heritage assets, that would protect the natural environment. People will finally, for once, be able to use and enjoy this first urban national park. We want to put it in place, to make it happen, with the support necessary to make it happen.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the creation of the Rouge national park shows our government's strong commitment to conserve Canada's natural spaces and connect Canadians to nature as highlighted in our government's national conservation plan.

Could the member tell me how Bill C-40 would support our hard-working farmers?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, some would prefer to see a hard line ecological position in place that would prohibit and prevent any activities, including agriculture. That is why in the end we will

never be able to accommodate every group. There are different interests at stake and we want those interests balanced.

We recognize that agriculture is a heritage activity, for 200 years plus, worthy of recognition in the park. That activity would continue to exist. The park would be exempt from those prohibited activities. That is the sensible thing to do. This park is not in a pristine natural environment. It is an urban national park. The pristine parks should be protected, but those other elements in our culture and history that we look to protect should also be there. They will be there and they will be protected in a way that will allow their use and enjoyment, and prevent their development for urban purposes forever.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, we do not have to pick between farmers or environmentalists. I asked almost every witness who appeared before committee if it was possible to work together. Farmers said that they were already environmentally responsible, that they were environmental activists. Environmentalists said they wanted sustainable farming to continue in the area.

My question for the minister is about something he repeated a few times, and that is ensuring people will enjoy the park and understand its cultural and historical heritage. People already enjoy the park. People are using it and learning about it.

I want to specifically ask him about the history of the park. There is a sacred burial ground and sacred village of the Mississauga, Huron-Wendat and Seneca First Nations peoples within the park right now. We put forward an amendment at committee to create an aboriginal interpretive learning centre on the park grounds. The idea was put forward by aboriginal first nations leaders and elders. Why did the Conservatives vote against it? Why has the minister responsible for this park still not yet spoken to the bill? Why does he keep saying that he wants to help the people learn and enjoy the cultural and historic importance of this park and communities when that is really not true?

•(1205)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that there are actually four discovery hubs, which do not exist now, that are to be established with the creation of this park, funded by the federal government. She and here party are opposing that right now. One of those discovery hubs will be near Bead Hill National Historic Site. It will introduce visitors to Rouge Valley's aboriginal history and will deal with aboriginal themes, with a special emphasis on engaging youth. This is one of four of those hubs that will be presented.

She is not right when she says it is not there. It is there. It is one of the proposals, one of the things that will happen if this passes. However, she is resisting this passing, for some reason, and then standing here, saying that we need it.

This is the difficult thing. We get an opposition that claims it supports something, but then, for political reasons, it does everything it can to try to keep it from happening.

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Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, the minister has a talent for revisionist history. For the last 30 years, all governments have worked to create this park. Whether they have been Conservative or Liberal governments at Queen's Park, or Liberal or Conservative governments in Ottawa, all governments have worked on the land assembly.

Pauline Browes is a legitimate person who has been properly recognized as a real contributor to this, as have Derek Lee and Lois Jane. Frankly, that covers the entire political spectrum. All of these people, up until six months ago, wanted this to happen, yet the government has a unique talent to take consensus, destroy it, stomp on it and do it for the most obscure reasons possible.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, did the hon. member's Liberal government get this done? Did it make it happen? Did it get the park established? No.

Is the Ontario Liberal government now establishing the support of the park? No.

It is very simple. We are moving forward. We are getting the park established. It will be an asset for the people of Durham, York region, Toronto, Scarborough and, in particular, for generations to come.

In particular, we talk about levels of protection, for example. It enjoys protection right now from the Ontario government, under the Greenbelt plan. It needs to merely amend the plan, change a line on a map. It does not even involve passing a law, and that protection will be all gone.

Under this bill, that protection would be there in perpetuity for the benefit of the people of Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

● (1245)

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

(*Division No. 301*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Barlow	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bemier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Calkins
Cannan	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockett	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Nicholson	
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 136

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NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Byrne
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dusseauit
East	Eyking
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Stewart
Sullivan	Thibeault
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriotte	Vaughan— 106

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I declare the motion carried.

* * *

NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve of Canada), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

● (1250)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of the Environment) moved that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve of Canada) be concurred in at report stage.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

YUKON AND NUNAVUT REGULATORY IMPROVEMENT ACT

The House resumed from December 1 consideration of the motion that Bill S-6, An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak on Bill S-6, an act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act.

I think the member from western Arctic has clearly outlined the NDP position on the bill, and of course, we are opposing it.

I will focus my speaking time on the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act aspect of the bill, because that is very controversial.

To give a bit of background, in May 2003, Canada enacted the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act, or YESAA, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 12 of the Yukon first nations' comprehensive land claim agreements. Yukon first nations agreed to accept less than 9% of their historic land. They accepted this small land settlement partly in exchange for the establishment of a permanent assessment process that would manage all projects in their traditional territories in accordance with the objectives stated in chapter 12. That process is defined in YESAA, which was developed collaboratively by Canada, Yukon, and first nations.

A number of concerns have been raised by Yukon first nations with regard to this piece of legislation. Following are the primary concerns.

The Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon first nations are concerned that the changes proposed in Bill S-6 would be contrary to the intent of the land claims agreements, would undermine the neutrality of the YESAA process, and would reduce the effectiveness of environmental and socioeconomic assessments. First nations' main concerns relate to four amendments that were never raised by Canada during the five-year review.

Number one is policy direction to the board. Clause 34 of Bill S-6 would provide an amendment that would give Canada the power to give binding policy direction to the YESAA board. Canada could choose to delegate this power to the Yukon government. Providing Canada with the authority to issue policy direction would undermine the independence of the board and designated offices. Independence is a fundamental element of the YESAA. During the development of the YESAA, Yukon first nations, CYFN, Canada, and Yukon, discussed this at length.

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The following analysis is from a pamphlet called *Changes to YESAA Threaten Our Land, Our Economy, Our Yukon. How Bill S-6 affects Yukon*. It is a background fact sheet.

Providing a single party with the authority to direct the Board is contrary to the spirit and intent of the YESAA and the provisions of the Final Agreements.

The second piece that is controversial in this bill is the delegation of federal powers to the Yukon government. Providing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development with authority to delegate powers to the territorial minister without the consent of first nations would create a bilateral process that would exclude first nations from discussions about the balance of power. I will come back to this particular point.

The third sticking point is exemptions for renewals and amendments. This is a particular concern. It is addressed in clause 14 of Bill S-6. Again, I will quote from the background fact sheet:

This amendment allows governments to approve the renewal or amendment of permits and licences for projects without any YESAA assessment. Renewals or amendments could have serious impacts on the environment, regional economies and local communities.

This amendment will make project assessments challenging. Impacts would need to be identified for the entire project life because renewals would likely not have to go through an assessment. For some projects, effects cannot be foreseen at the time of the initial review. This may result in negative impacts to the environment, our economy and communities.

Under the amendment, governments can avoid assessment for renewals and amendments if they decide that the project has not changed significantly. The proposed amendments do not provide a definition for significant change, but rely on the opinion of the regulators. This will create uncertainty, and the perception of political interference, resulting in conflict and could possibly end up before the courts.

The fourth and final concern and objection is on the timelines for the YESAA assessments. The proposed beginning-to-end timelines would affect the thoroughness of environmental and socio-economic assessments and opportunities for first nations' input on major projects. Of course, we know that in many cases, first nations do not have the resources to drop everything and immediately respond to a project when an assessment is required.

• (1255)

It is very concerning and has the appearance of trying to ram through assessments without first nations having adequate time and resources to review them.

What we have heard consistently from the government is that there was consultation and that it was adequate.

I want to start with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and reference two articles, because it is important to set a context with regard to consultation. Article 18 says:

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

Article 19 states:

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

I want to remind the House that the government signed on to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and made a commitment to take some next steps to implement it, but so far it has failed to do anything meaningful or concrete to uphold its international obligations.

I want to address one of the myths with regard to consultation. A paper entitled "Changes to YESAA Threaten our Environment, our Economy, our Yukon" specifically addresses the issue of consultation. This is the myth:

There have been thousands of hours of consultation with First Nations on changes to YESAA over the past 7 years.

Here is the reality:

The Parties discussed the YESAA process for many hours between 2008 and 2011, as part of the YESAA Five-Year Review. It was a review required under the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA). The Parties to the UFA, the Council of Yukon First Nations..., Canada and Yukon agreed to work together to improve the YESAA process through shared decision making and by consensus, when possible.

The amendments to YESAA under Bill S-6 that are of concern were never discussed and were never raised by Canada during the Five-Year Review. The amendments of concern include: giving binding policy direction to the Board; handing over powers to Yukon; imposing maximum timelines for assessments; and not requiring assessments when a project is renewing or being amended. These new amendments were introduced with little opportunity to ensure adequate consultation and accommodation.

I have outlined those amendments before.

The paper continues:

On February 26, 2014, Canada arrived at a meeting and provided paper copies of these amendments and refused to provide electronic versions to the First Nations that were on the phone for the meeting. This stopped them from being able to participate in a meaningful way.

Yukon First Nations had less than 2 months to review and respond to the changes proposed by Canada. That is not enough time to review important changes to the YESAA law. Consultation means providing the necessary information to the Parties. Canada didn't do that step. Canada failed to meet the test of its Treaty and common law duty to consult and accommodate.

I have heard the government say that it consulted but that the Yukon first nations did not agree with it, so it was going to go ahead with the amendments, even though there was grave disagreement.

We have heard the Conservative government talk in the House a number of times about an agenda around reconciliation. If it has an agenda around reconciliation, does that not mean respect for its partners?

It signed an umbrella agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations. I would argue that there is a spirit and intent around these agreements that is about a respectful relationship, a willingness to move toward reconciliation, and an unwillingness to unilaterally impose a federal government's will on first nations. It is fine for the government to say that it has consulted, but if it does not actually do anything about the disagreement to try to resolve it, that is hardly consultation.

Representatives of the Council of Yukon First Nations were in Ottawa because of their grave concerns. They were here at the invitation of the minister and had a meeting with him. CBC's headline was, "Ottawa trip on Bill S-6 ends in insult to Yukon First Nations". In that meeting, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Chief Eric Fairclough said:

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The minister shut us down by telling us we were “not real governments”, and therefore he does not need to make us active participants in changing legislation that arises from our treaties.

The article went on to state:

Fairclough says that's an insult that "flies in the face of recent court decisions that have affirmed the duty to consult First Nations."

• (1300)

At the aboriginal affairs committee yesterday, I asked the minister whether or not he had said that. He put it into context, and I will read his response into the record. He stated that “The point I made is under the umbrella agreement, government is defined as being the Government of Canada or the Government of Yukon, so my point was that this delegation is contemplated under the umbrella agreement and it does not define government as being first nations. Their argument is that, under the umbrella agreement, they should be considered governments, and unfortunately, that was not the deal concluded. The umbrella agreement is clear that “government” is defined either as Government of Canada or Government of Yukon. I said that for the purposes of the umbrella agreement, they were not considered and defined as government. That does not mean they are not governments. They are governments but not under the umbrella agreement...”

We have a government that talks about how it supports all government agreements with first nations. I am not a lawyer, but I know there are many fine lawyers in the House who will tell us that we cannot outline every single possible detail in any agreement, and that what a lot of it comes down to is the spirit and intent. From many presentations and court cases, I can tell members that the rights of first nations have been reaffirmed.

I want to refer to a document from January 2007. It is not a legal document but rather an interpretation. It is entitled, “Recognition and Implementation of First Nation Governments”. This was put out by the Assembly of First Nations. Under “3.3 Core Functions of First Nation Governments”, it states:

The United Nations Development Programme views “capable government” as a precondition to development. Governments are the primary vehicles for promoting social, cultural, and economic development within a society. A capable government must be the one that makes decisions affecting its citizens. A government works best when it is close to those it governs.

It goes on to say:

Communities need to be able to govern themselves with real authorities and jurisdiction. We have governed ourselves effectively in the past and continue to do so despite external impositions like the Indian Act....All regions agreed that First Nation governments have the inherent responsibility and jurisdictions to legislate on those areas that affect their communities.

Surely the changes that are proposed in Bill S-6 would fundamentally affect economic development, the environment that Yukon first nations live in, and their way of life. If that does not meet the test of what should be considered a government-to-government relationship, I do not know what does.

It is not just first nations who are opposing this legislation. I have a number of letters here, which I unfortunately will run out of time reading into the record, but I will quote a few to give members a sense of their flavour.

The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon wrote to the member of Parliament for Yukon stating the following:

On behalf of the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, I am writing to express our support for the Council of Yukon First Nations' opposition to particular amendments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act...by the Government of Canada, through Bill S-6. We believe that these changes will have a negative impact on the tourism industry, and for Yukoners overall.

In conclusion, the TIA states:

TIA Yukon asserts that taking land use planning decisions away from the Territory will ultimately give tourism operators in the Yukon less of a say over land use issues where resource extraction interests conflict with the interests of tourism businesses.

The Casino Mining Corporation wrote to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development stating this:

On behalf of Casino Mining Corporation...I am putting forward our company's concerns regarding the fragility of intergovernmental relations in the Yukon surrounding Bill S-6 and the negative impact this is having on the territory's mineral industry.

It is imperative for Casino that the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act...has the broad support of all governments in order to ensure the confidence of both project proponents and Yukon residents in the YESAA process and to facilitate investment in the territory....

Casino believes that if the YESAA has the full support of all levels of government, it will provide greater certainty for the mineral industry. To this end, we encourage Canada, Yukon, and Yukon First Nation governments to engage, work collaboratively and find a solution to address the outstanding issues within Bill S-6.

In a letter to the member for Yukon, the Wildlife Conservation Society states:

I am writing on behalf of Wildlife Conservation Society Canada...to express opposition to Bill S-6, recently introduced through the Senate of Canada by the federal government.

I have witnessed the implementation of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act...since its inception in 2005, and have been generally impressed by the record of its implementation body....

That is the YESA Board.

• (1305)

It continues:

Bill S-6 proposes various amendments to the YESAA that will undermine the independence and integrity of the environmental impact assessment process currently administered by YESAB. Therefore the social licence for project approvals that YESAB has gained runs a strong risk of being compromised. Bill S-6 has substantial shortcomings, both in the process by which it has been drafted, and in its content.

The process for developing these amendments and compiling them in draft legislation has been flawed. The original YESAA derives from the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) under which Aboriginal claims for rights and title have been settled in Yukon. A review of YESAA was mandated to occur after 5 years of implementation, and that review began in 2008. The subsequent process has been long and ultimately produced Bill S-6. The major problems with the process have been: (i) a number of issues raised by First Nations up to June 2011 were ignored or overlooked without explanation in the Interim Draft Final Report of the review process released by the federal government (March 2012) and in the Final Review Report (October 2012); (ii) some of the stages of the review process were held in camera so there is a lack of transparency and accountability to all the negotiating parties and to the public; (iii) certain stakeholders, notably the non-renewable resource extraction industries, participated in the review process in camera; (iv) Bill S-6 has been introduced by your government without the endorsement of Yukon First Nations which makes it contrary to the spirit and intent of the UFA. In sum, the consultation process has lacked transparency, appears biased, and has not addressed First Nations' concerns which are of equal validity to those of Canada or Yukon in a government-to-government agreement such as the UFA.

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There are also reasons for concern about the content of Bill S-6, and I highlight three. First, the Bill provides the option for the federal government (Canada), or by delegation the Yukon Territorial government, to impose policy direction on the Yukon Environmental and Socioeconomic Assessment Board (YESAB). This undermines a stated purpose of YESAA (5, 2(a)) which is to produce a "neutrally-conducted assessment process" at arm's length from government. The existing YESAA already allows the Yukon Territorial government, through the Executive Council Office, the power to accept or reject YESAB recommendations. There is no need, in practical or moral terms, to further remove power and influence from YESAB and place it unilaterally in the hands of one or other government. Doing so goes against the spirit and intent of the UFA and the First Nations' final agreements.

Second, Bill S-6 imposes specific timelines on YESAB for project review. As a result, complex projects will receive relatively cursory review because of a rushed process. It is unclear why this would be needed other than perhaps that the YESAB review process in operation before Bill S-6 has come under criticism from the mining industry when YESAB requests additional information during the process. Speaking from the perspective of a biologist who is aware of ecological impacts brought about by mining operations, this is not a reflection of a faulty review process, but a reflection of inadequate preparation by industry and its consultants. In other words, there is a strong argument to be made that YESAB's reviews have been working well by uncovering poor planning and preparation by project proponents.

Finally, as I mentioned, they also raise the following concern:

Bill S-6 removes the need for any YESAB review of project amendments or renewals, unless there are "significant changes".

A number of bodies have pointed out the very serious concern that this piece of legislation does not define what significant changes are.

There are other organizations, including the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and the Yukon chapter of CPAWS, who have also raised very serious objections with regard to the independence and impartiality of the development assessment process. Generally, they are calling on the government to pull this bill and to work with Yukon first nations to make sure that the bill reflects both the spirit and intent of the Umbrella Final Agreement, and the spirit and intent of government-to-government relationships, which would include Yukon first nations.

Given the number of objections that have been raised by Yukoners, including industry and non-governmental organizations, I would urge this government to take a step back and look at the four key areas where there are very serious objections.

• (1310)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke quite often about the spirit and intent of the Umbrella Final Agreement. What we have done with the bill is actually respect the text of it. She spoke about a perceived insult that was reported in the news, and which she did bring up yesterday at committee, where the minister simply pointed to page 4 of the umbrella agreement, which says the following in the definition section:

"Government" means Canada or the Yukon, or both, depending upon which government or governments have responsibility, from time to time, for the matter in question.

This is not something we have made up. This is not something that has been pulled out of thin air. This is certainly not an insult. This is a definition in the Umbrella Final Agreement, Council for Yukon Indians, which this legislation certainly respects, and it certainly allows for the delegation of federal powers. It allows for policy direction. It allows for all four amendments that have supposedly invoked the ire of the CYI.

I wonder if the member could speak specifically to what sections of the Umbrella Final Agreement have been violated by Bill S-6, not the spirit and intent, but the text itself, because that is what we deal with here as lawmakers. We respect final agreements and the law, and I would like her to point out where it has been violated.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I did address that in my speech and acknowledge that the minister had quoted that. He did not quote a specific section, but he indicated that the Umbrella Final Agreement talked about the Government of Canada and Yukon.

I do not believe we can just brush away the spirit and intent. If we are to move toward reconciliation in this country, then first nations must be recognized as an order of government. When we are putting forward legislation that would have a profound impact on first nations' ability to manage their territories, then we need to have them at the table and not just brush them aside, which the government is attempting to do.

The parliamentary secretary can say that it is not about spirit and intent but about what is written right here, but the Conservatives are the ones who signed on to the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which acknowledges that first nations have a right to make decisions about matters, legislative decisions and other matters, that directly affect their ability to govern their communities.

I would argue that Bill S-6 directly affects their ability to govern their communities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this bill stinks of paternalism. I have noticed that many of the Conservatives' first nations bills have had the same stink, especially when they have to do with first nations women.

Has my colleague noticed this as well?

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, for the last many years, from 2006 actually, we have continually seen legislation come forward that does not reflect, in many of our views, at least on the New Democrat side of the House, the duty to consult.

The government loves to trot out the fact that it has had eight meetings talking to people. What it fails to address is the fact that consultation actually should be a circular process. We provide information, we provide resources, we sit down with people, we hear what they have to say, and then we actually include them in working toward a solution where there were differences. It is the part where we include people toward working toward solutions where there are differences that the government consistently fails, whether it is on matrimonial real property, water, or education. Whatever legislation has come before the House to which first nations have objected, the government has failed to work to resolve those objections.

I would agree with the member for Hochelaga that it is a very paternalistic approach to working with first nations.

Government Orders

• (1315)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of consultation, I think the member is correct. She has pointed out the number of meetings that we held and the fact that over \$98,000 was provided to the first nations in question to debate these very specific four points that were not included in the five-year review.

What would the member suggest when there really are two positions that are not going to change and over which there is disagreement? Does the duty to consult fail when the government does not accommodate differences every time? There certainly has to be a test where there is consultation, but it does not always require accommodation.

What does the hon. member think should be done when there are entrenched positions that are mutually opposed? Does she simply suggest that the government knuckle under every time, or how do we resolve that when the positions are entrenched?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I used the words “knuckle under”. What I did say was that, in a respectful relationship, one tries to work toward a solution.

In my speech, I talked about the parts that are the sticking points that are not part of that five-year review process. From the Yukon first nations' perspective, some of their members were not even provided with copies of the documents that were under review at a meeting back in February 2014.

If we are going to have a complete consultation process, we have to allow enough time and provide people with the documentation to allow them to review it.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I remind the parliamentary secretary that in the Haida case, which was 10 years ago now, the Supreme Court indicated that the broad spectrum of consultation includes the full consent of the first nations on important issues. I think that the environment is most definitely an important issue to the first nations. I simply want to remind the parliamentary secretary of that.

I have a very simple question for my colleague. I have noticed a common thread in all of the government's actions since it got a majority in 2011. It has been weakening all of the environmental assessment processes to make it easier to develop natural resources. That is unfair to many people—the first nations, of course, but also people who live in the north. They need to be involved in the decisions that affect them, especially when it comes to the environment.

My colleague mentioned a number of important stakeholders in this process, such as the tourism association and mining companies. Are there any others she could mention to show that the first nations are not the only ones who are upset here, but that there are many people living in the north who care about the environment and the economy?

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I want to touch for one moment on the issue around accommodation. The member cited the Haida case from a number of years ago. However, we also had a recent

court decision, the Tsilhqot'in decision, which talked about not only consultation but consent. Consent is missing in Bill S-6. There is no consent to the changes that would be made.

With regard to the environment, there are mining companies that have raised objections, environmental organizations, and tourism organizations. It sounds to me as if there are a number of Yukoners who are really concerned about protecting the wonderful, amazing environment up in Yukon. People want economic development, but they want it done responsibly and sustainably.

What the bill would do is create more uncertainty. It would not protect the environment and it would create uncertainty for some of these projects.

First nations have already indicated that, if the government is not willing to sit down with them and talk about accommodation and consent, this will end up in court, and that would not provide certainty in terms of development of a variety of projects.

• (1320)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to speak to Bill S-6, a bill from the Senate, an act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act.

I oppose this legislation. I think it is deeply flawed. I would love to hear from the member for Yukon in the House. I do not see him anywhere.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Unless the member thinks we should amend the rules so the member for Yukon can give two speeches at the same stage, perhaps he should stick to order and not point out the presence or absence of a member. Perhaps he could check back in *Hansard*, where he can read the speech of the member for Yukon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his intervention. Members may know that, in fact, the Standing Orders do indicate that members should avoid any reference to the presence or absence of members in the House. That is an area of speech we tend to stay away from.

In this case, the hon. parliamentary secretary makes a valid point. Therefore, I would encourage the hon. member to perhaps rephrase that comment and perhaps avoid it in future.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I will take your good counsel on this matter.

To further debate on this bill, it is very important that the government understand that environmental protection is a fundamental obligation of this House. We need to ensure that our environment is going to be there for future generations. We all want to benefit from its wealth, from the bounty it brings us, but we need to do it in full consultation and full agreement with the people who live on those lands.

Government Orders

The current government has had extreme difficulty in being able to bring forward legislation that brings this consultation process to the fore. We need to recall previous bills that this side of the House certainly had a lot of difficulty with, such as Bill C-38, which gutted environmental protections in this country. We see with this bill that we are again going in the same direction.

Environmental protection is an obligation; it is a duty on our part. We want to ensure that resources remain. We want to ensure that people can continue to benefit from the wealth that this land brings us. It is not simply a theoretical question. In my riding, when we speak to environmental protection, we are talking about the fundamental industries that make my riding economically viable: the forestry industry, the fishing industry, the mining industry. We need those environmental protections so that future generations can exploit those resources and, unfortunately, Bill C-38 scrapped those.

With Bill S-6, we have a situation where those who live in Yukon have challenged this legislation insofar as they have not been consulted adequately. In fact, there have been threats of legal action against this bill. I sometimes wonder if the current government is not simply here to ensure that lawyers have as much work as possible challenging its bills before the courts. Let us remember that the Supreme Court, over and over again, has identified that the duty to consult is not a duty to be trifled with.

My colleague recently mentioned that the courts, in June of this year, came up with even stronger language. The court has made it clear that the government not only has a duty to consult but has a duty to accommodate. The duty increases with the responsibility and the rights of first nations on their land. In the case of this bill, we have a number of first nations representatives who have told us precisely why they do not agree with this bill.

A few representatives of first nations have been very clear. I will start with Mary Jane Jim, councillor from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. She has already testified and has said very clearly that in her opinion there are concerns regarding Bill S-6. They are subject to the matters raised during the five-year review. It is her view that Yukon environmental assessments have been operating effectively and efficiently since 2003, but that Bill S-6 would amend this process so that the proposed Bill S-6 would breach the crown's duty to consult and accommodate with respect to the proposed changes to YESAA.

Mary Jane Jim goes on to point out that:

The CYFN and Yukon First Nations assert that the federal government would breach its constitutional duty to uphold the honour of the Crown when it proceeded unilaterally with amendments to the YESAA. These are matters that were not discussed or raised during the five-year review or, in the case of the amendment that would create exemptions for project renewals and changes, contradict agreements reached during the five-year review.

This is the opinion of one person, a representative of first nations. I am going to bring more testimony that was brought to the fore already, to the other House.

Let us be clear. The representatives of first nations are dissatisfied with this bill. This bill does not go far enough in consulting first nations, nor does it go far enough in protecting the environment. It was done in a secretive way. There are a number of organizations that feel that the five-year review process was not respected and they

were not allowed the input not only that they were expecting but also that we are duty-bound to supply.

● (1325)

The Nunavut Water Board, for instance, has a number of concerns. It has already brought forward possible amendments; one of them being the question of anticipated duration, which Mary Jane Jim, the councillor from the first nations, has already brought forward in the testimony I just cited. The question of the anticipated duration of appurtenant undertaking is a very ambiguous statement.

The question from the board's perspective is that there is an absence of regulatory definition of what is an anticipated duration, what it means, and it seems to create confusion regarding enforcement. What is an anticipated duration of any project? One would have a hard time defining that from the get-go.

The difficulty is that, if there had been an adequate process of consultation, maybe these issues would have been addressed in the first place.

The problem, again, with the current government is that it is in a terrible hurry to adopt legislation, it does not take the time to consult, and it comes up with legislation that is often flawed, forcing many organizations to bring legislation to tribunals and, ultimately, possibly even the Supreme Court—a very costly, time-consuming undertaking—when in fact it would have been simpler and much more effective if the consultation had been done properly in the first place.

I would like to comment on an issue that the member for Hochelaga also brought forward, that there seems to be a strong sense, a strong flavour of paternalism in the way we deal with first nations, in the way we deal with our territories. When we do not have adequate consultation, the solutions are made in Ottawa and imposed upon people in the north.

Why would we not take the time to bring their concerns forward and have them properly addressed and accommodated for?

The consultation process is not simply a theory where we put up a website and wait for comments to come in. There is an obligation to bring those concerns forward, to address them, and to accommodate them to the extent we are legally obligated, and more. The obligation here is to respect first nations' rights and respect our environment in the long term.

Unfortunately, we seem to making legislation that brings the possibility of exploiting our natural resources at the first possible occasion and in the quickest way to make a buck. However, that is not a long-term view. That is a view that can only bring us forward for a few months, for a few years, but in the long run, we all end up losers in that process.

We should really be looking at why we put in the YESAA in the first place. The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board has a reason to exist and it was done through partnership. We brought this legislation forward in partnership with our first nations. We brought it forward in partnership with those who live in Yukon.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, in this particular case, we have decided that it is much more efficient—and it is certainly not my view, but it seems to be the view of the current government—to just bring down legislation as fast as possible, to use the language of the parliamentary secretary, to “knuckle under”, if we do not allow the process to just be steamrolled forward.

I do not see this as a confrontation. “Knuckle under” sounds awfully violent to me. In fact, we should be looking at a process that is conciliatory, a process that is understanding of people's concerns and that takes the time that it takes to bring legislation that upholds our rights and obligations.

There should not be a massive hurry to exploit our resources. They are not going anywhere. We need to be doing this carefully. We need to be doing this properly. We can only extract a resource once. We cannot extract it over and over again. Let us do it properly, let us do it right, and let us do in full respect of our first nations.

When it comes to what we should be doing, we should have a broad public consultation process, not a process that seems to breach the five-year review that we are legally obligated to bring forward. The YESAA should be operating effectively and efficiently, but at this point it does not seem that the amendments that are being brought forward by this bill would support the process that was put in, in the first place.

When it comes to our NDP leader from Yukon, Ms Liz Hanson, she made a very good point at the Yukon legislature, I thought, where we need a relationship built upon dialogue and respect.

● (1330)

She pointed out that 11 years ago, devolution gave the Yukon government province-like powers for land and resource management, that this was an important step in Yukon's history and that it was crucial to Yukon's ability to determine its own future, one that was grounded in respectful relationships among Yukon first nation governments and the Yukon government.

With the proposed changes that the YESAA brought forward, there was a made in Yukon solution for a made in Yukon economy. It was a made in Yukon proposal that was adopted by those who lived in Yukon. Today we have a relationship that does not seem to be based on dialogue and respect. It seems that we are trying to barrel it through.

There was an editorial in *Yukon News* in June, 2014, around the same time the Supreme Court came down with the ruling that amplified our duties and obligations to first nations. I would like to quote this editorial from *Yukon News* on June 13. It said:

A long list of people deserve raspberries for this needlessly shady behaviour. At the top of the naughty list are Senator Daniel Lang and [the member for Yukon], who are supposed to ensure that the interests of Yukoners are represented in Ottawa. Instead, they've kept the public out of the loop, other than [the member for Yukon] uttering vague generalities about the forthcoming changes without offering any meaningful specifics.

The newspaper goes on to say, “Shame on them.”

I have difficulty with a process that does not seem to have widespread support and that does not seem to reflect the obligation of consultation.

Let us go back to some discussions that were brought forward by the leader of the Council of Yukon First Nations. Ruth Massie, Grand Chief, pointed out, “The Council of Yukon First Nations reiterates that the five-year review has not been completed.” Are we respecting our terms, agreements and the obligations? According to the Council of Yukon First Nations, the answer to that is a clear no.

There are three issues that Yukon first nations say remain outstanding. It is worth mentioning what they are.

The first is:

Future Review: It is expected that the YESAA process will require adjustments to deal with future circumstances and ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Some provisions have not been operational. Therefore, it would be prudent for the parties to commit to undertake another review of the YESAA process in the future.

We need to have continuous reviews and input to ensure our legislation stands up. We need adequate funding for Yukon first nations. This is something we have heard frequently in the House. The government seems to impose obligations on first nations, especially lately. It seems to be imposing obligations that are very onerous. They are obligations that we do not even impose upon ourselves, yet we do not give the first nations the capacity to meet them effectively.

Going back to the testimony that was brought forward by the Council of Yukon First Nations, it says:

If the YESAA process is to operate effectively and efficiently, Yukon First Nations must have the resources to fulfill their duties and participate fully in the assessment of projects within their respective traditional territories. Due to the significant increase in the number, scale and complexity of projects proposed in certain areas of the Yukon Territory, this issue has been raised repeatedly by the Council of Yukon First Nations.

The third point that the Council of Yukon First Nations wish to underline and address as a strong objection to the bill is the engagement with affected Yukon first nations. It said:

The CYFN has proposed that a territorial or federal decision body must engage with the Yukon First Nation when it is considering recommendations from the executive committee or a designated office with respect to projects that may affect its Aboriginal treaty rights, titles and interests. This engagement must take place prior to the issuance of a decision document.

This is probably the one that is of greatest concern to me. I do not understand, knowing what the Supreme Court has said over and over again about our duty to consult and to accommodate, how it is possible that first nations are coming back and saying, yet again, that we should be consulting with them before we impose a decision upon them.

● (1335)

I thought that was made clear by the Supreme Court of Canada. I thought the government actually listened to the laws of this land. We are certainly very busy legislating in this place, but we do not seem to be taking the time to read in this place.

Government Orders

I would really enjoy hearing from government members as to why first nations of our country continuously repeat that they are not being heard. The consultation process is clearly inadequate. From the readings I make of the Supreme Court of Canada rulings, it agrees with first nations on this point. They simply are not being heard as far as our obligations toward them is concerned. First nations have the right to be heard and they have the right to expect that we will accommodate them. Unfortunately, we seem to be steamrolling decisions that do not accommodate them, making it possible for companies to come in and exploit the resources regardless of local concerns.

It is a poison chalice when companies come in and try to exploit a resource without adequate consultation and without adequate local support. Ultimately, the process becomes flawed and those companies must expend enormous resources to backpedal in order to compensate for the lack of work that was done by the government with its legislation. We should not be imposing that kind of burden on our resource companies. We should help them to adequately, properly and respectfully exploit our resources so that long-term benefits can be had by all.

There is no reason why we all cannot benefit from our resources, but unfortunately the Conservative government insists that it knows better than anyone else and steamrolls legislation through at all costs and with all speed. The fact that today two motions were brought to this place regarding time allocation speaks to the fact that the government just simply does not want to take the time to listen.

Bill S-6 proposes amendments that were not even discussed with the Council of Yukon First Nations. This is reason for deep concern. How is it possible that the Council of Yukon First Nations was not consulted regarding the modifications? The Conservatives say that they consulted hundreds of people in Yukon regarding this legislation, and I am happy they have.

However, the Conservatives seem to have side-stepped consultation when it comes to representatives of first nations. I do not understand their reasoning for this. If the Council of Yukon First Nations is saying that it is not being heard, then I suspect this bill is probably yet another one that will be brought before the courts because of its inadequate consultation process. Ultimately, bad consultation means bad legislation. We are not going to have the proper safeguards in place and we are not going to see the benefits being shared as they should.

We should stop being paternalistic in this place. Yukon has the right to govern itself. We have had that discussion in the House. There seems to be agreement in principle that Yukon should have much more autonomy than it has now. Unfortunately, with Bill S-6, we seem to be turning the clock back to a process where the House will decide for first nations and for Yukoners what is best for them. I do not agree with that process.

It is important that we take time to reflect on this legislation. I would like to hear from the parliamentary secretary. I would like to hear from all members of the House. I would especially like to hear any comments that the member for Yukon might have regarding the legislation.

• (1340)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my earlier point of order, the member for Yukon has already spoken to the bill during this stage, so he cannot speak again. The member will need to go back and read his remarks in *Hansard*.

The member should also read the Supreme Court's views on consultation. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that the government has a duty to consult and where appropriate, accommodate. The NDP does not seem to like the part that says "where appropriate".

The assertion that the CYFN was not consulted on these four issues is demonstrably false. The council received close to \$100,000 as reimbursement for the costs associated with the consultation. The grand chief of the CYFN in her testimony before the Senate said, "Although we have been consulted several times...we...have been accommodated". There absolutely has been consultation.

The Supreme Court has made it clear that there is a duty to consult and where appropriate, where necessary, accommodate. The member is a lawyer. The importance of those words cannot be understated.

Would he not agree that there is a duty to consult, but where appropriate, accommodate? It is not an absolute duty to accommodate.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, that is a reasonable question. That question has been brought to the Supreme Court and other court levels on many occasions. It is certainly an evolving process, but the evolving process is pointing in the direction that we need to be much more forceful and forthcoming in our consultation in order to determine the degree of accommodation that must be had.

I would like to point out that the Council of Yukon First Nations was very clear in its testimony at the Senate. When it came to consultation, Ruth Massie, Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, said that Bill S-6 proposed amendments that were not discussed by the Council of Yukon First Nations. It might have been consulted on some aspects, but it was clearly not consulted on others. Therefore, it is pretty hard to determine the level of accommodation if the consultation never happened in the first place.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

What does he think of the way such bills are being introduced? Common sense would suggest that there should be a consensus among the parties before a bill is introduced in Parliament. Had there been discussions, I am sure that there would have been an even greater chance of unanimity among all of the parties in the House.

Does he think that would be the right way to do things given that the Conservatives did the opposite in this particular case? There is no consensus on the bill they introduced, not even within the community it will affect.

Does my colleague think it would be better to turn things around and try to achieve consensus before introducing bills?

Government Orders

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

This bill has triggered a debate that should have been held in Yukon long before it reached the House. The government should have taken the time to hold consultations. Unfortunately, this is not the first time the government has chosen this approach. The government has invoked closure 84 times to limit the time we have to debate bills in the House. That is what it is doing on the ground too: limiting consultation with the first nations and people.

This government has made it very hard to achieve consensus or gain the support of community groups and organizations. Social acceptance is just not in the picture. That is a big problem.

We cannot continue to have a government that disregards its duty to help people and protect our rights. This government is very ideological and does whatever it wants. Unfortunately, that means that, sooner or later, many of these laws will be challenged in the courts and overturned. Then we will have to start all over again. What a waste.

I would sure like to know why the government wants to hand so much money over to lawyers.

● (1345)

[English]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe I heard the member say that there was no support for this bill. I would like to read some quotes from the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources by a few witnesses who appeared.

Samson Hartland, the executive director of the Yukon Chamber of Mines, indicates the organization is supportive of the bill.

Darrell Pasloski, the premier of Yukon, stated:

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, I believe that the changes to this legislation that Canada has proposed will ensure that Yukon continues to be a progressive and responsible place to invest and to do business, and even a better place to live, raise a family and make a living.

Cathy Towtongie, president of the Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., NTI, has no objections to the modest changes.

Why does the member discount those witnesses at committee and only cites the ones who fit the very narrow view of the bill by the NDP?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, first, I do not think that the bill has no support. It is clear that if the government brought it forward, at least the government must support this bill, so I will give him that.

If there was a misunderstanding as to that, either I misspoke or he misheard. Either way, the limited support that this bill has will certainly please those it was drafted for. However, regrettably, the first nations have not been properly consulted, as is clear in the testimony. This House has a duty, an obligation to address those concerns, and in this bill, that duty has simply not been reflected.

The member may have a point that some people have been sufficiently addressed and may actually benefit from this bill, and more power to them. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has made the

legal obligations clear and has stressed them on so many occasions on so many challenges that were brought to its attention. I do not understand why the government has not taken the time to reflect on those decisions of the Supreme Court and wonder if this bill is not going to go down that same path and go down in flames.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech the member was talking about the idea of consultation. At the committee stage we get a sense of the lack of consultation, but we have also heard about the lack of consultation directly, in particular from up north.

We want to be able to reach out to our first nations, our aboriginal peoples, and we should be developing legislation that at least in part takes into consideration many of the leaders of the north. This appears to have not been the case. There does not seem to be a consensus.

The member has pointed out that some factions may be somewhat supportive, but the overwhelming feeling seems to be that the government has not gotten it right. As a result, we should be looking at not supporting the bill.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member brings a fair point to this place.

If this House is going to take its responsibilities seriously, I would encourage all members to start reading the rulings of the Supreme Court that have, over time, become ever more forceful as to what the duty to consult and to accommodate looks like.

I believe the Supreme Court is showing a degree of frustration with this place because we simply are not taking that responsibility seriously. I believe the first nations are living through that frustration. We can see it in their testimony and we can see it in the disagreements that they have with the legislation brought to this place.

We need to take this duty to consult much more seriously. Unfortunately, an ideological government is badly placed to be able to take that role seriously. I think first nations would be much better off with a change in government, and I am looking forward to 2015.

● (1350)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Drummond to resume debate, I must inform him that I will have to interrupt him at approximately 2 p.m., when statements by members will begin. As usual, I will indicate when he has one minute left before members' statements are to begin.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to once again defend the interests of my constituents in Drummond, and across Canada, regarding the environment. It is a topic that is very important to me and to them as well.

I am rising to speak to Bill S-6, An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act.

Government Orders

To begin, I would like to say that we will be opposing this bill at every stage, as my NDP colleagues have articulated so well already. This bill is poorly put together, it is biased in terms of consultations and it does not meet the needs of Yukoners. However, it is a very important piece of legislation, and I think Yukoners will keep that in mind during the next election.

Looking carefully at the bill, it is clear that it will dismantle the entire environmental assessment process. I will explain that a bit later. However, it is very concerning, once again. The Conservatives have a bad reputation when it comes to the environment, and unfortunately this is no different. They are systematically dismantling our environmental protections.

As I was saying, Yukon first nations were not adequately consulted, as my colleague from Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine clearly explained. There are major gaps in this regard. The people of Yukon are upset about this bill.

This bill is very troubling because it will allow the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to give binding policy direction to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board.

In other words, we are handing the minister every opportunity to set policy direction for the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. We know about all the mishaps that have occurred over the past few years when it comes to environmental assessments and diminished environmental protections. That is not all.

As if that were not enough, this bill will also establish mandatory maximum timelines for the assessments and allow the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to download his responsibility. What is more, it will be possible to create broad exemptions in terms of enforcement of the law and project renewals. We can just imagine all the flaws in this bill.

Since we are talking about the environment, this week marks the beginning of the UN climate change conference in Lima, Peru. This has come up a lot in the House of Commons, including during question period, because we want to show that the Conservative government is weakening environmental protections. It is definitely not doing its job in this area.

Furthermore, ever since this government came to power, opposition members have no longer been included in Canadian delegations. The Conservatives seem to believe that there is only one vision of Canada—theirs.

Of course, that vision does not represent all Canadians; quite the contrary. As everyone knows, only 40% of Canadians voted for this government. However, because of the imbalance in our democratic system, that equals 55% of members, but we plan to correct that in the next election.

It is also important to understand that we asked the Minister of the Environment to hold some information sessions so that people could better understand this government's position since it withdrew from the Kyoto protocol, but to no avail.

There was an announcement of \$300 million—

• (1355)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I was in the House the other day when the NDP was repeatedly encouraging members to stick to the subject at hand. We are on Bill S-6. I know the member only has a few minutes, but perhaps he could stick to the actual bill and not stray into other areas that he may be concerned about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I appreciate the intervention by the parliamentary secretary. I note that the hon. member for Drummond is on a topic that may in fact be related to the question at hand. I am sure that in the time provided to him, he will surely get around to how his arguments pertain to the question before the House.

The hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I was in fact talking about the legislation with regard to environmental problems. Unfortunately, the government is considering giving the minister all the power. Indeed, this bill gives the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development certain powers, including the power to establish general standards for environmental assessments and the power to limit them.

Can we trust this government when it comes to the environment? No, because it has made so many cuts that affect the environment. It has laid off 2,000 environmental scientists; it closed 200 scientific research centres; it cancelled 492 environmental impact assessments; it closed oil spill response stations in northern British Columbia; it closed seven out of 11 Fisheries and Oceans Canada libraries; and it has made cuts to research institutes. I could go on and on about this government's abuses.

Bill S-6 continues the trend the Conservative government has established since coming to power. It attacks science and environmental assessments and continues to tear down the basis for environmental protection. That is truly unfortunate. Therefore, we will oppose this bill, which does not have the support of the people of Yukon, aboriginal peoples or Canadians in general.

This bill has shown that this is an issue of concern to many people. I would have liked to quote the testimony of Ruth Massie, the grand chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, but my time is up. In short, the fact that the Conservatives are again attacking the environment is a problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Drummond will have 12 minutes left when the House resumes debate on this motion.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[Translation]***VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for 25 years Quebec has been nursing a wound that will not heal and has been in perpetual mourning.

Today, we grieve for the 14 victims of the École Polytechnique massacre as though the tragedy just happened. We feel the same sadness and shame that we felt 25 years ago for letting such a tragedy take place in Canada.

That is why, since that day, Quebeckers have been staunch advocates for gender equality. That is also why there is strong support among Quebeckers for gun control.

Let us work together to prevent a tragedy like the December 6, 1989, massacre from ever happening again. Let there never be another École Polytechnique.

* * *

● (1400)

*[English]***PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY IN CANADA**

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tonight Casa dos Acores of Ontario will host a very special visit from His Excellency Dr. Vasco Cordeiro, President of the government of Azores in Portugal. The majority of Canada's 400,000 Luso-Canadians come from the nine beautiful islands that make up the Azores, and the visit of Dr. Cordeiro gives us an opportunity to reflect on this remarkable community.

What started as a small group of Portuguese workers who first arrived here in the early 1950s has blossomed into one of Canada's most influential communities, contributing greatly to Toronto's reputation as a global city and sowing the seeds for the current generation of Luso-Canadians, who are leaders in every single facet of Canadian society. Portuguese influence in Canada dates back to the 16th century; in fact, Labrador was named after the Portuguese explorer Lavrador. However, perhaps most important, Luso-Canadians have strengthened the institutions and values that define who we are as a country: hard work, caring for one another, and building a society that is fair and equal for all.

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ROMANIA

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Canadians of Romanian descent on the 96th anniversary of the national day of Romania. In December 1989, many Romanians had the courage to fight for freedom, and more than 1,000 of them paid with their lives. Their sacrifice made today's Romania possible. Romania is now in the European Union and is a NATO member with an unwavering commitment to democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

This year the anniversary has a particular significance, since it marks 95 years of diplomatic relations between Canada and Romania, 25 years from the fall of Communism, and 10 years since

Romania's membership in NATO. Romania was able not only to strengthen its security but also to contribute to a co-operative endeavour aiming to secure the entire Euro-Atlantic region in a challenging security landscape.

I invite all hon. members to join me in congratulating Romania for 96 years of national unity and 25 years of democracy and progress. God bless Canada and Romania.

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ST. MARY'S POLISH CHURCH

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, November 29, fire destroyed St. Mary's Polish Church in Whitney Pier. A strong, proud, and resilient community in my riding, St. Mary's was the only Polish parish church in Atlantic Canada. It was built by Polish immigrants who came to the city to work in a new steel plant. Just last year, St. Mary's celebrated its 100th anniversary, after 100 years of providing spiritual guidance and support not only to the community of Whitney Pier but all over Cape Breton.

This past summer I had the opportunity to attend a fundraiser at the community hall for a roof, and I saw first-hand the spirit and success of that community. Parish council president Tom Urbaniak stated, "There's a resilience in the spirit of the Polish Cape Bretoners, and in the spirit of the larger community."

I rise today to recognize St. Mary's and its parishioners for their spirit and faith, which is very much alive as they persevere during this very difficult time.

* * *

ELGIN MILITARY MUSEUM

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Elgin Military Museum in my riding, including the HMCS *Ojibwa*, was named recipient of the Brewster Travel Canada Innovator of the Year award in the Canadian tourism awards. I was honoured to attend the awards ceremony and join Ian Raven from my constituency on stage as he accepted this prestigious award.

The HMCS *Ojibwa* is a retired Cold War submarine that, with the help of our government and through the hard work of many, was brought to Port Burwell, Ontario. Since June 2013, the *Ojibwa* has welcomed close to 50,000 visitors. I am proud, along with my colleagues the Minister of Justice and the Minister of State for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), to have been a part of bringing HMCS *Ojibwa* to the riding.

I invite all to stop by to see this incredible museum full of naval history the next time their travels bring them to the great riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London.

*Statements by Members***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, on his agreement with the People's Republic of China on a set of measures to support the increased use of the renminbi, which is the Chinese dollar, in trade, commerce, and investment between our two countries. China is Canada's second-largest trading partner, and trade between our two countries totals \$73 billion.

With North America's first offshore RMB centre established in Canada, this agreement will facilitate the stable and healthy development of the RMB market in Canada, which facilitates direct trade between Canada and China without having to first convert to the U.S. dollar, saving 6% on every single transaction.

As part of this agreement, Chinese regulators will grant an initial 50 billion yuan quota of investment to Canadian financial institutions under the RMB qualified foreign institutional investor program. As Canada is the first country in the Americas to have an RMB clearing bank designated in its jurisdiction, I am proud to be a member of this government as it does its part in accelerating the flow of trade and investment between Canada and China.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

ANDRÉ LAURIN

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Quebec lost a great man with the passing of André Laurin. Mr. Laurin, a resident of Quebec City, was an ardent defender of consumer rights. His actions led to the creation of family finance co-operatives, the Quebec Consumer Protection Act and legal aid.

Mr. Laurin realized a long time ago that there was a need to address the problems of debt and poverty and to help families in crisis. That is why he chose to help workers and poor people take control of their financial situation. He was committed to various causes, which led to the creation of car insurance and the Caisse d'économie solidaire de Québec. He was also very involved in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

He received Quebec's Prix de la justice award in 2009 and was made a knight of the Ordre national du Québec in 2012.

André Laurin was guided by the fundamental values of justice, sharing of the collective wealth and co-operation. We sincerely thank him for that.

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[English]

BROOKS FESTIVAL OF TREES

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Stampeders have made me and thousands of others just like me very proud fans. They have once again become Canada's Grey Cup champions by defeating the Hamilton Tiger Cats 16-20.

On a more serious note, it is an honour for me to stand in this House to speak about the 20th anniversary of the Brooks Festival of

Trees, which I had the pleasure of attending on Saturday, November 23. Every year for the last 20 years, the Festival of Trees has been one of the main fundraisers for the Brooks and District Diabetes Association.

The Festival of Trees continues to be a place where families can enjoy a holiday celebration, with beautifully decorated Christmas trees, miniature forests, a silent auction, a gingerbread village, Santa's canteen, crafts and gifts, and so much more.

I was proud to attend the emerald gala and auction night, where good times were had by all. The auction went over smoothly, thanks to the talented auctioneer, Huby Kallen.

The generosity of the people of Brooks continues to warm my heart, and I am very proud to represent this community.

* * *

SMART RURAL COMMUNITY SHOWCASE AWARD

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with exciting news out of Huron—Bruce. Local telecommunications company HuronTel has received international recognition with the Smart Rural Community Showcase Award.

This prestigious award is handed out by the Rural Broadband Association, and I am happy to announce that HuronTel was the only company outside of the United States to receive the award.

HuronTel was judged against dozens of other companies and was chosen on account of its ability to inspire innovation through the deployment of advanced technologies, economic development, education, enhanced health care, government services, security, and energy use. Truly, this company does it all.

HuronTel has been offering telecommunication services to Huron—Bruce since 1911. It currently provides these services to 10,000 homes in midwestern Ontario.

I would like to congratulate HuronTel on winning the Smart Rural Community Showcase Award and thank it for representing not only Huron—Bruce but Canada on the world stage. Here's to another 100 years.

* * *

[Translation]

MAURICIE

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Moisson Mauricie just finished its campaign, and today the media in my riding are holding their charity drive. Tomorrow will be the 56th edition of the Noël du Pauvre telethon. These few events illustrate how great the needs are in my riding, as in many regions across the country.

These three events meet their objectives by appealing to the compassion we all feel as Christmas approaches. However, I want to point out that hundreds of volunteers at these organizations have been working for months to make these events a success and also to bring out unparalleled community spirit.

Statements by Members

These dedicated volunteers embody the Christmas spirit all year long and encourage everyone to keep up the spirit of sharing. I want to express my appreciation and respect for all those who give their all for the well-being of others.

In the spirit of Christmas, let us look not at hands that give or hands that receive, but simply at hands that share.

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[English]

HOCKEY CANADA

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the centennial of Hockey Canada. To mark this important milestone, since last May until next April, Hockey Canada celebrates by hosting events across the country that focus on all that is hockey.

• (1410)

[Translation]

This national celebration commemorates over 100 years of achievements by our country and Canadian hockey players.

[English]

Hockey Canada represents 13 agencies and more than 3,500 minor hockey associations in Canada. Over 635,000 young people, both boys and girls, play hockey and are registered with Hockey Canada.

[Translation]

Some 98,000 coaches, including more than 7,000 women, are involved in Canadian hockey at all levels. More than 32,000 referees and officials are also involved in this sport.

[English]

This government is a proud supporter of Hockey Canada and all that it represents to Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

By the way, congratulations to Daniel Alfredsson for a fine career.

* * *

[Translation]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on December 6, we will commemorate a dark anniversary, the 25th anniversary of the Polytechnique massacre. Despite the years that have passed, this misogynistic act is indelibly etched in our collective memory. We must remember these 14 women and the collateral victims every day.

Remembering motivates us to take meaningful action to prevent such tragedies. We remember so that this will never happen again. We have a duty, as individuals and as a society, to fight to ensure that it will never be easy to buy firearms. Instead, we need to tighten gun control. Some may see this public debate as a political one. However, it is a reminder that these victims did not die in vain.

That is why tomorrow I will be joining a peaceful gathering that has been organized by Carrefour pour elle, in Saint-Bruno—Saint-

Hubert, to educate the public about violence against women, in the hope that such a tragedy will never happen again.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our new family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit will help 100% of families with kids. Families will receive nearly \$2,000 annually per child under the age of six. That is nearly \$12,000 over a child's first six years. It is \$12,000 for mom and dad to spend how they see fit.

The Liberals would reverse our tax cuts so that families like the thousands in the riding of Provencher will have their financial choices ripped out of their hands and put into big government bureaucracy. Only our Conservative government can be trusted to stand up for the interests of families.

* * *

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the first anniversary of the passing of Nelson Mandela, a historic role model in the struggle for freedom.

Indeed, this morning we held an all-party press conference, together with the Minister of Justice, to raise the cases of three political prisoners, each of whom embodies Mandela's courage and commitment and all of whom are heroic role models in their own right.

They include Venezuelan opposition leader Leopoldo López, imprisoned for his advocacy of democratic reform; Mauritanian anti-slavery leader Biram Dah Abeid, imprisoned in a country that has the largest percentage of enslaved people in the world; and Iranian Shiite cleric Ayatollah Boroujerdi, who has been languishing in prison for eight years for advocating the separation of religion and state.

Mandela's emergence after 28 years in a South African prison is an enduring source of inspiration and hope, demonstrating the transformative impact of freeing political prisoners.

I invite colleagues in the House to join me in calling for the release of these three political prisoners to let them know that they are not alone, that we stand in solidarity with them, and that their cause is our cause: the cause of freedom.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our family tax cut will benefit every family with kids by an average of \$1,100 per year. Soon families in my riding of Fort McMurray—Athabasca will receive nearly \$2,000 annually per child under age six. When it is added up, a family with five children will receive nearly \$60,000 by the time all the children have turned six years old.

However, the Liberal leader announced he wants to take that money away from families. We will never let this happen.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the support last night from Green Party MPs and from Independents such as the member for Edmonton—St. Albert for the NDP proposal on mixed proportional representation. We also received the support of 16 members of the Liberal caucus, and I thank them too. I know there are many Liberal supporters across the country who support real electoral reform.

However, it seems they still cannot count on the support of their leader. The member for Papineau has made his dislike of proportional representation known on several occasions. During the Liberal leadership race, he told a number of people attending why he did not support proportional representation, even though a substantial majority of Canadians do. Mischaracterizing proportional representation, he said, "...too many people don't understand the polarization and the micro-issues that come through proportional representation."

It is not Canadians who are wrong in their support for proportional representation; it is the leader of the Liberal Party who is wrong in his support for the continuation of winner-take-all politics.

* * *

•(1415)

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since introducing our family tax cut, an average of \$1,100 in savings will be put back into the pockets of every Canadian family with children.

The new family tax cut gives the majority of benefits to low- and middle-income families. A single mother with two kids earning \$30,000 would benefit by \$1,500 a year. We want families like the Davies, the Crawfords, and the Hughes to benefit and be more prosperous, not government.

Our plan helps 100% of families with kids, but the NDP plan only helps 10%. Only our Conservative government can be trusted to stand up for Canadian families.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 1,000 professionals responsible for helping our veterans have lost their jobs. That is one of every four employees. Nine regional offices have been closed, and the Prime Minister says that they are just bureaucrats. Such disdain for our public servants and our veterans, who are not getting the services they need.

Instead of laying off the public servants who help our veterans, will the Prime Minister consider getting rid of the minister who has done nothing for veterans?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to ensure that we have the right people in the right locations to assist our veterans and their

Oral Questions

families. We have invested in new front-line medical facilities for Canadian veterans and their families. We have been opening military family resource centres in seven locations across the country for medically releasing veterans and their families. We will continue to make improvements while the opposition opposes all these measures.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP are fighting for veterans. The Conservatives are fighting against them, even in the courts.

The Conservatives have told the courts that they never promised to look after our injured soldiers. According to the government's lawyer, no formal promises were made; it was just political rhetoric. That is unbelievable. Why are the Conservatives blaming veterans for believing Conservative promises?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the irony of all of this is that I can rhyme off a litany of issues that the party opposite has not supported, all of which have gone to help support our veterans and the programs and services for them and their families. At this point in time it is most unfair for any of us to comment on a case now before the courts.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the irony is that veterans will never believe Conservative promises again, because Canadians expect some contrition and shame from this minister. The case workers who were fired by the minister were front-line workers who were helping veterans.

The Conservative government has closed nine regional offices and has fired a thousand people who helped veterans. It even took a billion dollars out of veterans' hands, money that was authorized by Parliament for veterans' needs.

When will this Conservative decade of darkness for veterans end? When will the government start helping veterans instead of hurting veterans?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to state that we on this side of the House know that if veterans have the tools they need to transition to civilian life, the chances of their succeeding are increasingly improved. That is why our government has invested in new research to design more effective treatments for Canadian veterans. We are partnering with mental health organizations, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and many others to enable us to provide the kinds of services and support that our veterans and their families need, which we are committed to provide, while the opposition votes against all of these.

Oral Questions

●(1420)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our nation-to-nation relationship with first nations means respect and dialogue, but what we have seen so far from the Conservatives is only more of the same confrontational approach. Too many communities have had to resort to the courts to get their voices heard and their rights respected.

Recently, four first nations from Treaty 8 filed a judicial review with the Federal Court against the federal government with respect Site C. When will the government learn to respect and work in collaboration with first nations?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is protecting the environment while supporting economic growth. This project will provide thousands of direct and indirect jobs and provide clean renewable energy for the next 100 years. Of all of the possible ways to generate energy, this project would have the lowest level of greenhouse gas emissions. The project underwent a thorough independent review and extensive consultations with the public and aboriginal groups.

I am amazed to see the member opposite opposed to this project. Maybe that is because the New Democrats would rather see a job-killing carbon tax.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the first nations that I cited are not alone. The Peace Valley Landowners Association and first nations in Alberta have also recently joined the fight on Site C. These communities are expecting more from the government than the empty rhetoric we are hearing. They want their voices heard and their rights respected. Unfortunately, with the environmental assessment process in shambles, the only way they can get results is to resort to our judicial system. Instead of wasting resources fighting them in court, why is the government simply not addressing their concerns?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is protecting the environment while supporting economic growth. This clean energy project underwent a thorough independent review. This process included meaningful and respectful consultations with 29 aboriginal groups.

BC Hydro must meet 80 legally binding conditions, and failure to do so would be a violation of federal law.

* * *

[Translation]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives made cuts to funding and to the staff who maintain the graves of our Canadian heroes. They did this following an audit that pointed to the deplorable state of these graves.

Today, we learned that half the money for research on veterans that the minister claimed was new funding comes from existing programs. We are talking about a very small amount. How many

more reasons does the Prime Minister need to dismiss his incompetent minister?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made significant investments in restoring Canadian war graves and sending hundreds of Canadian veterans back to visit the battlefields of Europe. The opposition has voted against these initiatives, and I can cite time after time when it let us down. It let veterans down, and it let our deceased soldiers down.

Our Second World War veterans who returned to Italy last week noted how beautifully maintained our Canadian grave sites are, and we are in fact proud of the work that we are doing at home and abroad.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they are not proud of this minister, that is for sure.

Major Mark Campbell, a veteran with 33 years of service, was badly wounded in Afghanistan by an IED while rescuing a fellow soldier. Now he is fighting the Conservatives for a pension.

The government has stated in court that providing this pension would violate fundamental principles of democracy.

Could the minister please tell the House which democratic principles would be violated by providing this brave veteran and double amputee with his pension?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are profoundly proud of and honoured by the service that veterans have rendered to this country in the interests of freedom, democracy, and human rights.

However, in this particular case, the government does not comment on matters before the court, except to say that this matter deals with something that all parties agreed to under the previous government. It was the Liberal government that initiated much of what is in debate today.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives claim all sorts of new funding for veterans, but it is a sham. Today, we learned that half of the so-called new programs the minister speaks of already exist, and experts say that it is a very meagre amount of money.

Conservatives claim in the House that they honour the sacred obligation, but that is a sham too, because in court they are still fighting Canadian veterans represented by the Equitas Society, claiming that no such obligation exists.

When will the Conservatives realize that “lest we forget” means both commemorating the dead and taking care of our living veterans, like Mark Campbell?

Oral Questions

•(1425)

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his passion on this issue, but as I indicated earlier, this matter is now before the courts. Out of respect for due process, I think that all of us should let the courts do their work.

I am at a loss for words to explain how it is that the Liberals would vote against earnings loss and supplementary retirement benefits, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Korea transition services, disability awards and allowances, disability and death benefits, and I could go on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, veterans no longer trust this minister who has repeatedly tried to mislead them. A responsible minister would dispense with the underhanded legal tactics, reopen the regional offices and rehire the staff in charge of helping veterans. He would invest in mental health without delay and he would apply the recommendations of the parliamentary committee.

Since the minister is doing absolutely nothing to help veterans, when will the Conservatives do something and dismiss this irresponsible minister?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to report that, consistently, since we have been in power in government, through the leadership of our Prime Minister, veterans have been a primary issue for us. Time and again, we have put forward initiatives and support systems dealing with veterans and their families. However, the party opposite continues to vote against them. The hypocrisy is more than anybody can bear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister tried to have us believe that the staffing cuts would have absolutely no impact on veterans, saying that it was just administrative staff that was cut. That is not true.

The Auditor General's report clearly shows that the wait times have direct consequences on the health and quality of life of our veterans.

Cutting one in four jobs and closing nine regional offices clearly has an impact on the quality of services.

Parliament put \$1 billion aside for this purpose. Why was that money not spent?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our continued effort to improve veterans benefits and programs, I recommended that the Auditor General should review our mental health program. I fully accept his recommendations and no doubt, am grateful for them.

The Auditor General found that Veterans Affairs spends half a billion dollars each year on mental health strategy and also on valuable mental health supports.

While we have already taken action to improve the service delivery, we will in fact continue to follow the Auditor General's recommendation, which, by the way, also stroked some very positive things in his report.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are failing veterans right across the board. They stand in the House and dismiss the crisis that they created when they gutted departments and fired the staff who helped veterans access the services they so desperately need.

Nine regional offices are now closed and one in four employees has been fired. The Prime Minister has the audacity to call people helping injured soldiers in those regional offices "backroom bureaucrats".

Instead of making excuses for that failed minister, will the Prime Minister finally just show him the door?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that on this side of the House, we have consistently been improving the quality of life support systems and assistance to veterans and their families.

It is very difficult for me to understand, though, how the New Democrats would vote against disability and death compensation, how they would vote against the veterans ombudsman, how they would vote against the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, how they would vote against earnings loss and supplementary benefits and, also, how they would vote against children of deceased veterans education assistance. I do not get it.

•(1430)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, too little too late. The Conservatives pedal their weak and petty excuses in this place, but the truth is they are going to court to fight disabled veterans injured in Afghanistan.

While lying in a hospital bed, Major Mark Campbell, who lost both his legs above the knee in a Taliban ambush, found out that the government had stripped him of his military pension. He is one of seven veterans who has gone to court to gain access to compensation that was promised.

Why is the government going to court to break those promises and the hearts of our veterans?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to get through to people who are not listening. My response—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs still has the floor.

The hon. minister of Veterans Affairs.

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, my concern, and it should be the concern of the NDP, is that in our country we have great respect for due process. In that regard, this matter is before the courts. It is really shameful that people would drag a sidebar issue into a due diligence court process that we should, in our country, respect.

*Oral Questions***STATUS OF WOMEN**

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week we commemorate 25 years since the massacre of 14 women at École Polytechnique. As we think of these women, their families and the countless others who have been victims of violence across our country, we also need to take action.

Today, half of women in Canada experience violence at least once in their lifetime. While violent crime goes down in our country, sexual violence rates remain stagnant. The reality is stark.

Canadian women deserve action from their federal government. Will the government work with us and support my motion for a national action plan to end violence against women today?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her very poignant question. Certainly this week our hearts and thoughts and minds are with the families of those affected on that terrible day 25 years ago.

Our government has made it a major priority to partner actively with many across the country to address the effects of violence against women and girls. Among the many initiatives, we participated in the 16 days of activism against gender violence, released an action plan to address family violence and violent crimes against aboriginal women and girls, introduced the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices, and other legislative initiatives aimed specifically to hold violent offenders accountable.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, initiatives are not enough, and they certainly did not save the life of Zahra Abdille, who was murdered along with her two children a few days ago in Toronto.

It is a heart-wrenching case of the way the system has failed Canadian women: no access to housing, no access to legal aid, nowhere to go. That is what happened to Mrs. Abdille.

Will the government commit to action, a national action plan to end violence against women, for women like Zahra and other women across our country?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. On this side of the House, we actually have taken action, whether it be the Safe Streets and Communities Act; whether it be our new bill, looking at zero tolerance for barbaric practices; or whether it be what we have done to ensure that victims are supported with a victims' bill of rights.

We on this side of the House, actually listen to women. We have listened to them across the country and we have acted, unlike the opposition that continues to have a lot of rhetoric, but do nothing to actually support those victims of crime.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the situation of aboriginal women is alarming. In the past 30 years, more than 1,200 aboriginal women have

disappeared or been murdered. Every year, 36 women and girls never return home.

Aboriginal communities, the international community and the United Nations are all calling for a national inquiry. When will the government finally join this movement?

[*English*]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has been acting with respect to this. In fact, on September 15, we moved forward with an action plan.

I guess what I find the most unfortunate is that the opposition wants to focus on being bogged down with a bunch of individuals who are lawyers to ensure we can just talk about this issue. Let us be very serious; this is about the families. This is about ensuring that those who are victims of crime, those poor aboriginal women and their families, see justice brought to them, that the criminals are held accountable and the victims are supported, unlike what the opposition wants to do.

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, everyone knows that the policies in place do nothing to improve the situation. Doing the same thing over and over again in the hope of achieving different results is futile.

Aboriginal women and girls are seven times more likely to be murdered than non-aboriginal women and girls.

Why is the government refusing to launch a national inquiry to shed light on this tragedy and to prevent violence against women?

[*English*]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House many times, having gone out and met with families and spoken to them, what they want is action.

Whether it be Bernadette Smith, who lost her sister and who has been unable to find her sister since 2007, or numerous other families, they want action now. They do not want an inquiry and a lot of people talking. They want action, and our government has moved forward on that on September 15 of this year.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is very thin on that action.

What we do need are serious policy initiatives and programs to support women fleeing violence at home and in their communities, to create a culture where women will feel unafraid to report sexual violence, to stop the tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and to eliminate the inequalities that make women more vulnerable to gender violence.

Oral Questions

I will ask the minister again. Will she commit today to addressing gender inequality in Canada, and support the motion by member for Churchill for a national action plan to end violence against women?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me start by talking about the things this government has done and that the opposition has not supported.

There is the victims bill of rights, a DNA-based missing persons index and new laws to protect victims from being harassed by those who have committed the crimes against them. We have eliminated pardons for serious crimes. We have provided better protection for, particularly, young women who have been victims of sexual predators.

I ask the opposition members this. We are acting. Why are they not supporting us? Why are they voting against all of these initiatives?

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives' failure to champion strong environmental policies is threatening to block Canada's access to markets. Reports out of Brussels indicate there are renewed efforts to brand Canada's oil sands as dirty oil.

When will the government clean up its environmental record and help get our products into Europe and other international markets?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the House that Canada is a secure, responsible and reliable source of energy that can make a growing contribution to global energy security.

We know that fuel quality directive is counter to Canada's interests. We believe it is not based on science. We continue to encourage the European Union to follow a science to ensure that Canada's trade interests are not unfairly impaired.

* * *

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister took 48 hours to apologize for her despicable actions and arrogance toward northerners and Inuit people who are going hungry due to the high cost of food. However, after 24 months, she has yet to acknowledge and take action to fix the problem of the high cost of food in northern regions and a defunct nutrition north program.

Will the minister apologize to the people of the north for her neglect and fix this problem?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the way those members try to picture the Minister of the Environment and member for Nunavut, without hesitation, the north has never been as well represented by a member of Parliament than by the Minister of the Environment.

Those members remain blind to the real issue. The real issue is that the objective of the nutrition north program is to increase access to nutritious food, and we have accomplished that. The shipment has

gone up by 25% in two years and the cost of a food basket has gone down for an average family of four by \$110 a month.

● (1440)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister and the government ought to start talking to people in the north a little more.

I am an aboriginal woman from the north and I am a woman of Inuit descent. Why is it that I can see the struggles of the people in the north, while the minister and the government opposite only work to stifle the voices of Inuit leaders in our communities?

Will you not demand more of the Conservative government that you are a part of to fix these problems?

The Speaker: I will remind the hon. member to address her comments through the Chair, not directly at other members. Even when you say "through the Speaker" and then use the second person, it still amounts to the same thing. I will ask her to avoid doing that.

The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): I sometimes have a hard time understanding, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say unequivocally that unlike the previous Liberal government, this government has made long-term prosperity in the north a priority, whether it is economic development, or social development or the research station. No government in the history of Canada has done more for the north. We need more members like the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now that the Minister of the Environment has recognized that it was a bad idea to read the newspaper during question period, maybe we can get her to answer our lingering questions over the food crisis going on in her riding and throughout the north.

Will the minister now recognize that the nutrition north program is a failure and will she act now to ensure that none of her constituents have to resort to landfills to find food, especially over the holidays?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the record is clear. The Auditor General has reported and has made recommendations so that we can improve the effectiveness of a program, which has already brought significant results. The shipment of nutritious food has gone up by 25%. Those members cannot deny that. The average food basket for an average family of four has gone down by \$110 a month, whereas it has gone up everywhere else in the country. They cannot see it. Stop playing politics on the backs of northerners.

The Speaker: I know the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development will remember not to address his comments directly to his colleagues but to the Chair.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you know, shaving \$100 off the cost of a basket of groceries that costs \$1,000 or \$1,200 is not a lot.

In the Minister of the Environment's riding, dozens of people are reduced to rummaging through garbage to find food because the Conservatives are incapable of setting up a program to cut prices. Those who speak out against the situation are threatened with legal action by their own MP.

Will the minister also apologize for the government's failures and her bullying?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether in English or in French, it is the same charade.

They refuse to admit the facts, which have been well established. Since introducing the nutrition north Canada program, the amount of nutritious food transported to the North has increased by almost 25%. The cost of a food basket for a family of four has decreased by \$110 a month on average. I know that \$110 a month is not a lot for a socialist in a suit and tie, but it is something for the people of Nunavut.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing they definitely cannot deny. Since the Conservatives have been in power, patronage appointments have skyrocketed.

Yesterday the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food appointed Sylvie Cloutier to Farm Credit Canada. I would be hard pressed to find anyone more "blue" than her. This former assistant to minister Robert de Cotret was a campaign organizer in Saint-Jean and for Jean Lambert, who twice ran as a Conservative candidate. Under the Mulroney government, with Chuck Guité, she was the one who preselected Conservative-friendly communications agencies.

Instead of taking care of their friends, perhaps the minister could take care of our farmers.

●(1445)

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, all of these candidates go through a rigorous hiring process. They are hired on merit by the board of FCC. They fit in. They bring skills to that board that serve farmers. I went through a list, for one of her colleagues yesterday, of how much better farmers are doing under this Conservative government. Of course, New Democrats voted against every one of those initiatives.

The member from Winnipeg would be the grinch at Christmastime and take away marketing freedom. We will not allow that to happen.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe the minister. His ideological crusade is wreaking havoc across the Prairies. The grain bins are still bursting at the seams. The quality control system has collapsed, and yet what is the minister's priority? It seems to be finding a cushy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pat Martin: I can hardly hear myself think.

The Speaker: Order. Members of the government will have the opportunity to respond to the question when the member for Winnipeg Centre is finished asking it. I will ask members to come to order so he can finish. He has about 16 seconds left to conclude his question.

Mr. Pat Martin: Them's the rules, Mr. Speaker.

His priority seems to be finding a cushy patronage job for none other than Sylvie Cloutier, a well-known Conservative organizer, whose previous claim to fame was helping the notorious Chuck Guité, of all people, finding the right ads to suit Conservative needs.

Would the minister start spending a little more time cleaning up the mess he has created on the Prairies and a little less time trying to find cushy patronage jobs for well-connected Conservatives?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite cannot hear himself think. We can certainly see them sink.

Having said that, there were several hundred farmers here in town last week for the GrowCanada convention. I had the great opportunity to speak to them. They are all celebrating the success in western Canada.

When it comes to complaints, we are shipping, on average, 17% more tonnage, year after year, since the single desk has gone, and our complaints have gone down 40%. That is a success.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the events of last October starkly showed us that ISIL is a real and present threat to Canada. They also spurred us to resolve to tackle this threat. I am very proud of our government for rising to this challenge.

Yesterday, the RCMP in Montreal announced that it has charged a man for robbery at the direction of or for the benefit of a terrorist group. Allegedly, he was going to travel abroad to conduct terrorist activities.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please inform this House about this dangerous situation?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday an individual in Montreal was charged with offences brought in under the Combating Terrorism Act. While I cannot comment on the matter that is currently before the courts, I would like to thank law enforcement for its efforts to keep Canadians safe.

This arrest clearly demonstrates that our approach is effective. I would encourage all members of this House to support our efforts to give national security agencies the tools they need.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for over 10 years, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research were a strong voice and an important source of funding for aboriginal health research.

However, the Conservatives have cut that organization's funding, eliminated successful programs and gotten rid of the advisory committee, as though they were not already doing enough to show how little they care about the aboriginal community.

Will the Conservatives give the institutes the importance they deserve?

• (1450)

[English]

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the changes made by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's board of governance were made independently. These changes will allow for additional support for researchers as they leverage new dollars.

I can assure this House that Canada, through Health Canada and through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, remains the single largest contributor to health research, spending over \$1 billion each year. Since we have formed government, we have invested almost a quarter billion dollars in aboriginal health research.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have made all their changes to the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health and its partners without consulting the affected community.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research went under a model review, and key recommendations came only from an external group consultation, bypassing anyone who actually had experience with the institute. As a result, there is minimal interaction now between the aboriginal health research community and CIHR.

Why is the minister allowing the CIHR to undermine aboriginal health research, when it is so important?

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to the contrary. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research operates independently. It is its board of governance that came up with and developed these changes. It is the one that recommended them.

As I have assured members, we have invested over \$247 million in aboriginal health research since we took office, and that is in addition to the \$2 billion we invest each and every year in direct aboriginal health care.

* * *

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, or the FCFA, is calling for the creation of an independent commission on the future of CBC/Radio-Canada and a moratorium on cuts.

For many francophone communities outside Quebec, the drastic cuts to our public broadcaster mean that they will no longer have access to programming about their own reality.

Will the government listen to the FCFA and create an independent commission to assess the impact of the cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada on minority communities?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we expect the CBC to fulfill its mandate to provide quality programming to those communities under the Official Languages Act and the Broadcasting Act, using the \$1.1 billion it receives from taxpayers every year.

Let us not forget that the CRTC has the power to ensure that CBC/Radio-Canada fulfills its mandate under the law.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is shameful to hear the minister say such things.

In 1998, the Liberals made \$258 million in cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada. Last year, the Conservatives made \$115 million in cuts. They want to get rid of our public broadcaster. That is unacceptable. We will fight and CBC/Radio-Canada will go on.

Will the Conservative government minister save CBC/Radio-Canada or will she just make unacceptable excuses?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is shameful is to see an MP lose control like that in front of Canadians across the country.

With regard to the CBC, once again, the CRTC is responsible for ensuring that the public broadcaster fulfills its mandate. We are going to let the CRTC do its job.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recently learned that the avian flu has been detected on several poultry farms in our biggest producing region, the Fraser Valley.

Canada's poultry industry is so important to farmers and consumers. Thousands of jobs on the farm and in processing depend on it.

What is the scope of the outbreak? What is this government doing to contain it and prevent this disaster from happening again? How much of the farmers' losses will the government compensate?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as is well known, a couple of days ago, avian flu was detected on four farms, which are under quarantine now, in the Fraser Valley. That, of course, has an eight-kilometre range that is taken into account.

So far, the testing is ongoing. We are working with industry right now. They will begin putting birds down in those affected barns very soon.

Oral Questions

When it comes to compensation, of course, that was all redone some two years ago, so farmers know exactly what they will be compensated, per bird, and we will certainly honour that.

This is totally unlike what happened in 2004, when the Liberals at that time let this just run like a prairie fire up through that Fraser Valley. Not this time.

• (1455)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): When the government eliminated the single-desk selling system for western grain, they acceded to the U.S. government's number one demand in its trade with Canada, but Canada got nothing in return: no guaranteed market access, no end to country of origin labelling, no approval for Keystone XL. We got nothing.

Now the vandalized remnants of the CWB are simply being gifted, absolutely free, to a U.S. multinational. Again, Canadian taxpayers and farmers get nothing in return.

Why does the government always lose in dealing with the United States?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, any good Habs fan will tell you that is not true. Certainly we have done very well when it comes to dealing with the United States on a number of different levels.

I have a good working relationship with Secretary Tom Vilsack. I know the Minister of International Trade has a good working relationship with Ambassador Froman.

Having said that, what the member for Wascana is alluding to when it comes to the single-desk is absolutely wrong. He needs better research. He actually needs to get out of Regina at some point and talk to farmers, and if he would like, I could introduce him to some from Saskatchewan later today. They are here attending GrowCanada. They are thrilled with the changes that were made, and I am sure they would be happy to speak to the member for Wascana.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): In order to form government, Conservatives promised Canadian families that they would help create 125,000 child care spaces. In the years since, they have created none, and now the Conservatives are attacking their own workplace daycare policy, unilaterally cancelling a critical subsidy that allowed a non-profit daycare to operate in a federally owned building.

Why have the Conservatives abandoned families that need access to affordable child care?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done the opposite through our significant, in fact enormous, increases in the Canada social transfer to provinces. They have been able to use part of those funds to create over 175,000 additional daycare spaces, compared to 2006.

Last month the Prime Minister announced that this government will be increasing the child care tax deduction that will provide further assistance to families using institutional child care, in

addition to which, of course, the child tax benefit package will deliver, on average, \$1,200 in incremental benefits to families with children in a way that respects the choices they make.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives are not going to build the 125 spaces they promised, they could at least stop shutting them down.

Last week, Ottawa lost Tupper Tots, a non-profit daycare, because the government killed the federal workplace daycare policy.

Right now, dozens of parents in Ottawa are desperately scrambling to find care for their children. There are nine other similar sites and centres across Canada, four of them in Ottawa.

The question is: Will the government work with those of us who want to preserve these child care spaces and make sure there is child care for these families and others?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the precise subsidy to which the member is referring. I can tell him, however, that the government is increasing the child care tax deduction, which will assist parents who pay for institutional child care.

Of course, we have announced billions of dollars in additional support for families with kids, including through the child tax benefit. All together, these benefits will amount to about \$1,200 in incremental support for the average family with pre-school children. That is considerable support that respects the choices of families.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is ranked number one in the G7 for our support for scientific research and development in our colleges and universities. Science powers commerce, creates jobs, and improves the quality of life for all Canadians.

Can the Minister of Industry please update the House on the exciting announcement the Prime Minister made in Markham earlier today?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today in Markham, the Prime Minister announced the Canada first research excellence fund. This follows through on our commitment in the budget to support Canada's universities.

I think, as are all Canadians, we are incredibly proud of the universities we have and the great work they do, such as the world-class engineering schools at the University of Waterloo and University of Toronto, the brain research centre out of the University of British Columbia, the pediatric AIDS research that is being done at McGill University.

We want to take this research that is being done across the country and boost it, so that Canada will continue to lead the world in academic research and be proud of these great institutions.

The Prime Minister made this announcement, \$1.5 billion over the next seven years, and we are going to continue to lead the world.

* * *

• (1500)

ETHICS

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2007, the Prime Minister appointed Mark McQueen as the head of the Toronto Port Authority. The federal guidelines that govern the political activities of Governor in Council appointees clearly state that public office holders should not participate in political activity. Under the guidelines, contributing money to political parties at any level of government is explicitly forbidden. In 2008, Mr. McQueen donated more than \$1,000 to the Conservative Party. This is a violation of the rules.

Will the Prime Minister immediately dismiss this port authority member, and will the party give back the dirty money?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the guidelines state that public office holders must consult the guidelines to ensure that political activity does not impair their ability to discharge their public duties. In this particular case, Mr. McQueen's Twitter feed is personal in nature, and the exchange in question with the member opposite stems from a long-standing pre-existing relationship

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by allowing Canada Post to eliminate home delivery, the Conservatives have been willing accomplices. While the city of Laval has been talking about adapting its services to the needs of an aging population, Canada Post and the Conservatives are making things harder on seniors.

Next year, the people of Chomedey, Îles-Laval, Laval-Ouest, Laval-sur-le-Lac, Sainte-Dorothée and Fabreville will lose their home delivery services. Why is the government cutting our public services?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is doing no such thing. Canada Post is obviously an arm's-length crown corporation that makes its own decisions. It is confronting a problem where 1.2 billion fewer letters are being delivered in 2013 than in 2006. In order to meet that, Canada Post came up with its five-point plan. The member should be well aware of those particular steps.

By the way, it was not so long ago that the FCM examined this particular issue by way of a motion and defeated it by nearly two to one.

Oral Questions

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on creating jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. Through our government's investments, we are ensuring that northern Ontario is well positioned to reap the benefits of economic development. However, many small communities in northern Ontario have limited capacity to undertake economic stimulus projects.

Could the President of the Treasury Board share with this House what our government is doing to create jobs in northern Ontario communities of all sizes?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to commend the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie for the great job he is doing representing his constituents and representing the values and interests of northern Ontario. I share with him in that capacity, as well.

In fact, the hon. member for Kenora, the minister responsible for FedNor, is in Sudbury as we speak, making another announcement for community investment, for jobs and opportunity in northern Ontario. That is what we do. We are there for communities.

While the other side is trying to find new ways to create a new long gun registry to go after law-abiding duck hunters and farmers, we are looking after the real interests of northern Ontarians, and we will continue to do so.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Charlevoix Biosphere Reserve has been recognized by UNESCO since 1988. This is a unique conservation site that helps the region grow and helps put it on the map.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives cut funding for this reserve in 2012. Now, it could lose its international status and recognition. The people of Charlevoix are working together to maintain this recognition. Will the minister help the reserve or will he ignore Charlevoix and biodiversity in Canada?

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to protecting our environment. Since we formed government, we have created two national marine conservation areas, three marine protected wildlife areas, three national wildlife areas, two national parks, and a national historic site.

We are committed to our national sites, and it is a shame that the NDP does not support this action.

• (1505)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will be heading to the COP 20 climate negotiations taking place in Lima, and I know that the eyes of the world are on those negotiations to come up with—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Business of the House

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has the floor, and I would like to be able to hear the question.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I was having difficulty being able to put forward what I believe is the common will of everyone in this place. It is, apparently, the avowed desire of the Prime Minister to see a comprehensive, legally binding treaty—or at least comprehensive involving all nations around the world—for climate action.

My question for the Prime Minister is this. Would we agree, when numbers get bigger over time, that something is rising? We keep hearing that greenhouse gases are falling in this country, but they do not meet that definition.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about international agreements, we have stated consistently that, in any agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, all major economies and emitters must do their part.

Recently, we saw the U.S. and China, who account for 39% of global greenhouse gas emissions, get together and have some discussions. Canada only emits 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2012, for example, to answer the member's question, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions were roughly 5% lower than 2005 levels, while the economy grew over 10% during the same period. It will continue to do this without a job-killing carbon tax.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again this week, the NDP, as official opposition, has proposed practical changes and policies to the Canadian people.

Last evening, we had a vote on proportional representation, to bring in a fair and just voting system. Unfortunately, the leader of the Conservative Party and the leader of the Liberal Party voted against our motion, even though the public is becoming increasingly interested in this issue.

[*English*]

The other offer this week was the historic motion offered by my colleague from Vancouver East, which the NDP brought forward to finally put into place adequate compensation for victims of thalidomide, which passed overwhelmingly from the House, and on which we will hopefully be seeing action within the next few days.

There are only 16 sitting weeks in the life of the government, 16 sitting weeks before Canadians can put an end to the current government.

My question for the government House leader is quite simple. What will the government put on the agenda next week for the Canadian public?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will continue

the second reading debate on Bill S-6, the Yukon and Nunavut regulatory improvement act.

Tomorrow we will debate Bill C-43, the economic action plan 2014 act, no. 2. This bill would put into place important support for families, as well as key job-creating measures, which would build on our government's record of over 1.2 million net new jobs created since the economic downturn.

[*Translation*]

On Monday, before question period, we will resume the second reading debate on Bill C-12, the Drug-Free Prisons Act. By tackling drug use and trafficking in federal penitentiaries, we will make the correctional system safer for staff and inmates, while also increasing the success of rehabilitation.

After question period, we will consider Bill C-44, the Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act, at report stage. I understand that, regrettably, the NDP will be opposing this bill.

Tuesday will see the House debate Bill C-43 before it gets its third and final reading.

[*English*]

Wednesday we will consider Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights act, at report stage and I hope at third reading. This bill was reported back from the very hard working justice committee yesterday. It was adopted unanimously after a thorough and exhaustive study all autumn. The victims bill of rights act would create statutory rights at the federal level for victims of crime for the very first time in Canadian history. This legislation would establish statutory rights to information, protection, participation, and restitution and ensure a complaint process is in place for breaches of those rights.

The chair of the justice committee implored House leaders yesterday to pass the bill expeditiously. I hope my colleagues will agree.

Next Thursday we will resume the uncompleted debates on Bill C-32, Bill C-12, Bill C-44, and Bill S-6, as well as taking up Bill S-5 at third reading to establish the Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve act.

Next Friday, the House will complete the third reading debate on Bill C-40, the Rouge national urban park act, to create Canada's first national urban park.

After that we will have an opportunity to wish everybody a Merry Christmas.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1510)

[English]

YUKON AND NUNAVUT REGULATORY IMPROVEMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-6, An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to rise in the House. Today we are speaking to Senate bill S-6, An act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act.

It is interesting that the bill is coming before us the week that the Yukon Supreme Court just struck down the efforts by the Yukon government, another right wing government, to ignore consultation, ignore environmental due process, ignore first nations in its push and attack on the Peel valley watershed. The supreme court said that it cannot do that. There is a social licence issue here when we are looking at development issues, and the court has thrown it back.

This is a pattern, and we are going to talk about it in the bill. The government thinks it can get ahead of social licence by just bringing in omnibus legislation, by stripping regulations, by doing things in the back room in order to kick-start mega development projects on which it has failed to do its basic due diligence and consultation, especially with first nations, who have enshrined constitutional rights under section 35. In doing so the government ends up creating a situation like the one we have now.

The government's militant advocacy of the big oil agenda has created a backlash across the country. It is a backlash where people say "You stripped the waters act of 99.999% of the lakes and rivers in our country so that the pipelines could get through without having to worry that there are basic protections in place." Then it goes into the communities and they are saying "Are you kidding me? You're going to run bitumen through my town when there are no shut off valves on either side of the lakes and rivers?"

I represent probably one of the largest mining regions in Canada, if not in the world. When I talk to the mining companies in my region they get it. They understand the importance of having what we call "treaties on the ground". We need to have the support of the local communities. Some of the ways to do that is by meeting environmental standards and through first nations consultation. Talk to anyone in the Ontario mining industry today about the possibility of getting a project off the ground, and they will say that without that consultation, it is not going to happen

We see a bill come forward like Bill S-6 that is unilaterally rewriting Yukon's environmental and socio-economic evaluation system. It is ignoring the issues of first nations consultations. It ignores the incredible economic value of the landscape and natural resource beauty in Yukon. This is another attempt to bypass the people of the country and create consensus on what development

Government Orders

should look like. I believe it is only going to end up in another failure and impasse, going all the way back to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline days of these mega projects. If they are not done in a balanced manner, they are not going to get done at all.

Having travelled across the country from one end to the other, having done some of it in the back of a cheap little mini van with a band and other times as a sitting politician, I have never seen a section of the country that has taken my heart as much as Yukon. I love St. John's, Newfoundland, and my family roots—

Mr. Mark Strahl: More on Timmins. Shame.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to let the member throw me off. I have been in Cape Breton. However, everywhere I have gone, my wife asks, "Is it as pretty as home?" I say in response, "It's nice, but it's not home." When I went to Yukon for the first time, my wife asked me, "Is it like home?" I said, "Well, this is the one place that might actually move my heart."

Fortunately, where I live in the incredible Cobalt—Temiskaming region, with the beautiful white pines at Temagami, there are incredible opportunities for canoeing—not that I canoe, by the way. If I cannot see it from a car window I do not go there. However, I encourage everyone else to come. I will stay where I am in northern Ontario. However, there is something magical about Yukon.

I say this in all seriousness, because when I am in Yukon and I go to the hotels and see all the people who fly over from Germany, when they come to Canada, their idea of Canada is about these incredible natural resources. They come to Yukon. They fly in from Japan and from all over the world.

Therefore, when we balance the incredible natural resources, we also have to balance the other interests. We certainly know that in my region, which is a very heavy mining region. It has the deepest base metal mine in the world, the Kidd Mine. It was discovered in 1964. It has pretty much the largest gold mines in operation. Hollinger Mines is just reopening now. My grandfather, Charlie Angus, was killed at Hollinger Mines. It was the largest gold mine in the western world. After a hundred years, it is being reopened. Dome Mine is still running. No matter how rich they are, these are finite resources.

• (1515)

We have to find ways to ensure value added. We have to ensure that when we develop these resources, it comes back. I have to admit that in Ontario, the Conservatives have not been very bright on this. Their idea of the north is that it is some kind of colony: the north gets the money and it goes down south. When a mine shuts down, they tell us in the north, it is too bad, so sad, we were never meant to stay.

However, we can do things better. In Yukon, with the spirit of the people there, the incredible natural resources and their sense of community, they have a right to have an active say in whether development will occur, and whether it will occur in mining, hydro development, in oil and gas, or if the land will be maintained in its natural state. That was the fight about the Peel valley watershed.

Government Orders

Bill S-6 would dismantle the environmental and socio-economic assessment that was developed in the Yukon, by Yukoners, for Yukon. There has been a complete lack of consultation with first nations, which is not surprising for the current government. The Conservatives just do not understand that these are constitutional obligations; they cannot get over it and they cannot get under it.

The Conservative government, with the full assistance of a local Conservative MP and the senator from Yukon, is forcing a pro-southern-resource agenda down the throats of Yukoners. That is what I heard when I was last in Whitehorse regarding what was happening in the Peel valley. Conservatives see this watershed and they know that there is incredible value in it.

Yukoners do not like that they are being sold down the river for the benefit of companies that are going to be fly-by-nighters, which might be here today but could be gone tomorrow.

There are a number of amendments in the bill that the people of the Yukon we have been talking with have been discussing and certainly the incredible workers of the New Democratic opposition in Yukon as well. The amendments would provide the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development with the authority to provide binding policy direction to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. Yukoners are like northerners, so the idea that a minister in his office gets to decide what they are going to do is just not on.

Here is another one that is just typical of these guys. It would introduce legislated time limits for assessments. Conservatives wonder why their pipelines are going nowhere. Regarding public assessments, now people have to write and apply to be able to be part of the public consultation, and the government gets to decide whether people will be accepted. No wonder the National Energy Board is coming up with big blanks time and again. Using the same strategy they are using with the National Energy Board, the Conservatives want to be able to introduce these legislated time limits for assessments. We have certainly seen in northern Ontario that when they do that and ignore due process, there will be a backlash, because they are not respecting social licence.

It would allow the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to delegate any or all of the responsibilities to the Yukon government. There are federal responsibilities here because these are federal lands, and also because of the fundamental legal obligations that the federal crown has to first nations. They cannot delegate those away just because they figure that the local government is going to be more amenable to ignoring their legal and constitutional obligations.

It would create broad exemptions for renewals, amendments, permits, and authorizations. I have seen that with the attempted development of resource projects. In our region in northern Ontario, we have seen that once they get a permit and it becomes a rubberstamp, they can vastly expand an operation and its impacts. They need to be able to go back to the people and say what the impact is.

The people of Yukon have lived there. The newcomers feel as passionately about it as the original people of the land. This is their land. They will always be there. The mining companies are going to

come and go. They will change ownership and some of them will make money and go on and become another company or go bankrupt, but the resource they are playing with is the resource of the people of Yukon.

We have seen a number of really strong voices on this issue. I have enormous respect for Yukon NDP leader Liz Hanson and her passion for the people of Yukon. What is sorely missing is a willingness to engage in an open and honest manner. We need a relationship built on dialogue and respect rather than lawsuits and secret negotiations, which again is the fundamental pattern that is undermining development projects across Canada.

● (1520)

Conservatives believe that if they ignore consultation and public processes and do things through backroom regulations, lo and behold there will be all these pipelines and mining projects. I can say, from being on the ground in northern Quebec and northern Ontario, that if there is no social licence, that project is not going ahead, full stop. That is the end of it.

I have an editorial from the *Yukon News*. The title is, "Environmental assessment reform should be done in the open". This is from June 13, 2014. It states:

A long list of people deserve raspberries for this needlessly shady behaviour

—that is not parliamentary, but I am just reading it—

for this needlessly shady behaviour. At the top of the naughty list are Senator Daniel Lang and [the] MP [for Yukon] who are supposed to ensure that the interests of Yukoners are represented in Ottawa. Instead, they've kept the public out of the loop, other than [the member for Yukon] uttering vague generalities about the forthcoming changes without offering any meaningful specifics. Shame on them.

That is a direct quote from the *Yukon News*.

We need binding policy direction, and we need it from the federal minister to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. We need to make sure that the Conservatives are not undermining the basic rights of protection and consultation through the devolution process.

The government always brags about consultation but ignores the voices of the people who are mostly directly impacted. We have heard the Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Ruth Massie say there was not adequate consultation and that if there is not adequate consultation before this bill is passed, the council will take legal action.

Once again, we see a government that decides that if it ignores its legal obligations, it somehow just might get away with it. The Yukon supreme court this week said no way, that it is not going to happen, so the Peel planning process has to start again.

There have been numerous pieces of legislation that the government has been warned do not meet the constitutional requirements of this country, but that have been forced through anyway and turned back. This is not how to develop resources in this country.

Government Orders

Before the election in 2004, I had the great honour to work with the Algonquin Nation in the La Verendrye park region of Quebec and up through the Abitibi region. At that time, the communities watched as millions and millions of dollars of development, hydro resources, forestry, and mining left the territories. No one local was ever hired. The only way they ever got attention was through blockades, threats of injunction, and protests.

The people in the community asked what would happen if they could put their resources into negotiating and building a relationship with the forestry companies so they could benefit from their territories and have them recognized as unceded lands. No treaties were ever signed, including for the Algonquin lands in northeastern Ontario. They said that if they put their efforts into consultation and building a relationship, communities and the regional economy might start to develop.

That conversation took place 14 years ago in northern Quebec and northern Ontario in the Algonquin communities I worked in, and in the 14 years since I have seen how dramatic the change has been. The mining companies get it. They will now go to communities and have discussions. It is not always easy. We have a long way to go and a lot of problems to work out, but we are a lot further down the road than we were.

I see northern communities like Timmins, Kirkland Lake, and Black River-Matheson that are dependent on mining resources. They get it that if they are not talking in partnership with the Mushkegowuk Cree, the Wabun Tribal Council, and their Algonquin neighbours, the development will not happen.

I ask my hon. colleagues on the government side why they are ignoring the pattern of the refusal to consult, the undermining of environmental regulations, and the stripping of local authorities and local people of consultation in order to pursue a mining, fracking, or oil agenda that is going to be defeated in the courts, just as it was defeated this the past week in the Yukon supreme court, and just as it has been defeated with Kinder Morgan and Burnaby Mountain. It is the issue of a social licence.

I want to go back to Bill S-6. There are parts of this bill that are largely housekeeping, which can be part of any bill. The fact that it would dismantle the environmental and socio-economic assessment process developed in Yukon for Yukoners is a non-starter for the New Democratic Party. New Democrats are not going to go there, because we are on the side of ensuring sustainable development, development that is long term and based on the principle that we have been given.

• (1525)

We have incredible resources in our country, and these resources have to be treated with the respect they deserve. Instead, we see this kind of gambler's economy.

I was talking with a Yukon MLA about the attitude of the Yukon government and the similarity with the Conservative government on the belief that if it could get the resources as fast as it could and get them out of the ground as fast as possible, and these are finite resources, that somehow everything would be better off and that we should not worry about the economic impact or the environmental impact. That is not a reasonable way to do development.

I would like to point out, as well, that in my region we have the Ring of Fire. It is part of the great region of Timmins—James Bay. It is another incredible resource. The Ring of Fire is sitting there among some of the poorest fourth world communities. There is Webequie on one side, with Marten Falls and Ogoki Post on the other. These communities have been left out of the economic development plans from the beginning.

We have an enormous resource to do it right, but it has to be done in consultation. Nothing will happen in the Ring of Fire without the input of the Matawa people and then down river from them the Mushkegowuk people. Then I go into the non-native communities, and I hear the same message, that they want this thing done right.

Coming from a mining family on both sides and representing mining towns and living in a town where half the men in my community travel around the world working in mining, if we asked them about the Ring of Fire, they would say that if it is not done right, then we should leave it in the ground. If there is no value-added plan, it should be left in the ground. One miner said to me that this was the capital for our children's future. He asked why they would strip the bank account now to make some easy cash.

Instead of moving on in a nation-to-nation relationship on the idea of respect, the government believes that it can just change the regulations and everything will be fine. It might get taken to court. If the government does get taken to court, it will lose.

If we look at the legal precedents in terms of all the decisions about the legal rights of the first nations people in this land, it is an unbroken string of victories. It defines more and more, from Taku River, with the second Haida decision, and the Delgamuukw decision. We have been moving on.

Each of these rulings make it clear, and they are boxing government in more and more. Part of the reason the courts are acting in this way is because of the lack of good faith from the crown. The honour of the crown is continually undermining and abusing its fiduciary responsibilities.

I will go back, before I go on to Yukon, to my region and Treaty No. 9. When Treaty No. 9 was signed, it was to share the land. There was a promise of education. At the time of the signing, Ontario was an economic backwater and Toronto was just a little town then.

Treaty No. 9 resources turned Ontario into an international economic powerhouse. It was the hydro, gold, copper, iron and the forestry from Treaty No. 9 that created the Ontario economy, which was the juggernaut of the 20th century.

What did the people who signed the treaty get out of that? They got put on these internal displacement camps. All their economic rights were stripped. It does not say anything in the treaty about having their economic, cultural, religious and education rights stripped, or that they would be made wards of Duncan Campbell Scott who came north to sign the treaty.

Government Orders

There needs to be a day of reckoning on this. The communities I am in say that the reckoning is the respect that we move forward with. We cannot fix the past. None of us can. Knowing what has happened and knowing our obligations, we can move forward.

When I look at a bill that will fail the fundamental test of legal duty to consult, that treats the people of the region as though their voices will be less valued than the voices and interests of southern mining, I am seeing another bill that will be challenged in the courts. Like the Peel Watershed decision in the Yukon court, it is another bill that is eventually going down in defeat, and we will be back at square one.

• (1530)

The only thing that will come from this is bad faith. People I know in the resource industry do not want bad faith. They want peace on the ground. I hear that all the time. They want negotiations. They get the idea that if people in the local regions are not happy, then the project will not move forward.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noted the member quickly corrected the record when he said that he liked Yukon more than his own riding, and I will give him credit for that.

He said that there was no consultation with the Council of Yukon First Nations. This is demonstrably false. I have a list here of all the meetings that took place. The council received over \$98,000 to compensate it for consulting with government on this legislation.

Perhaps the member was not aware of that or perhaps he would like to correct the record and not leave the false impression that consultation did not take place on this bill.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I really thank my hon. colleague for that. I definitely would like to correct the record. I am so glad he stood up on this issue.

I will refer back to the testimony of Ruth Massie, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations. I did refer to her earlier, but the parliamentary secretary might not have heard. She said that in the end:

Canada unilaterally finalized the report and systematically rejected the input from the CYFN...The Council of Yukon First Nations reiterates that the five-year review has not been completed, and three key issues identified by Yukon First Nations remain outstanding....The proposed amendments in front of the Senate today were not discussed in the five-year review process with Canada and the Yukon government.

Consultation is not just about holding a meeting. Consultation is about listening and understanding.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Timmins—James Bay understands first nations, works with them, and knows what the word consultation means.

Over 12 people who were invited by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs came to Ottawa, but they felt it was a waste of time. Ruth Massie said, “We went to actually talk to him, hoping...It didn't matter to him. It's too bad about your treaties. This is what we unilaterally have decided to do and that's that.”

Could my colleague explain if consultation is telling them “too bad, so sad”, after having invited them to come all the way here and they put everything aside for this?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I find it shocking that any minister of the crown in 2014 would say, “Too bad about your treaties.”

As I said, we have been dealing with one court decision after another and the idea that somehow these fiduciary obligations will be extinguished by just continual underfunding or ignoring. The courts are strengthening those rights. Coming from a resource area, I would think that we would be a lot better off if we negotiated in good faith rather than having to turn to the courts to bring in these decisions.

I would like to also point out the millions of dollars the government spends every year ignoring the courts. When court decisions are made, the government just goes to the wall. This is not just about treaty rights. This goes right down to individual families trying to get service for their sick children. The government will fight them every step of the way.

• (1535)

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a couple of points on what the member commented about.

Being an first nations, I realize what duty to consult is, but it has not been clearly defined by the courts.

One of the things that really upsets me is when a colleague across the floor states a fact that is not correct. I would like to clarify that.

Let me go over Bill C-15, the McKenzie Valley resource management act, which was before the House. The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development travelled to the Northwest Territories to hold public hearings.

The NDP talks about stalling the process. What is the best way for people to be heard? It is for committee members to travel to listen to the constituents in that region, Yukon. Unfortunately, the member across the floor is being hypocritical in that the New Democrats are not letting committee members travel to Yukon to hear what people there have to say. The government wants to hear what is going on, but the NDP is stalling the whole process. When is that party going to wake up and allow members to travel to hear from people across Canada?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I think I heard a few personal insults there, but I will not engage in that. I believe this is an august institution, with my deference to you.

However, what I would like to say in response to my friend who said he feels insulted. The Canadian Press headline of December 3, 2014, reads in part, “Yukon chiefs say Valcourt”—sorry—“[the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs] insults them”.

Ruth Massie—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has the floor.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know they are going to try to shout me down about facts. If they want to fight in the sewer, they should go to the sewer. This is the House of Commons.

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Members who have not been recognized will take their seats. The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River is on a point of order. Members know that points of order can be raised at any moment, provided they are legitimate points of order.

We will hear the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, there were some directional approaches, which is unacceptable, and I apologize for that.

However, the one thing I want to know, being first nations, is a simple yes and no. Will the NDP members allow the aboriginal affairs committee to go up to Yukon to hear other first nations?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. That is really not a point of order. That is really a continuation of the debate on a similar question.

I see the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans rising. Is it on the same point of order?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: No, Mr. Speaker. It is a different point of order. It has to do with the rules of the House.

The hon. member facing here, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, has much more experience in the House than I do. He should know that one of the things we cannot do here is name other members of the House by their own name. We cannot do it directly and we cannot do it indirectly. That is exactly what he did, and that actually caused disorder in the House. He should know better and he should retract. When he speaks of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, he should do it with a certain level of respect and not foam, using his own name.

• (1540)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I appreciate the intervention by the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans. I think it is true that there was some disorder in the House. I think there would be a difference of opinion as to what caused that disorder. I do not quite share the same view as the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans on that point.

Nonetheless, this is one of the reasons why, when there are exchanges across the floor of this nature, disorder can become the case. I would engage all hon. members to keep their commentary within the bounds of respectability.

To the point the member for Ottawa—Orléans raises, it is true the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay did in fact refer to the aboriginal affairs minister by his name. He very quickly recognized the error and, in fact, changed it. As the member may know, it happens regularly in the routines of debate in the House and

members, once they have caught their mistake, tend to correct them, as the hon. member did in this case.

We will continue with the debate. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I want to honestly respond to my colleague who started off with a question before we got sidetracked, but it was a question on a yes or no. Therefore, how about yes; end of story on that.

With respect to the issue of being insulted, I was reading the Canadian Press headline, “Yukon chiefs say [Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development] insults them over environmental concerns”. This was yesterday, December 3. Ruth Massie said the “amendments...were drafted in secret after a meeting between the government and five industry groups.”

The article goes on:

[Grand Chief] Massie said she and her fellow chiefs hoped to make headway with [the minister] in a face-to-face meeting on Tuesday. Instead, she said, [he] told them he didn't need to consult them.

“We went to actually talk to him...” said Massie. It didn't matter to him. 'It's too bad about your treaties. This is what we unilaterally have decided to do and that's that.’”

I think the record of an aboriginal affairs minister in 2014, saying “too bad about your treaties” is absolutely scandalous and I would be ashamed to be in a House where someone had such a disrespect for their legal obligations.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, to clarify the record, I was also in that meeting, and no such words were spoken.

If we can get back to the crux of the bill, the member talked about policy direction. There have been four examples where the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development used the policy direction he has for other boards in the Northwest Territories. Each and every time, he used that policy direction to communicate expectations based on interim measures agreements with first nations. He provided instruction to the Mackenzie Valley board regarding its obligation under the Deh Cho First Nations Interim Measures Agreement. He ensured that the board carried out its functions and responsibilities in co-operation with the Akaitcho Dene First Nations and the pre-screening board. He required that notification be provided to both the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Denesuline regarding licences and permits in a given region.

When the minister has been given the authority to direct the board, he has used it to protect the interests of first nations. Does the member not agree that this is exactly what the minister should be doing with this policy direction?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I heard my hon. colleague contradict Grand Chief Ruth Massie. I do not want him to get into a fight with her, so I will refer to the CBC News article from yesterday, entitled, “Ottawa trip on Bill S-6 ends in insult to Yukon First Nations”, wherein Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Chief Eric Fairclough stated, “The minister shut us down by telling us we were not real governments, and therefore he does not need to make us active participants in changing legislation that arises from our treaties.”

Government Orders

Talk about banging one's head against a legislative wall and thinking that the wall will come down. That is what the aboriginal minister has done. He is telling first nation people, who have inherent constitutional and treaty rights, that they are not real governments and that he does not have to consult them, as if mining companies are real governments.

What is interesting is that Vancouver-based Casino Mining Corporation, which has a large interest in copper and gold, is encouraging the government to back off on this and to work collaboratively and find a solution, because even the mining industry knows that if the minister has a disrespectful attitude, this bill will go nowhere.

• (1545)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have an opportunity to participate in the discussion on Bill S-6.

I am concerned about the way the government is moving forward in its dealings with first nation communities throughout this country. It is frankly embarrassing to me as a member, as a Canadian, that the government does not recognize its constitutional responsibility, its fiduciary responsibility, to deal with first nation communities on a nation-to-nation basis, as it has committed itself to doing.

My colleague from Timmins—James Bay just mentioned a moment ago a meeting that was reported on yesterday. Representatives of a first nation community in Yukon met with the minister. They felt that they were insulted, because he suggested to them that they were not government, that in fact, participation in the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act agreement has somehow taken away their status as a government. Now it is only necessary for him to deal with the Government of Yukon. It is hard to fathom that a minister of the crown would have that kind of approach to first nation communities.

I am troubled by the direction the government is going. At every opportunity, it seems to get more focused on trying to find ways to quickly allow southern mining companies or national and international oil companies to go into the north, to frankly go anywhere in this country, to develop those natural resources and get them out of the ground and off to market as quickly as possible, regardless of the inherent dangers to the environment and the communities that will be affected by that development and regardless of the question of ownership of those natural resources. In this respect, I refer to the responsibility of the government to negotiate with first nations communities.

This is a classic example, really, of the way the government is approaching these issues, the ham-fisted way it is dealing with these issues as they relate to first nations treaty rights and responsibilities, land title, and the responsibility to not only consult but accommodate. The government has failed at every turn, it seems, in its responsibility to fulfill the directions provided by the Supreme Court again and again.

We can talk about oil and mining and talk about fish. As the critic for Fisheries and Oceans, I deal with first nation communities on our coast repeatedly. They are frustrated by the lack of responsiveness of the government in accepting its responsibility under the constitution, which has been reiterated, clarified, and enunciated by the courts

time and time again at different locations around this country. The government has failed to act.

• (1550)

Then we have issues like this. We have issues like the government trying to impose changes on the education system in first nation communities. It created such a firestorm that the government finally had to withdraw that legislation. First nations leaders and communities across the country responded in such a negative way to the unilateral imposition of something that is clearly the responsibility of first nations communities that they had to back off.

With respect to the changes to the Fisheries Act that began in 2012, the grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations went before committee and was utterly insulted himself and on behalf of other leaders across the country. Some 640-odd first nations were required to be consulted on matters like this that affect their rights, and the government completely ignored them. It went ahead and brought forward changes that affect those rights without any consideration.

It is that kind of disrespect and unilateral action that resulted in Yukon chiefs coming to town. Nine representatives travelled to Ottawa over the weekend to meet with the minister. What they said has been quoted. I think it is important to quote the article again:

The minister shut us down by telling us we were not real governments," says Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Chief Eric Fairclough in a news release, "And therefore he does not need to make us active participants in changing legislation that arises from our treaties."

The government brought forward the Federal Accountability Act, and yet there is very little, if any, consultation. It has been threatening the leadership of first nation communities, telling them that they either go by the government's law or the government will be exercising unilateral punishment. That not only impedes the work of first nation communities and the efforts by many of the leaders to move their communities forward but is clearly an example of the government getting in the way of fulfilling its responsibilities in dealing with first nation communities.

Dare I bring up the reluctance of the government to deal with the issue of the 1,100 missing and murdered aboriginal women in this country? The government seems to be able to understand that the despicable act of killing a Canadian Forces member and a reservist and threatening other people in the House is a terrorist act. It has been able to clearly identify that as a terrorist act, yet it does not recognize and will not commit to making the changes and bring in the programs necessary to deal with why aboriginal women and their families have to fear for their lives each and every day in this country. It is unconscionable that the government seems to have this kind of attitude as it relates to the first nations.

Let me delve a little deeper into Bill S-6. It would change the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act. This is an act that was established in 2003 in fulfilment of an obligation under the Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement. The Umbrella Final Agreement is a consultative process among first nation communities, the Yukon government, and the crown.

Government Orders

● (1555)

First let me add that there was a requirement in that agreement that there be a review after five years. The government decided that it did not like that review so it did not release it. It decided to impose its own changes, along with the government dealing directly with the government of Yukon, excluding any substantive consultation with the first nations communities. The amendments were developed through a secretive process. The non-union groups—the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, the Mining Association of Canada, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, and Canadian Energy Pipeline Association—were all allowed input. However, there was no public process, and there continues to be very significant opposition not only on the part of Yukoners but also on the part of the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Why is the Conservative government moving forward in this fashion? What is the Conservatives' purpose? We have heard them talk about resource extraction repeatedly. What they want to do is speed it up and they want to get rid of the regulatory processes. They have changed the Environmental Assessment Act. They have changed the Fisheries Act. They have changed a number of pieces of legislation that deal with the protection of our environment and controls over resource development: the Navigable Waters Protection Act; the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act.

That was an interesting one right there. In the NWT, the Conservatives decided to get rid of all the local and regional water and resource boards that had the local first nations representatives on them and had the territorial and federal governments represented. There were a number of them throughout NWT, as is the case elsewhere, recognizing the particular interests of the first nations community in the area that is under discussion. The process that those boards used to follow was that a mining company or otherwise would present a plan to the board and the board would begin to review that proposal and ask questions.

Most importantly, and something that we could learn a lot from, is that they would go out into the community and meet with local first nations and hear from people directly about exactly what the impact was going to be. It was not the case that there was always huge opposition. There is no question that people in many communities are looking for work and for economic development opportunities and opportunities to generate wealth in their community that will benefit them, their children, and future generations. However, they understand how to look at things in terms of generations, not months or years; they had the long vision.

It was always important that they understood and that the development plans laid out how the development was going to happen and what the impact was going to be and that proper mitigation measures were brought to bear in order to ensure there was as little impact as possible in order to meet the particular objectives of extracting the resource, generating the jobs, and ensuring that some of the revenues were poured back into the communities and elsewhere. However, it was also important that, given whatever the stated life of that particular development might have been, there was built-in reclamation of the site or other ways that the particular site would be returned as closely as possible to its natural state.

● (1600)

That is the kind of process that was undone. It became apparent, and I had the opportunity the summer before last to visit Yellowknife and meet with representatives of some of these boards. I met with the Tlicho First Nation and learned a bit about their culture and about their approach to the management of natural resources to best benefit their community. I learned a great deal.

It was interesting. When I met with representatives of the boards, one of their concerns was that even then—and this was a couple of years ago—the federal government was increasingly withdrawing some of the supports that had been there. For example, if it was a development that would affect a particular watercourse, a lake or a river, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans biologists and officials in that local office would be involved. They would get involved, engage in consultation, and be able to go out and talk to citizens on the basis of their understanding of the land, the environment, and the fisheries. They were able to respond in a concrete, factual way about what the impacts would be.

What they were finding even then, in 2012, was that as a result of the massive cutbacks at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, there was not the same number of officials, in Yellowknife for example. Rather than eight or ten scientists and managers who would work with these boards, they were reduced to two. They had to go to Burlington, Ontario, or Winnipeg, Manitoba, to try to bring that kind of expertise in. It was not local expertise, but they could bring that expertise in.

My point is that they were beginning to see that things were beginning to break down under the government as it related to local control over resource development.

Then we dealt with Bill C-15, I believe, which created a superboard for the Mackenzie Valley, because the government thought it would take less time and be less cumbersome, and companies would only have to deal with one board, and they would be able to get the job done a lot more quickly, get at the resource, move it out, and make their money.

Speaking of that, there was just a story in the news this morning about how the Tlicho First Nation has taken the government to court because it believes the superboard ignores the intent of the self-government agreement. What the superboard does, in fact, is get rid of that local first nation control, and the Tlicho are fighting it.

I know we have heard the minister say, repeatedly, to first nations communities that if they do not like it they should take the government to court. We also know that costs hundreds of millions of dollars, federal taxpayers' dollars, to continue to fight against the rights of first nations communities in this country that are clearly defined by the Constitution. I do not believe that is right.

I do not believe that Bill S-6 is going in the right direction. I am disappointed in the direction the government is going in relation to its dealing with first nations communities.

Government Orders

•(1605)

As with the Peel watershed land development case that was struck down by the courts, if it keeps going in this direction, unfortunately, everything the government does is going to get struck down by the courts.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech, much of which was on Bill C-15, which the House has already passed.

I would like to talk about consultation. I have corrected the record several times, but there have been consultation meetings on the specific issues with which the CYFN has taken issue. From April 2013 until June 2014, over a year, a number of meetings took place. Those first nations requested and received over \$98,000 from the government to compensate them specifically for consultation. Clearly, it demonstrates that consultation took place.

The court has also said that the government has a duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate. The NDP does not ever reference the "where appropriate" part, and that is my question for the hon. member. Is he suggesting that after consultation has occurred, which it clearly has in this case, and there is no agreement, that first nations have a veto over any development that takes place in this country and over any legislation that takes place in this country, if there is no agreement? If he believes that, he should state it very clearly.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the parliamentary secretary gets up and says "We have consulted" and "look, we have had all of these meetings." The Conservatives do that every time they go to the Supreme Court or to the appeal court. They do the same thing. They say they have talked to them.

What happens when we dig into it is that we realize that the government has not consulted. It may have had a few drive-by meetings where it presented some of the things that it plans to do to a group of people. It could be a group of hunters and fishers, a group of environmentalists, or a group of school teachers or health care workers, and the government says it has consulted.

What often happens is that the government talks at people and it does not listen to them. It does not take into consideration the opinions and the interests of the people who are participating in that process. It has been found by the courts on numerous occasions—and not just with the Conservative government, but the Liberals adjacent—that the responsibility to consult is much greater than being able to show that there was an appointment one day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated the presentation by the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. It is always interesting to hear him speak about the issues that have been brought up in today's debate.

I heard the parliamentary secretary talk about consultations again. Must we remind him that in addition to the constitutional obligation to consult first nations, there is also an obligation to accommodate them with respect to the concerns they have raised during those

consultations? The Conservatives are often content simply to hold meetings, but it does not work that way.

In the 2004 Haida Nation case, the Supreme Court said that the duty to consult can go as far as full consent of the nation on very serious issues. The Supreme Court did not go into detail about what constitutes serious issues, but in my opinion, the environment is a serious issue to first nations.

Having read the Supreme Court ruling in the Tsilhqot'in Nation case, I believe that at least nine paragraphs are about consent and at least 11 paragraphs are about control of first nations' traditional territories. We need to take another look at those issues.

Why does my colleague think that the government has not taken an approach that includes partnering, co-operating and collaborating with first nations? Every time it has the opportunity, it fails to meet its obligations.

•(1610)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the question from my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and his leadership on this file, the wisdom he brings to bear as he represents his constituency and brings forward the years of wisdom and experience he has gained from first nations leadership in this country and internationally. I appreciate what he does and the counsel he provides.

I want to indicate to him that I do not understand why the government fails to accept its responsibility in dealing with first nations communities in this country. Conservatives indicate they are trying to make things work better for the companies that are extracting our natural resources, but in talking with the people who lead those corporations, we learn they would rather see a respectful, dependable, responsible process than the kind of confrontation that follows the kinds of approaches the government takes at these negotiations.

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question I will ask will be very simple.

On September 25, Grand Chief Ruth Massie appeared before the Senate committee on aboriginal peoples and clearly stated that they had been consulted multiple times.

Will the hon. member answer a simple yes-or-no question? Is he saying that this person was providing false information to a committee? Is he stating that she is misleading the committee and that she was not consulted? It is either a yes or a no.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite brings out a quote and reports that somebody said something somewhere. That is all good. I have also read testimony in which that same person said something different. All I can do is report here what I have read and what I understand to be the position of an individual, and that is what I present to this House.

Government Orders

If the government has any other information it wants to table, if it wants to call witnesses back, or if it wants to stand the bill and have a special committee look at it again, especially in light of the Supreme Court decision as it related to the umbrella agreement and the Peel land development decision, I think that will probably have an impact on this particular piece of legislation, but maybe that is what we need to do in order to clarify and deal properly with a piece of legislation that inevitably, once again, will be challenged by the people who are affected by it.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not just about consultation. Yes, there has been some consultation, but in other areas there has not been.

The whole thing is about the honour of the crown and respecting treaties and respecting agreements that are currently in place. Maybe my colleague could just explain how much the honour of the crown is at risk here, and the fact that we have heard from mining companies that have indicated that the government needs to ensure that they work together to get it right.

•(1615)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the point is whether the people who participated in the process feel that they have been consulted and whether the process meets the definition clearly laid out by the Supreme Court on the responsibilities of the crown. It has been done. The responsibilities have been laid out.

However, I want to ask the parliamentary secretary a quick question. On September 18, the member for Yukon said that he agreed with the idea of having public meetings and public consultation on this matter. Why is it the government did not fulfill his request for having public consultation?

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on this bill. I met with the group of Yukon representatives yesterday, who raised a lot of concern about the fact that the government put in amendments that they had not agreed to. Not only did they not agree to them, but there was no discussion about them.

Mr. Mark Strahl: False, false.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: The member may be saying that is false, Mr. Speaker, but this is exactly what has occurred.

Let me first talk a bit about the bill. I am going to inform the House that New Democrats are opposed to the bill because there has been a flawed process. I am assuming that if my colleague wants to speak, he will have his turn later or can ask me a question.

Basically, the bill was developed behind closed doors. It actually originated out of the Senate, but it should have been a government bill. That is the lack of respect we see from the government when it comes to treaty obligations and constitutional rights.

There has been a lack of public input because of this. I can say that my colleague from the Northwest Territories actually held a meeting on this issue in Yukon, and there was very little standing room at this meeting. That is how important this issue is to the people in Yukon.

I should provide a bit of background on the bill itself, because it has been a little while since we have talked about it and some people may not be familiar with it. Bill S-6 is an act to amend the Yukon

Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act. The short title is the Yukon and Nunavut regulatory improvement act. It was introduced in the Senate on June 3, 2014.

The objective of Bill S-6 is to change the regulatory regime in Yukon and Nunavut. The bill is composed of two parts. Part 1 proposes a series of amendments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and Part 2 proposes amendments to the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act.

The problem that needs to be emphasized is that the bill unilaterally rewrites Yukon's environmental and socio-economic evaluation system. The system is actually a product of the Umbrella Final Agreement, which settled most of the first nations land claims in the territory. The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act, the short form of which is YESAA, is seen by most residents of the territory as a made-in-Yukon solution to the unique environmental and social circumstances of the territory.

The changes proposed in Bill S-6 are seen as being imposed from the outside to satisfy southern resource development companies. Again we can see that the issue is that the government is listening to industry as opposed to doing it from the ground up, which means starting with the people who actually live and work on these lands.

New Democrats are opposed to this bill, of course, because it was developed without adequate consultation with Yukon first nations and residents of the Yukon and is not supported by the majority of them. Although Part 2's amendments to the Nunavut legislation are largely housekeeping, the Nunavut Water Board did raise some concerns with this part as well.

It is extremely important for us to recognize that Bill S-6 would actually dismantle the environmental and socio-economic assessment process developed in Yukon by Yukoners for Yukon. We can see why people are actually up in arms about what the government is trying to push through.

There has been incomplete consultation, as I have indicated, with Yukon first nations before the amendments were made, but there must be consultations before such amendments are actually proposed. As New Democrats have indicated over and over again, the fact of the matter is that the government has put in amendments that nobody has actually talked about, and it is not the first time that we have seen the government do that. It is grabbing them out of thin air.

The Conservative government, with the full assistance of the Conservative MP and the senator from Yukon, is actually forcing a pro-southern resource company agenda down the throats of Yukoners, so we can see why people are really up in arms about this situation.

•(1620)

As I mentioned, my colleague, the member for Northwest Territories, held hearings on this issue. However, the fact of the matter is that there are four changes that really upset Yukoners.

This is what my colleague said:

Government Orders

One of them is providing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development the authority to provide binding policy direction to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. This is something that was established in the NWT and there were real concerns with it there. The Yukon, which has been dealing with a different system for the past 10 years, is looking at anything like this as an abrogation of its rights and hard-fought authority over the lands and resources.

However, we have seen this over and over again with the current Conservative government when it tries to give rights to a federal minister to unilaterally make decisions. I think this is of great concern to these people.

On the second change, I will again quote from the speech of my colleague, the member for Northwest Territories:

The second change is the introduction of legislative time limits for assessments.

The third change is allowing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to delegate any or all responsibilities to the Yukon government. That is an issue of huge concern to first nations, and Yukoners as well. Yukon has worked out an arrangement between first nations and public government that is critical to the future of the Yukon territory. I do not think anyone would deny that. That relationship is one that the provinces are having more and more trouble with every day. The failure to deal on a nation-to-nation basis at the provincial level is causing all kinds of grief in all kinds of projects right across this country. Therefore, there is concern about how the delegation takes place.

Again, I am quoting from the speech of my colleague from the Northwest Territories when this issue first came before the House:

Then there is the question of creating broad exemptions from YESAA for renewals and amendments of permits and authorizations. People look at that and ask what is going on and wonder how they we make sure it is correct.

Additionally, these amendments favour the Yukon government over Yukon first nations,

—members can see why there are challenges there right now—

the other partner in the YESAA process. The Council of Yukon First Nations has threatened legal action should the bill become law.

As my colleagues have mentioned throughout the debate, the Conservative government is putting forth legislation after legislation that ends up in the courts, and guess what? They lose over and over again. I think when it comes to first nations, the Conservatives have lost something like 200 cases, so we can see that it is not in the best interest of Canadians to table legislation that people are so opposed to.

There is a quick fix here. We can listen to what the changes are, make those changes, and the problem would be solved. It does not cost us a lot of money to do that. However, going through the courts is a different story.

As I mentioned, my colleague held a meeting on this in Yukon. Talking about the environmental assessment process and having discussions such as this do not normally tempt a lot of people, because a lot of people sometimes do not understand it, but Yukoners do get it. They get it so much that they actually packed that room. Therefore, I think that it is important for the government to listen to the debates that we are having here today, to listen to the comments that were made, to go back and listen to the testimony that was presented, and say, “Hey, maybe we should take a step back here. We can get it right.”

The Conservatives can get it right. All they need is the will to do it.

●(1625)

It is important for me to read some of the testimony that was given before the Senate committee. Grand Chief Ruth Massie of the Council of Yukon First Nations was glad to be there because she wanted to make sure that the council's concerns were heard, in the hope that the government was listening in good faith. She talked about the Council for Yukon Indians that represented Yukon first nations in the land claim negotiations and signed the Umbrella Final Agreement, the UFA, in 1993. The UFA directed the CYFN, Canada, and Yukon to develop legislation to implement the objectives and principles set out in the development assessment found in chapter 12. This is the legislation in the YESAA. They are prepared to do that, but the only thing is that the government has thrown a wrench in there.

I quote from Ruth Massie:

The CYFN has a membership of nine self-governing Yukon First Nations and we work in collaboration with the other Yukon First Nations, including the three unsigned First Nations, with respect to specific projects and initiatives.

This is an organization that has already built a foundation to be able to work together and has been able to move forward on working with mining organizations. It is willing to do that, but it needs to make sure that at the end of the day, mother earth is going to be protected.

She went on to say:

In particular, the CYFN and Yukon First Nations have worked cooperatively to deal with matters relating to the YESAA over the past fifteen years, including its development, implementation and review. The UFA directed the CYFN, Canada and Yukon to complete a comprehensive review of the YESAA in 2008. This is known as the “five-year” review since it was directed to take place five years after the federal enactment of the YESAA. Despite the claims of the federal officials, this review has not yet been completed.

Hold on here. The government put forward this bill, yet there was supposed to be a review but it has not been done yet. There is a problem here.

Grand Chief Massie continued:

For several years during the five-year review the federal officials maintained that no legislative changes would be made to the YESAA in order to implement any recommendations of the five-year review. Canada now proposes that Bill S-6 would amend the YESAA pursuant to its Action Plan to Improve Northern Regulatory Regimes. It is our position that certain amendments to the YESAA proposed by Bill S-6 undermine the spirit and purpose of the YESAA that implements treaty rights of Yukon First Nations and their citizens. These proposed amendments fundamentally alter the operation of the YESAA process. In some cases, these proposed amendments relate to matters that were never discussed during the five-year review or, in other cases, contradict agreements reached by the CYFN, Canada and Yukon during that review.

The government is actually contradicting agreements. We know that is true because we have seen it over and over again.

She went on to say:

If the amendments proposed by Bill S-6 are proclaimed, the Crown will have breached its duty to consult and accommodate owed to Yukon First Nations and its constitutional duty to uphold the honour of the Crown.

In our view, these amendments would infringe rights under our land claim agreements, including the right for independent assessment of certain projects to be carried out in accordance with Chapter 12 of the final agreement. These amendments would also serve to undermine the integrity and effectiveness of YESAA.

Government Orders

Imagine trying to put some legislation in place that undermines the integrity and effectiveness of the act itself. This means that the amendments proposed by Bill S-6 must be rejected or revised. That is why we on this side of the House are standing today to reject this legislation and asking that there be a revision.

There is much more documentation here that I do not have time to speak to.

● (1630)

However, I think it is important to reiterate the fact that representatives came to Ottawa yesterday to raise the issue, to ask that there be some revisions to a bill that will impact their lands and their ability to move forward in certain areas and on the protection of their environment, yet we have a minister who has basically shut them down.

I will quote Eric Fairclough, the chief of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, from a news release from the CBC, dated yesterday. He said:

The minister shut us down by telling us we were not real governments, and therefore he does not need to make us active participants in changing legislation that arises from our treaties.

If the government side of the House is trying to tell me that is not what the government said, then there is a problem. However, I cannot see anyone saying that the minister told them they were not a real government. They would not just grab that out of the air. That is a serious allegation.

He went on to say that it "...flies in the face of recent court decisions that have affirmed the duty to consult First Nations."

Again, it is not just this chief who has actually made the comment. I could go on with respect to another northern aboriginal group that governs a New Brunswick-size chunk of the Northwest Territories, who has already asked the Territory's supreme court for an injunction against a similar federal law to the one we are speaking about today. They indicate that it violates their hard-won treaty. That is the Tlicho. They say:

...the law, to take effect next April, would dilute local decision-making by replacing environmental regulators created by land-claim settlements with a single board controlled from Ottawa.

Critics have said the superboard was the price the—Conservatives—exact from the territorial government in exchange for rules transferring resource royalties to the territory, which were contained in the same bill.

It is not just in Yukon. It is not just in Ontario. It is not just in New Brunswick. We are seeing this in every province and territory where the government is tabling legislation, pushing it through despite concerns about it, with the result that we find ourselves yet again before the courts.

It is imperative for us to indicate that for legislation to work properly and to foster good relationships, and not just good relationship but great working relationships with our first nation, Inuit, and Métis people, we need to make sure that we have that proper dialogue. We need to make sure that we actually listen to changes that they know will impact them negatively. We need to make those changes before we pass the legislation and end up in court.

Another important thing is that we know that our leader would approach resource development in the north in a respectful and consultative manner, unlike the Conservative government. We need to recognize that the nation-to-nation dialogue is extremely important. We need to ensure that any steps taken in northern development are done with the full participation of northern communities.

It is also important to note a few more things. This is from Grand Chief Ruth Massie and Chief Eric Fairclough. The first nations have four concerns: policy direction to the board, delegation of federal powers to Yukon government, exemptions for renewal and amendments, and timelines for YESAA assessments.

● (1635)

I will close by saying that we must emphasize the fact that the government needs to recognize the necessity of making these changes to the bill. I know that the leader of the Yukon NDP has been working very closely with first nations and supports the position taken by them in calling for these amendments to be made to the bill.

With that, I will close and wait for further questions.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to deal specifically with the issue of policy direction that the member raised in her speech. There are four examples of policy direction provided to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, which she referenced. In each case, policy direction was used to clearly communicate expectations based on interim measures agreements with first nations.

I asked this of the member for Timmins—James Bay, who refused to answer, so I will ask this member. On which of the following does she think the minister erred when he issued policy direction: when he required that notification be provided to both the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Denesuline regarding licences and permits in a given region; when he provided instruction to the board regarding its obligation under the Deh Cho Interim Measures Agreement respecting lands withdrawn from disposal; or when he ensured that the board carried out its functions and responsibilities in co-operation with the Akaitcho Dene First Nations and their pre-screening board?

The minister has issued policy directions solely to protect the rights and interests of first nations. Which of those directions would the NDP not have given? Why is the minister wrong to be issuing policy directions that protect the interests of first nations?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, in any legislation there are some good parts, just as there are some good parts in the budget. However, that does not mean that we have to swallow the bad parts with it.

In looking at this I must reiterate the fact that the majority of the first nations in Yukon have indicated that they are not supportive of this and feel that some changes need to be made to it. They are not against the whole bill, but only against some of the changes the government has made. The government is not listening to the changes being requested.

Government Orders

Again, one of the changes falls under the delegation of federal powers, on which the CYFN has expressed the following view:

The CYFN opposes any amendment that would allow the AANDC Minister to delegate any or all of his or her powers, duties and functions under the YESAA to the territorial Minister. The CYFN has several concerns relating to this proposed amendment. There is no requirement for the AANDC Minister to obtain the consent of Yukon First Nations before delegating any powers, duties or functions. The AANDC Minister only has to provide notice to the Yukon First Nations.

That is not me saying so, but Grand Chief Ruth Massie of the Council of Yukon First Nations. As I mentioned before, that organization represents a variety of first nations.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague from northern Ontario. However, one of the things I noticed that the government has done over the past few years, particularly since the 2012 budget, is to attack environmental legislation and environmental assessments, starting in 2012, when the budget implementation act eliminated the Environmental Assessment Act and rebuilt it in such a manner that it was a sham. As a result, there are portions of that bill that have not yet been enacted. There are regulations that were to come later that have not yet been enacted some two years later.

When the government did that, it said that it was just to avoid duplication because the provinces and territories would be doing their own assessments and it did not want to duplicate those with federal assessments. Of course, we know that the end result is that federal issues do not get assessed at all, because the provinces do not have the right. Now we see the government, through its own actions, taking away or diminishing the right of the territories. It is not allowing the territories themselves to amend this legislation. Instead, the government is taking it away from them and reducing the environmental assessments in the territories.

I think it is appalling that this is happening. Would the member like to comment on that?

• (1640)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why we had that visit yesterday with respect to those concerns.

Here is an article by Kirk Cameron of CBC News about the fact there was a meeting with over a hundred people, who packed a small room at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. It states:

In the crowd were people from around Yukon, about one half of First Nation ancestry and the rest equally concerned Yukoners. Most, if not all, were of the view that the amendments, known as Bill S-6, violate the fundamental relationship secured between First Nations, Yukoners and Canadians through land claims agreements, modern treaties that have been in place (at least the first four) since 1993.

It goes on to say:

Most of the crowd saw the amendments for what they are—an affront not just to the aboriginal people of Yukon who spent 20 years in treaty negotiations, but to all Yukoners.

Mr. John Barlow (MacLeod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing spoke quite at length about how dialogue is extremely important. I could not agree more. It is important that we engage first nations, learn what some of the issues are, and have feet on the ground to discuss them. Unfortunately, it is the member's own party that is stopping us from doing just that.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, I would like the opportunity to go to

Yukon and discuss first-hand with the residents there some of these issues. I would like to hear the member's response and why the NDP is blocking us from doing those important jobs.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the member is talking about, because we have clearly said that we will actually go to Yukon. Our leader has indicated that there is no problem. If we want to go to Yukon and hear these witnesses—

Mr. Phil McColeman: No travel.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I am telling them right now. Book the travel. We are on our way.

Here we are. This is from CBC News, posted yesterday, on December 3. It says:

The news release points out that the Yukon First Nations have the backing of at least two mining companies in Yukon, "which have sent letters to Minister Valcourt warning that regulatory reforms without meaningful consultation will create tension and uncertainty and urging the government to find a solution."

I am going to add as well that, during the treaty negotiations, first nations actually agreed to retain less than 10% of their traditional territory in exchange for the partnership and management of all Yukon land and resources, and this is what they get from the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have time for one more question and response.

Just as a reminder to hon. members, with respect to using the proper name of another hon. member, even if it is included in a citation, it is still not permitted. When one is reading the citation, one would simply change the name to the riding or title of the hon. member.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Brant.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to listen to this debate today and hear the member relay the news that her party was somehow going to change its view on committee travel and travel for members of Parliament to go out to first nations and actually find out.

I am chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and we were doing a study on first nations about job opportunities for them. We had our travel planned and booked, but it was not allowed to proceed because of the NDP's position.

Could the member explain that to the House please?

• (1645)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, I do note that the question from the hon. member for Brant really does not pertain to the question that is before the House. However, I note that the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing did make those comments in her remarks in response to another question, so I will allow the question and recognize the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, we have always been willing to meet at committees. It is just that the government did not call the meetings until just this week. We are willing to travel. We are willing to travel to Yukon to hear these witnesses.

Government Orders

With respect to all that is going on here, at the end of the day, with this type of legislation, the government has basically said it is a take it or leave it package, and these people are against the taking of it at this point, the way it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Malpeque, Agriculture and Agri-food.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to Bill S-6, a bill that would have a significant impact upon us all, no matter what region of the country we happen to live in. Obviously, it would have a larger impact in our northern region, in particular, Nunavut and Yukon.

I would like to start off by, first, acknowledging and welcoming the suggestion, the possibility of a standing committee being able to travel to get direct input on issues such as this, as it would have a very positive effect in certain situations. We will have to wait and see, through the critics and the minister, whether or not that will actually take place. I was under the impression that the official opposition party was not allowing for committees to travel, but I would hope that position has changed, when in fact there is legitimacy for committees to travel. We will have to wait to see.

One member across the way made reference to the aboriginal affairs committee. I, for one, would welcome the aboriginal affairs committee doing something more tangible on a very important issue, which we saw raised inside the House today; that is, the hundreds of murdered and missing aboriginal women and young girls.

Having said that, I will go right back to Bill S-6.

When I think of Bill S-6, a number of thoughts come to mind. I have been listening very closely to a lot of the questions that have been put forward to the New Democrats, in particular, with respect to the whole issue of consultation. I have had the opportunity to ask some questions, again, with respect to the idea of consultation. I recognize that the bill itself would make some very significant changes. Consultations were in fact warranted, and I think there is a huge question mark in terms of to what degree the government did, in good faith, go into the consultation process.

What I do know is that I have had the opportunity to receive some feedback from a couple of people in particular, from the north. One individual who I had known very briefly when I was first elected in the by-election was the former member of Parliament from Yukon, Larry Bagnell. He was sure that we had an understanding that it would appear as if there was a genuine lack of consultation that had taken place and raised a number of concerns that we felt were important, and one would question why the government was unable to build the consensus that was necessary to get more of a consensus in passing the legislation we have here today. I do not think they have achieved that.

We start to get wind of that, whether it was individuals or stakeholders making contact with caucus critics or caucus offices, but we get that sense in terms of the way in which the government also responds to the legislation.

We have Bill S-6, which has already been time allocated. That says something in itself. It means there will be a limited number of members of Parliament allowed to speak on this legislation. I suspect there might be keener interest from certain members of Parliament, quite frankly, over others, but at the very least, I think that all those who would like the opportunity to share their thoughts on this legislation should in fact be afforded the opportunity. However, like other pieces of legislation, Bill S-6 was time allocated

It does seem, on the surface, that the government uses it as a form of process, that the way it gets its legislation passed in the House is to bring in the time allocation tool.

• (1650)

The unfortunate aspect of that is that we have legislation before us that, ultimately, would have been much better had the government been successful in being able to consult in good faith—and I underline the words “good faith” for the simple reason that many of the answers from the government side are that it has consulted. I have even heard quotes from the government side saying that it has consulted. I suspect that, to a certain degree, it has conducted some form of consultation, but obviously the type of consultation the government espouses has not been effective because of the response we are hearing, that there seems to be a genuine need for the government to go back to the drawing board.

What would Bill S-6 actually do? When we read the summary of the bill, we find that it would, in essence, establish time limits for environmental assessments and a cost recovery regime. It further states:

It also amends that Act to provide for binding ministerial policy directions to the Board and the delegation of any of the Minister's powers, duties and functions to the territorial minister, and allows for a member of the board who is participating in a screening or review to continue to act for that purpose after the expiry of their term or their removal due to a loss of residency in Yukon, until decision documents are issued....

Part 2 amends the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act to modify the maximum term of certain licences, to establish time limits with respect to the making of certain decisions, to allow for the making of arrangements relating to security, to establish a cost recovery regime....

Very substantial things would be applied through Bill S-6 to two pieces of legislation.

Issues have been brought forward. When I say that there was lack of consultation, a few points were specifically brought to my attention. The government is now proposing some new measures through Bill S-6, and it is questionable as to whether there was consultation to the same degree on these new measures.

The bill would provide sweeping powers for the minister to issue binding policy direction to the assessment board; the minister could unilaterally hand over his power to the territory without the consent of first nations; and there could be exemptions of assessment renewals and amendments to projects. There is also the issue with regard to timelines and whether they are unrealistic. These are some of the areas. The general feeling is that there was no real, genuine consultation on those points, and I suspect others.

Government Orders

In terms of the potential development in the north, it would be wrong for us as a nation, as we continue to evolve and develop, not to recognize the potential of the north, in terms of how Canada as a whole would benefit if it is done properly and well under good stewardship; we can all benefit. That benefit goes beyond just finances. Quite often, when there is legislation of this nature or when we talk about the north, we do not put enough emphasis on the environment, the natural beauty, and how we can help the north become that much more alive for people who have a desire to get the northern experience. There is so much more we can do.

• (1655)

The Liberal Party supports assessing resource wealth in the north in a sustainable way. Unlocking this economic activity is contingent on environmental sustainability and on the impacted aboriginal communities being engaged as equal partners.

The government as a whole has fallen short when it comes to the development of our natural resources. That does not necessarily apply just up north. If we look at the Prairies or any other region in Canada, there has been a vacuum created by the Prime Minister in terms of leadership. We have not seen leadership coming from the Prime Minister's Office on the development of our resources.

We could come up with a number of examples. We could make reference to the legislation before us today or to the controversial issue of our pipelines, where one province is negotiating with another province and the Prime Minister is just standing at the side, not providing any form of leadership to bring the different stakeholders together to try to build consensus.

If we want to develop and promote our resources, we need to build that social contract. Ottawa has a responsibility to be engaged with the different stakeholders and to demonstrate strong leadership. That has been lacking for the last number of years, at a great cost to our community, both economically and socially in terms of development. Opportunities have been lost because the Prime Minister has not seen fit to demonstrate strong leadership in building that social contract.

I have had the opportunity to speak on a number of occasions on legislation affecting our first nations and our aboriginal peoples. If there is a common theme, virtually on anything affecting our first nations or aboriginal peoples, it has been the issue of consultation. That is one of the biggest criticisms, once again.

How can the Conservatives expect an opposition party to get behind legislation if the stakeholders are saying that they were not adequately consulted? We are getting feedback that there are legitimate concerns about the legislation and the impact it would have on development. The government seems to have the attitude that it knows best and does not necessarily need to consult. It wants to say that it consulted, but is it genuine consultation that has taken place?

Eleven self-governing first nations have made it clear that the federal government has not held enough adequate consultation on the bill to merit support. That is a substantial statement. They do not feel that they were adequately consulted. The government has brought things into the legislation that they had no idea were going to be incorporated into the legislation. Were they in fact consulted on

all aspects of the legislation that has been brought forward? Based on information we are being provided, that has not been the case, and it has been at a great cost.

• (1700)

I have had the opportunity to fly over, and on one occasion be in, Yellowknife. I used to be a serving member of the Canadian Forces, and what a privilege it was. I was posted out in Lancaster Park, just north of Edmonton. We had the C-130 Hercs, and we would do that northern run for the char up north. Everyone loved having that beautiful fish.

Flying over Yellowknife, one gets a good sense of just how vast our country is. There are so many opportunities there. We can talk about gold, silver, copper, zinc, and many more that are being mined in the north. The potential development there is overwhelming.

The entire population of the north is probably somewhere around 100,000 or maybe a little bit more. We need to play a role, but we need to be working with the territorial governments. We need to be working with the Inuit, our first nations, people of aboriginal heritage, and the communities, those who actually have intelligence on the ground on how we can best develop the north for future generations. It is not just about extracting; it is where we might be able to have additional value.

If we want to move forward, the first priority in bringing in legislation of this nature should be to build consensus. I do not think the government has been successful in building consensus.

I do not think the Liberal Party and the member for Labrador would oppose the idea of the standing committee going to the north to get a better understanding and see first-hand some of the things that are taking place.

At the end of the day, Bill S-6 would have a significant impact. We are looking to the government to deal with the issue in a conciliatory fashion and to respect consultation. That is a word I might have said a dozen times in my speech.

If we are not prepared to do the work, we should think twice before bringing in legislation. If we fail on consultation and force through the legislation, what can happen is more confrontation and problems in the future. It is better to get it right the first time and work in co-operation. If that means taking the extra month or two to get it right, let us take the extra month or two. The attitude the government has demonstrated, even by passing this legislation and bringing in time allocation, speaks volumes.

I realize that my time has expired, so I will leave it at that.

Government Orders

• (1705)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member suggests that perhaps another month or two would solve the problem. We have already conducted consultations for over a year, with meetings taking place and, as I stated previously, over \$98,000 provided to first nations specifically to consult on the four issues they have raised. They have been reimbursed over \$98,000 to compensate them for their time and expertise in participating in that. I would argue that, if over a year of meetings has not solved the issue and brought us to an agreement, another month or two is not going to get the job done.

The member referred to the delegation of federal powers. I want to refer back to the actual Umbrella Final Agreement. The concern seems to be that this violates that somehow. The delegation of federal powers is specifically addressed in section 2.11.8, which says:

Government may determine, from time to time, how and by whom any power or authority of Government or a Minister set out in a Settlement Agreement...shall be exercised.

I have addressed some issues of concern previously in the debate. One of the issues is the delegation of federal powers specifically contemplated and laid out in the Umbrella Final Agreement. Would the member not agree that the delegation of federal powers is already part of the final agreement? The final agreement takes precedence over any legislation that is being contemplated here, so why would that not be acceptable to the hon. member?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect the member might be somewhat missing the bigger picture here. He makes reference to the fact that the government has done some consultation, and I am not saying that the government has done no consultation. It is an issue of how effective the consultation has been.

If the Conservatives take an approach of saying what they want and what they expect and then go to the table and start consulting but have no flexibility, they can do all the consultation they want, but at the end of the day they will not get that consensus unless they are prepared to be flexible and open to other ideas and thoughts. Maybe that was part of the problem. Maybe they should sit down and listen in some of these consultations that have taken place. I still do not think there were enough consultations, by the sounds of it. Based on what I have been told, it seems as if they cut it off, but it does not seem as if the consultation was one of genuine exchange in which the government was actually listening.

Based on what has taken place in the House in my short period here, I have seen the Conservatives take an attitude of saying what they want, and that it does not matter what we say.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the member for Labrador feels about this issue, but the member for Winnipeg North kept on referring to “our first nations” when speaking about aboriginal peoples. I just want to remind the member for Winnipeg North that I am nobody's Indian here, nobody's first nation here.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if that is the way the member inferred it, I would apologize to him. It was not meant to be

expressed in that fashion whatsoever. I am a very proud Canadian and I recognize the important role of our first nations. Maybe the member can enlighten me on how he would rather I had made mention of it, so I could avoid making that same mistake in the future.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important debate that we are having around Bill S-6, and I do not think we should lose focus of what is happening here.

This is a perfect example of where the government members opposite are ignoring what first nations people in this country are saying. They are ignoring what aboriginal self-governments in Yukon are saying. We only have 24 aboriginal self-governments in this country. They have very specific, special legal rights, and there is an obligation by the Government of Canada to honour those rights. What Bill S-6 would do is violate it and disrespect it.

I would ask if my colleague could speak to that particular issue in terms of how these first nations governments have such a legal constitutional right in our country to have every bit of the say that they currently have. Why is that being stripped from them at this time by the government opposite?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question by my colleague. The member for Labrador has been a very strong advocate for the north and first nations, not only here in the House of Commons but also at the provincial level. She has an excellent understanding of just how important it is that we do consult.

One of the comments I made in my speech was on a common theme in the government's dealings with first nations and aboriginal peoples, namely that it has not done and is not doing anywhere near the type of consultation it should be doing. That pretty closely applies universally to all of the legislation the government has brought in dealing with first nations and aboriginal people.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, the member for Labrador just asserted and the member for Winnipeg North also mentioned in his speech that the bill somehow violated the Umbrella Final Agreement.

I would invite the member right now to point to the section of Bill S-6 that violates a section of the Umbrella Final Agreement. To date, no one has been able to do that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, in regard to the stripping of the rights of first nation governments, the member can stand up and wave the agreement, and I appreciate that he has a copy of the agreement in his hand. However, as I pointed out earlier, there is a bigger issue that supersedes it, which is the attitude of the government in dealing with issues of this nature. This is where the Prime Minister and his ministers have been caught falling short.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to my friend from Winnipeg North, there are numerous times in the House when we have not agreed on things, but this is one of the times that we are in agreement.

When the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board was first envisioned and put together, there was 60 to 70 days' worth of hearings across the north. I have to give credit that it was under a Liberal government when that took place.

Government Orders

Bill S-6 is coming from the Senate. However, the Senate did not do any travel for it. However, if the committee chooses to travel, the NDP will support that travel. I would ask the member very clearly, would he support such an idea by the Liberals?

• (1715)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. Given the significance of this, I know that the Liberal Party would be quite supportive of it. My colleague, the member for Labrador, has been fairly clear in explaining that to me. We believe that this is something that would be of great benefit.

Therefore, we have two parties in the House that are saying that we should move forward and do that. Maybe in response to the next question, the government will make that commitment, and so there would be unanimous approval by the three major political parties in the House today.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, of course, it was the member for Yukon who first asked that the aboriginal affairs committee travel to the north. We have been quite willing to do that.

Yesterday, the member for Northwest Territories was quite clear that this was not on the table. I guess he has been told that he did not speak for the party, which is not the first time that has happened.

However, yes, I will leave the comment that it was this party that brought it forward. We are glad to have the opposition on board for travel to Yukon.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Well, Mr. Speaker, you heard it first.

We now have unanimous support among the three major political parties. I suspect that the Liberal Party critic will follow through. Hopefully, we will see the committee actually go up north to Yukon and explore other potential opportunities.

At least the debate is coming to a close on a very positive note.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When the hon. member for Winnipeg North said that the debate was ending, I did not know whether that meant the House was ready for the question. However, I see there are other members who are interested in carrying on.

Before we resume debate, I will let the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou know that there are about 12 minutes remaining in the time for government orders this afternoon, and so he will not have his full 20 minutes. Of course, if he chooses, the remaining time will be available to him when the House resumes debate after the end of government orders today.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in light of your comment, I will try to wrap up this debate on a positive note. I hope I can. As always, I am very honoured to rise in the House to speak to Bill S-6.

I am honoured in the sense that I always have the opportunity to raise issues that are important to me as the member for the northern riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, which is home to a diverse population. I would like to point out that the riding includes

14 Inuit communities, nine Cree communities—soon to be 10, I hope—and two Algonquin communities. In addition, the cities in the riding depend heavily on natural resource development.

It is therefore always a privilege for me to rise to speak to these issues that are important to the constituents in my vast and magnificent riding.

I am particularly honoured to speak to this bill because I would like to raise two critical issues relating to the debate that I am wrapping up. The first is the fact that, in a way, Bill S-6 dismantles the environmental assessment process developed by and for Yukoners. The second is about the whole issue of consulting and accommodating first nations, which has been debated at length this afternoon.

I keep telling the House that these issues are constitutional obligations that we have as a country and that the government has towards first nations. We cannot ignore these very serious issues. They are not fluff and, in fact, I think they are very important.

This very morning, I introduced Bill C-641 in the House. The bill would ensure that the laws of Canada's Parliament are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That international document is the only one that specifically covers the rights of the 370 million indigenous people around the world. I believe that we need to find a way to embrace this important document in the House.

When the declaration was adopted in 2007, the UN Secretary-General spoke of this document as the path to reconciliation between states and indigenous peoples. I wholeheartedly support this declaration. It would keep us from going through the kinds of situations we are seeing right now concerning the whole issue of consulting and accommodating aboriginal peoples when legislation is studied in the House.

Article 19 of the declaration states that indigenous people must be consulted and accommodated, in addition to providing their consent, when legislation that would directly affect them is being considered.

I introduced Bill C-641 this morning, and I am very proud of it. It would put aboriginal people and all Canadians on the path to reconciliation, which is so desperately needed in this country right now.

What will happen remains to be seen, and I hope the House will support and pass this bill. I also hope for the support of every Canadian, as this affects us all.

• (1720)

In the Delgamuukw case, the Chief Justice clearly indicated that we are all here to stay. That is a statement I believe in, so let us try to find a *modus vivendi* so that we can live together in peace and harmony.

I can speak from experience about the environmental assessment process we are talking about in this bill. I chaired the James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment, which is provided for in section 22 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. This committee oversees the implementation of the environmental and social protection regime outlined in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. Having chaired this committee for many years, I could speak at length about it because I currently understand the importance of having a clear, independent and impartial process.

The James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment for the southern part of the James Bay area is made up of Cree representatives, members appointed by the federal government and others appointed by the provincial government, the Government of Quebec in this case. It is therefore a clear process.

In this regard, when the environmental assessment process and the powers and mandates of the assessment committees are clear to everyone, development goes well. Development in northern Quebec is going well because people know what to expect. They know the rules and standards set out in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. When these things are clear, everyone understands the rules and knows what to expect, whether it is the aboriginal people who are directly affected or the natural resource developers, particularly in the territories. Everything goes well.

Since I will be concluding the debate, I would like to quickly address the issue of consulting and accommodating aboriginal peoples. That is an essential point that has been discussed all afternoon. I was here all afternoon and I listened carefully to both the speeches and the questions and answers on this topic. It is important to consider all of these issues.

My colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan quoted a few examples of the objections expressed to this government concerning the changes it wants to make with this bill. First, she quoted the Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada. She also quoted the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, which expressed its opposition to the bill and its support for the aboriginal peoples in the context of the changes to be made under Bill S-6. I want to quote that tourism association, which is in the territories:

● (1725)

[English]

TIA Yukon asserts that taking land use planning decisions away from the Territory will ultimately give tourism operators in the Yukon less of a say over land use issues where resource extraction interests conflict with interests of tourism businesses.

[Translation]

I would also like to read from a letter written by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Yukon Chapter. This letter was sent to the government and to other members here in the House, including some opposition members. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society says it is against some of the proposed changes in Bill S-6, and mentioned four points in particular. The first is, and I quote:

[English]

...providing the federal minister new powers to give binding policy orders to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board as this amendment undermines the independence of the Board....

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

I just talked about the independence of these processes.

I will close by saying that the first nations directly affected by this bill complained that they were not properly consulted and that their concerns were not reflected by these changes.

We must never forget that we have a constitutional obligation to the first nations. We cannot deny that obligation, simply say that the first nations were consulted and then do nothing to address their concerns. We have a dual obligation to consult them and accommodate them. We must never forget that.

Again, our fear is that these matters will end up before the courts yet again and that once again the courts will side with us. That is our concern.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[English]

TAKEOVER OF STELCO

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) apologize to the people of Hamilton for approving the 2007 foreign takeover of Stelco by U.S. Steel, on the grounds that it has failed to provide a net benefit to Hamilton and Canada; (b) make public the commitments U.S. Steel agreed to under the Investment Canada Act in respect of the acquisition of Stelco Inc. in 2007, and the 2011 out-of-court settlement, concerning employment and production guarantees and maintenance of the employee pension system; and (c) take immediate action to ensure pension benefits for the 15,000 employees and pensioners remain fully funded and protected, including amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies Creditors Arrangement Act to protect worker pensions in the event of bankruptcy.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to bring my motion before the House. This will be the first hour of discussion on the motion. If plans go accordingly, early in the New Year there should be an opportunity for the second hour and then hopefully not long after that an actual vote.

My reason for bringing the motion forward is not because I have suddenly become delusional and believe that we can muster a majority on our side to make what we want happen, although I wish we could. With optimism, I look forward to the next election when we may have the opportunity to do that, but it will not be just motions, it will be bills that would make a difference for the people of my community of Hamilton and the rest of Canada.

However, we will do everything we can in this struggle to ensure that, at the very least, the government is not allowed to let this item just quietly slip away, because what is at stake is just too important.

Private Members' Business

Canadians know that Hamilton is Steeltown. It is changing now if we look at employment and where most of the jobs are, but nonetheless for the time being and in our proud history, we are Steeltown. It was known as the home of Stelco and Defasco. For the most part, things went along fairly good for the community, with some give and take. Then all of a sudden in 2007, the government approved the takeover of Stelco by U.S. Steel and it has been darkness ever since.

I want to read into the record an extract from the Investment Canada Act, so we understand exactly the government's responsibility in this regard. The Investment Canada Act says in part the following:

—the purposes of this Act are to provide for the review of significant investments in Canada by non-Canadians in a manner that encourages investment, economic growth and employment opportunities in Canada...

The takeover of Stelco by U.S. Steel has been anything but a net benefit to my community and the citizens who are there, and the smaller businesses that support that corporation. There is no net benefit, not when one of the corporation's earliest acts was to lock out the workers. This was not a strike but a lockout. Why did it lock them out? So the corporation could attack the pension plan of workers. That alone, in my view, warrants an apology to the people of Hamilton by the current government.

I see my friend over there wants me to quiet down. It is not his constituents and their pensions. The last thing the people at home in my community want is for me to be quiet on this issue. They want noise. They want attention. They want action. That is why the motion is here. The importance of this issue is not going to be lost. Whether we win or not ultimately remains to be seen, but we are not going to lose this.

That is why I put in the motion that its the government's responsibility, its sacred responsibility, to review potential foreign takeovers to ensure that exactly what happened in Hamilton with U.S. Steel does not happen again. It is not supposed to happen. Under the legislation, it is the responsibility of the federal government, when it reviews these kinds of buyouts, to ensure that does not happen. The government let Canada down. It let the workers and the pensioners of Stelco and U.S. Steel down completely, not to mention the city of Hamilton, and I will get to that in a moment.

The other thing my motion asks for is that the secret deal that got U.S. Steel out of court for not honouring its first set of commitments needs to be made public, unless the government thinks that it can just brush that off as just being the opposition, or that it is just Rolf Gerstenberger, the president of Local 1005, who says those kinds of things, that it is those kinds of folks. It is not the case.

• (1735)

Let me put on the record a letter dated September 24, this year, to the federal Minister of Industry from the provincial Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Brad Duguid, and he said:

As the CCAA process continues, it would be helpful for all parties to better understand the details of the 2011 settlement between the Government of Canada and US Steel Corporation related to the company's Investment Canada Act obligations and potential implications for Ontario and Hamilton. We fully recognize that there may be legal challenges to releasing commercially sensitive information, however, it would be helpful for all parties if the federal government could share this information

with all levels of government to ensure that we are all well informed. Anything you can do to assist in this matter would be most appreciated.

I am doing what I can to try to assist. I sure hope the minister is listening.

I said it was more than just a few voices in Hamilton or in Ontario. Hamilton City Council has a special committee on this issue, on the steel industry, and it is very seized of this issue. Up until now, councillor Scott Duvall has been the chair of this, and by the way, he is a steelworker himself and certainly understands the issues.

The council has been calling for this information, because the impact on Hamilton's revenue is huge. Millions and millions of dollars stand to be lost if this corporation closes and those jobs are lost. The city is quite worried, because like every other older city, it has all kinds of challenges already without suddenly having millions of dollars of tax revenue being taken away.

In terms of the broader community, *The Hamilton Spectator*, on September 26, 2014, just within the last couple of months, under the heading "The Spectator's View: Ottawa should come clean on U.S. steel deal", said:

Is it possible the federal government will heed the growing calls for it to lift the veil of secrecy covering the deal it struck with U.S. Steel back in 2011? The most recent demand for that comes from Ontario's Economic Development Minister, Brad Duguid, who wants the secrecy to end in order to protect provincial interests.

It's a reasonable demand. The chronology is as follows: U.S. Steel bought Stelco in 2007 and, amid foreign-ownership concerns, made promises around minimum employment and production. Not long after, it idled production in spite of its commitments. The federal government sued to enforce the promises and won a preliminary round. But suddenly, in 2011—

Mr. Brad Butt: You should pay attention, David.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, if anybody wonders, it is Butt.

—the government dropped this suit in exchange for new commitments that have not been kept.

Now that U.S. Steel aims to sell its Hamilton operations and pull out of Canada, the agreement should be made public. There may be legitimate reasons to redact some portions, but not at the expense of the truth.

U.S. Steel workers, pensioners and the citizens of Hamilton deserve to know what our government agreed to, and why it never enforced the agreement, not to mention what it plans to do now.

They sign their editorials, and that one was signed by Mr. Howard Elliott.

I read that to point out that this is not, again, just the opposition raising an issue and trying to make a mountain out of a molehill. This is already a mountain. This is huge.

So far, I have addressed the fact that it calls for an apology, because in our view, the Conservative federal government has let Hamilton down and let the workers and pensioners at U.S. Steel-Stelco down completely, and we demand and deserve an apology for that incredibly bad decision.

Private Members' Business

● (1740)

Next, the government owes it to the people of Hamilton, the pensioners, the workers, and the rest of this country to make public the deal that got U.S. Steel out of court. Remember, it was in court. The government was winning, holding U.S. Steel to account on its first round of promises. What got U.S. Steel out of court and out of trouble was this deal, but what is in the deal? It is at the heart of everything. What commitments were made, and are those commitments being honoured? In the event of a breach, what happens? We do not know.

That is why we local MPs are raising the issue. That is why I am putting forward the motion here in front of us. That is why Hamilton City Council has time and time again called for the government to release this information. Now the provincial government has also said that it believes that this information needs to be made public.

That deals with the first two issue. The last one strikes at the human level. It calls for amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, so that in cases of bankruptcy, unlike right now, workers' pensions will not be at the bottom of the list of things to be paid out from whatever assets remain. That is wrong. It is wrong, and here is why.

Corporations and companies can withstand the financial hit of one of their suppliers or clients going bust a lot more than the steelworkers can, who have worked 30, 40 or 45 years and then find out at the end of that grinding life that the pensions they were guaranteed are gone. Anyone who has ever worked in a factory will know and can imagine what decades in that plant are like. Those workers said that they would not take every hour of their wages in pay, but wanted some of it going into a fund that would accumulate over the pay periods, months, years and decades, so that they would have a little bit of a retirement, live in dignity and enjoy whatever remaining years they had in a decent retirement.

This is not to mention those pensioners who have already been retired for 10 and 20 years and now face the prospect of their income being cut by 20%, 30%, or 50% or more. I know what would happen in this place if someone said that MPs should get 50% less than they get right now.

Can members imagine what it is like and how frightening it is for people in Hamilton who worked at Stelco all those years and are about to draw their pensions or are already drawing on them, but which are now in jeopardy? They cannot go and re-live the 30 years. They cannot fix that problem. A company has some means to plan for the future, but what does a working person do when they have put their whole life into a company and are told that the pension money has gone? It is terrifying.

This motion draws attention to what needs to be done. It draws attention to how wrongly and shamefully the people in Hamilton have been treated, and it calls on the government to do the right thing. The government needs to apologize for what has happened to our community and our citizens. It should make the information public; the government does not own it.

Lastly, we need to change the legislation, to protect our pensioners. If we do not step in and protect them, we can see pretty clearly that U.S. Steel and others will not do it. If we do not do it,

who will? The people in Hamilton, those steelworkers, are looking to this place to help them.

Approving this motion and following what it asks for would go a long way to bringing dignity, respect, and fairness to the people of Hamilton and the workers and pensioners of Stelco and U.S. Steel, who deserve to be treated better than how they have been treated at the hands of the Conservative government.

● (1745)

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I waited for the hon. member to complete his speech because I respect the fact that he should have the right to do that on this issue.

I believe he referred to me by my surname in the House. That is not an appropriate way to refer to members of Parliament. We are referred to by our titles or the ridings we represent, and I would ask the hon. member to apologize for that and retract it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair heard the comment but was not exactly clear on what the hon. member for Hamilton Centre had said. At the time, the Chair was also mindful that the hon. member for Hamilton Centre was replying to heckling from the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville, which also falls outside the rules.

I did not clearly hear what the member for Hamilton Centre said. If that is what he said, then I would encourage him to retract it. It does happen from time to time in this place. The Chair can review the tape to see whether that is in fact what was said, but the Chair would also remind all hon. members that when one of their colleagues has the floor, they are to respectfully listen and not heckle. That is also an expectation.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, you are very fair-minded and always have been.

There was heckling. It was juvenile. I did use his name as a retort, and I apologize and withdraw the comment.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague putting forth this motion. Dubreuilville, for example, is one of the communities where the workers are still trying to figure out if they are ever going to get their severance packages and pensions. The company closed down, and they are in limbo. The issue is similar to the one with the Nortel workers.

I want to thank my colleague very much, because transparency is something we have been asking for on this side of the House for quite some time. The government keeps saying that it brought transparency in; however, it keeps hiding everything. We saw that with this type of legislation.

I am wondering if the member could talk a bit more about the amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, because I know that many people are having trouble making ends meet and are still wondering where they are at the end of the day, having worked all those hours without receiving what is rightfully due to them.

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Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. I know that there are members from all across Canada who can tell stories of exactly the same thing that in one degree or another has happened to their constituents. That is why New Democrats have always taken the position that this legislation needs to be amended, because at the time of crisis it is too late. The legislation needs to be in place at the time that these things happen so that workers have the security that right now banks and bond holders have.

They have that security. They get whatever amount of money. It may not be all of the money, but it is whatever amount is available. They are at the top of the list, the front of the line. We are saying that those workers should be at the front of the line, because we cannot repair the damage that is done to them when their pensions are cut in half or there is not enough money to even pay out a pension. New Democrats have always felt that this is the kind of legislative change that needs to be made.

As an aside, interestingly enough, when I was doing an interview with Mr. Steve Arnold, a reporter at *The Hamilton Spectator*, he asked me, "Hasn't this been put forward for about 30 years now? Why does it never happen?" My answer to him was it is because we have not had an NDP government yet. If we get an NDP government in place, we will get the kind of protections that workers need.

• (1750)

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's comments and was actually astounded by the level of hypocrisy in his remarks. He was a member of the Bob Rae government in the early 1990s that reopened collective agreements and chose not to pay civil servants an agreed-upon wage.

I am absolutely astounded that the member has the audacity and temerity to stand in his place in the House and not make reference to his own past when he was part of a government that reopened freely negotiated collective agreements and stabbed workers and public servants in the back in the province of Ontario. How does he explain that hypocrisy?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, the government would like to change the channel and talk about something else.

The member is talking about the social contract. The social contract was wrong and should not have happened. That is a given. I would like to hear the government stand up and say that it has done something wrong, and fix it.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did appreciate the member's remarks. He is correct; this is not the only industry or company that has been lost to Canada.

I could not help but sit here while the member was talking and think about what Mel Hurtig would be saying about this issue. Thirty years ago, he warned about these kinds of takeover and the loss of Canadian industries. That is what we are seeing.

I just want to congratulate the member for standing up for the steel industry in Canada. We need to see more of that. We are seeing an erosion of Canadian workers and Canadian industries with the current government. It is a serious problem.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, the member underscores the fact that, as I have said, there are those of us from all

across Canada who can point to examples of where this has happened.

We can look at other economies in the world and see that they are trying to create steel industries. They are trying to make sure they have the ability to do that.

Under the government, we are slowly but surely letting go of whatever little bit is left of the steel industry in Canada. As a wealth-generating country, having the state-of-the-art, world-leading steel industries was to our benefit. The government allowing that to change and be watered down is a harm to our future.

The hon. member is absolutely correct. If we continue down this road, it is going to do more and more harm. We need to change the ways, change the laws, and change the government.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to the motion from my colleague regarding the acquisition of Stelco by U.S. Steel in 2007 under the Investment Canada Act, I rise today to make a couple of points.

The current set of challenges that U.S. Steel faces are not unique within the North American steel industry, nor a result of government policy. In fact, competitive pressures have been changing the types of markets that the Canadian steel industry serves and the types of specialized products it makes for decades now.

My second point is the importance of foreign investment and strategic investments such as those our government has made under the economic action plan to Canada's continued prosperity, the kind of growth that we continue to see in my hometown of Hamilton, Ontario.

This motion implies that U.S. Steel's current situation is indicative of a flawed foreign investment policy. I profoundly disagree.

Before I get into some more facts, on this side of the House, we are very concerned about anyone who does not have employment or is concerned about their employment or their future. That is the heart throb of every kind of initiative that we have taken to try to ensure we create jobs, growth, and prosperity.

It was our government that took U.S. Steel to court in 2011 to ensure it fulfilled its commitments under the Investment Canada Act. It is the Minister of International Trade and our government that has been charging hard against the protectionist buy American legislation we are seeing south of the border, which has impacted the Canadian steel industry, as well as many other sectors of the Canadian economy.

This government is engaging the Obama administration on all levels because we know, and we always point out to the Americans, that these buy American policies are short-sighted and harm the economic interests of both countries. I should add that the Canadian Steel Producers Association has acknowledged the Minister of International Trade and his work on this issue.

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For the purposes of debate on this motion, I should also note that in October, members of Local 1005 of the United Steelworkers in Hamilton voted 86% to accept a new 30-month contract from U.S. Steel. Both the union president and the U.S. Steel president cited stability as the key reason for the favourable vote and long-term contract. This stability is what the company and its workers need as they restructure in the face of serious competitive pressures with which the entire steel industry is dealing, so it can continue to do business in Hamilton and safeguard those good jobs

It is also important to the context of debate on this motion to talk about the renaissance that is currently taking place in Hamilton, at least before we get into the nuances of trade and foreign investment policy.

The greater Hamilton area has transformed itself in the past few years. It is now a much sought after place to live, work and raise a family.

I have known for many years that Hamilton is the place to be, and my colleagues opposite know that is the case as well. Now the secret is out. The Hamilton economy is on a roll. New jobs are being added to the Hamilton market every month. People are moving from Toronto to Hamilton. There is an unprecedented amount of construction taking place, including much of it in the hon. member's riding of Hamilton Centre.

Notwithstanding the global pressures that the steel industry faces, there is no reason to be down on Hamilton. Here are some facts.

Hamilton has the busiest Canadian port on the Great Lakes and it is growing. The Hamilton Port Authority has an aggressive strategy to diversify the cargo in and out of this port. In fact, the port is a driver of almost \$6 billion of economic activity and 38,000 jobs for the Hamilton area. The unemployment rate dropped to 5.6% in October, a full percentage point lower than the national average. The value of building permits in Hamilton has topped \$1 billion more than once in the past few years. Business magazines have pointed to Hamilton as a great place to invest.

To sum it up, the economist with the United Steelworkers Union was quoted in the *Hamilton Spectator* on October 11 saying, "Overall the numbers are pretty good for Hamilton."

Why is this? Why the strong employment picture, busy and growing port and commercial investment that is taking place in Hamilton? Because this government is getting the economic fundamentals right, including an economically sound trade and investment policy. The fact is that trade and investment, both in and out of Canada, provide the foundation for Canada's continued economic growth, wealth and job creation.

Yes, there are significant competitive pressures weighing against some of our industries, but I have every confidence in Canada and Canadians to rise to the challenge to compete with the best in the world. That is why we believe in free trade, and it has benefited our country and economy greatly.

• (1755)

Investors have recognized that Canada is open for business under this government and have been attracted to the opportunities provided by a strong, dynamic Canadian economy.

We have created a transparent, stable, and predictable economic climate that benefits Canadian business, foreign investment, and frankly, Canadian workers.

In 2013, Canada leapt from sixth to second place in Bloomberg's ranking of the most attractive destinations for business, and Canada currently holds one of the strongest job creation records in the G7.

Our government is committed to creating the market conditions that will continue to attract international capital, technology, and innovative ways of doing business.

The positive benefits of foreign investment are well recognized.

First and foremost, foreign investment creates high-paying jobs for Canadians that contribute to our overall economic productivity.

Second, foreign investment provides new capital, which Canadian firms need to fuel growth and make the investments needed to thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy. This includes introducing new technologies and innovative business practices to Canadian enterprises, which as a result, can prove crucial to the expansion and development of important sectors of the Canadian economy, including our domestic manufacturing base.

Third, foreign investment also provides Canadian businesses with valuable access to new markets.

In order to reap the benefits, Canada must maintain the economic conditions necessary to attract investment, in the first place, and foster a welcoming environment for such investments to thrive.

In a global marketplace with strong competition for foreign investment, it is crucial that Canada provide an economic climate in which Canadian and international companies can succeed and thrive. Our government has worked hard to create the necessary conditions for Canadian businesses and workers to succeed. We have kept taxes low for Canadians and Canadian businesses, to support job creation, growth, and investment in all sectors of the economy.

Our government's economic action plan has resulted in significant investments to promote innovation and to foster research and development, and measures to ensure that Canadians are equipped with the skills and training they need to succeed in a globalized economy.

In Hamilton, the federal CANMET labs are one such example of a strategic investment in research, because the research there in new metals technology represents the competitive advantage the steel industry needs to compete on a global basis.

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History has shown that trade is the best way to create jobs and growth and boost our standard of living. Our government and our Minister of International Trade have worked tirelessly to open new markets, increase exports of Canadian goods and services to global markets, and provide new and diverse opportunities for Canadian companies.

The government will continue to bring the benefits of foreign investment to Canada by maintaining favourable economic conditions.

At the same time, the government recognizes that not every foreign investment will benefit Canada. The foreign investment review regime under the Investment Canada Act is a key part of Canada's economic framework. It promotes investment and ensures that Canadians reap the benefit of those investments.

Under the Investment Canada Act, Canadian businesses can capitalize on international trade opportunities, tap into deeper pools of global capital, and obtain greater access to the resources and markets they need to expand, innovate, and create.

The foreign investments that have been reviewed and approved under the Investment Canada Act have boosted Canada's productivity, created jobs, and enhanced research and development. Once again, they have also demonstrated to the world that Canada is open for business.

In conclusion, our government has demonstrated its commitment to ensure that Canadian businesses can compete in both domestic and international markets.

In order to prosper, create jobs, and maintain a high standard of living for Canadians, it is important to adopt policies that encourage trade and investment.

Please allow me to quote the president of the Canadian Steel Producers Association, Ron Watkins, who wrote in an opinion editorial in *The Globe and Mail* this week:

We support the government's efforts at international trade liberalization, including fair competition and increased market access in government procurement.

Through our trade agenda, overall economic policies, and foreign investment review regime under the Investment Canada Act, we are working to ensure that foreign investment continues to contribute strongly to the economic well-being and long-term prosperity of Hamiltonians, Ontarians, and all Canadians.

● (1800)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today to talk on the motion presented by the member for Hamilton Centre.

However, in listening to the Conservative member speak, it sounded more like a budget address than one dealing with the motion before us. I will spend a few moments commenting on that before I get to the guts of the motion.

When the government talks about the economic action plan and some of the initiatives it is taking, I believe it provides very little, if any, comfort to the individuals who are waiting, and have been waiting for years now, to try to get an outstanding issue resolved.

I am very sympathetic to individuals who are looking forward to retirement, a number of them with a great deal of fear or anxiety, because of a sense of uncertainty. What will take place? There is a huge question mark there. I think it would have been more appropriate to have heard from the member on where the government stands in regards to the three points that have been raised.

When the member refers to issues like trade and so forth, there is no doubt that we, as a political entity inside the House, have been very supportive of the principle of trade. At another time, perhaps I will be able to spend a little more time espousing where the government has fallen short on the trade file, but for now I will just say that the government was handed a multi-billion dollar trade surplus. The Conservatives can say whatever they want on all the trade agreements they have signed off on since being in government, but they have turned that multi-billion dollar trade surplus into a trade deficit, which means real jobs.

When the member talks about the industries and how well Hamilton is doing, he is right that Hamilton is doing exceptionally well as a community. There are a lot of people who deserve credit for that. However, what we are really talking about is the importance of an industry, the steel industry. More specifically, we are talking about the Government of Canada's actions related to problems Stelco was having back in 2006-07.

With the government's engagement on the issue, there was doubtless a general feeling among the employees that at least some of their interests would be genuinely looked after. I think we often find within the private sector that when a government at whatever level, provincial or national, gets engaged in an issue of this nature, there is a sense of comfort provided to the employees.

I am not a historian, but through a basic understanding of Canada, I do know that Hamilton has often been referred to as a steel city, and the member for Hamilton Centre has made reference to that fact. In my teenage years, that is how I saw it. Maybe it was somewhat slanted because I went to the CFL Hall of Fame, which is located in Hamilton, among many other wonderful attractions. However, there was something that took place after close to a hundred years. Stelco, I believe, was getting close to a hundred years old as a company. It provided many thousands of good, quality jobs that contributed immensely to the development of our country. It provided steel for all regions of our country, and obviously exported a great deal of steel, particularly to the United States

● (1805)

The steel industry is an important industry. Most people would say that with the size of Canada and the resources we have, we would expect to have a very successful steel industry. As times change, it is important that steel companies become modernized. A lot of people were shocked when we found out that Stelco was having serious financial problems and ultimately was not able to move forward. As a result of that and the turmoil that followed, a number of things occurred.

The motion is actually very specific, and I would like to deal with it in the three parts, as has been stated. It is asking for the government to:

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(a) apologize to the people of Hamilton for approving the 2007 foreign takeover of Stelco by U.S. Steel, on the grounds that it has failed to provide a net benefit to Hamilton and Canada...

Let there be no doubt that when the national government in 2007 made the decision to get involved, it raised the bar. There was a greater sense of expectation that not only would those jobs be saved but that the company would continue on, although obviously under another name. I think that is the reason the Government of Canada got involved in 2007.

It did not meet that expectation. It did not demonstrate to Hamiltonians and Canadians as a whole that it was successful in achieving what it was supposed to do, even though I am sure there was a fairly substantial cost one way or another, directly or indirectly, in terms of tax dollars, so it seems fair for an apology request to be on the table.

The motion continues:

(b) make public the commitments U.S. Steel agreed to under the Investment Canada Act in respect of the acquisition of Stelco Inc. in 2007, and the 2011 out-of-court settlement, concerning employment and production guarantees and maintenance of the employee pension system...

I thought the member for Hamilton Centre, who moved the motion, expressed that particular issue quite well. I can understand why that information should become public, and I support that idea.

The third point in the motion states:

(c) take immediate action to ensure pension benefits for the 15,000 employees and pensioners remain fully funded and protected, including amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies Creditors Arrangement Act to protect worker pensions in the event of bankruptcy.

I have walked on picket lines along with workers from companies both big and small, and without exception, whenever I have walked in strike situations in support of the workers, the pension issue is always important. I would go as far as to say that often it is the number one issue. I have said inside the Manitoba legislature that we as politicians need to focus more attention on pensions, both private and public. We are not doing enough to protect pensions and we need to explore other ways in which we might be able to do so.

I take great pride in the fact that whether it is the GIC, the CPP, or the OAS, those pension programs were brought in through Liberal administrations that realized and understood the importance of pensions. That is why I was so upset when the Conservatives increased the age for collecting OAS from 65 to 67, and I will take that to the doors. We know pensions are important.

It is a reasonable motion, and I would suggest that members would be best advised to support it.

●(1810)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today in support of Motion No. 537, which was put forward by my NDP colleague, the member for Hamilton Centre. I apologize to the interpreters; I may be speaking a bit fast tonight, but I have a lot to say on this topic.

For those of us in the NDP caucus who represent Steeltown, this motion could not be more timely. It demands accountability and action from the Conservative government to compensate Hamiltonians and steelworkers in particular for allowing U.S. Steel to run

roughshod over the requirement to provide a net benefit to Canada as a result of its takeover of Stelco.

In fact, New Democrats have been demanding such action from the federal government ever since it became apparent that U.S. Steel was flouting its obligations as spelled out under the Investment Canada Act.

Unfortunately, like their Liberal predecessors, the Conservatives simply refuse to ensure that foreign investments: (a) create new jobs for Canadians; (b) bring new capital to Canada; (c) transfer new technology to this country; (d) increase Canadian-based research and development; (e) contribute to sustainable economic development; and (f) improve the lives of Canadian workers and their communities.

Only if all six of those conditions are met, can any government feel assured that new proposals are indeed of net benefit to Canada, which is, after all, the key legal criterion for determining whether a foreign takeover should be allowed to proceed. Instead, foreign investments have been approved despite the fact that they were motivated simply by a desire to gain control of Canada's strategic industries and resources. Sadly, that seems to be just fine by the Conservative government.

Let us review what has been happening in Hamilton. U.S. Steel acquired the former operations of Stelco Inc. in 2007. That included both Hilton Works in Hamilton and Lake Erie Works in Nanticoke.

Under the Investment Canada Act, U.S. Steel had to demonstrate that its investment would provide a net benefit to Canada. As a result, it had to make commitments with respect to job creation, production levels, and domestic investment. To that end, U.S. Steel and the Government of Canada signed an agreement that committed U.S. Steel to 31 different undertakings and promises. U.S. Steel then started up its operations in the fall of 2007. Just a year later, layoffs began at Hilton Works and in 2009 at Lake Erie Works as well.

In the spring of 2009, the government started to ask questions, and U.S. Steel responded with a whole host of reasons for why it is excused, or ought to be excused, from meeting its employment and production commitments. The excuses did not fly, and so the government took U.S. Steel to court in July of that year.

The Steelworkers and Lakeside Steel, a company with a potential interest in acquiring U.S. Steel operations, were granted intervenor status. This was a huge victory for the steelworkers. Winning intervenor status is rare in cases such as these, but the court said that the union had "unique interests" that ought to be considered in determining an appropriate remedy.

U.S. Steel, of course, did not just roll over, and so in September of 2009, the company went back to court challenging the constitutionality of the entire act. The judge dismissed U.S. Steel's claim. Once again, U.S. Steel filed an appeal, and then asked for a stay. The court did not grant the stay application, but the charter challenge was never resolved.

Private Members' Business

Even just to that point in the U.S. Steel saga, a number of points had already been thrown into relief. First, by taking U.S. Steel to court, the federal government acknowledged that it does indeed have a legal duty to ensure that foreign investments provide a net benefit to Canada.

Second, the case made it clear that commitments made by foreign corporations with respect to job creation, production levels, and domestic investment are legally binding. They are not fairweather wish lists that foreign corporations can unilaterally abandon. Both of those things are good news; but, and this is a big but, clearly these are not ironclad guarantees.

In fact, when the Conservative government rolled over in December of 2011 and dropped its lawsuit against U.S. Steel, it got nothing in terms of either guaranteed production or employment levels at the former Stelco. Instead, it got a promise of new investments of \$50 million in both the Hamilton and Lake Erie plants, which many of us believed at the time was simply a way to fatten the pig before the slaughter, or in this case, before a sale.

In any event, the Conservatives completely let the company off the hook, and effectively said to all foreign investors that Canadian companies are free for the taking and that the legislated need to secure a net benefit from such transactions will simply not be enforced.

How can that be? What was in the original agreement with U.S. Steel that let it get off the hook so easily? What happened behind closed doors between the government and U.S. Steel? In truth, we will never know. Herein lies the crux of the problem. We do not know, because the agreements between foreign corporations and the federal government under the Investment Canada Act are negotiated in private and are never made publicly available.

• (1815)

It does not need to be that way, and it should not be that way. That is why the motion before us today mandates the government to make public the commitments U.S. Steel agreed to under the Investment Canada Act in respect of the acquisition of Stelco Inc. in 2007, and the 2011 out of court settlement, concerning employment and production guarantees and maintenance of the employee pension system.

This is absolutely critical and mirrors my own private member's bill, Bill C-358, the Stelco Inc. acquisition act. My bill is short and to the point. It requires the Government of Canada to publish: (a) all written undertakings given to Her Majesty in right of Canada under the Investment Canada Act in respect of the acquisition of Stelco Inc. by the United States Steel Corporation in 2007; and (b) all demands sent by the Minister of Industry in respect of those undertakings.

The intent here is clear. The single biggest challenge to holding companies to their commitments is not knowing what commitments were made in the first place. In essence, we are creating a legal requirement for transparency and accountability. The alternative is what is playing out in Hamilton right now. With a government abdicating its responsibility to hold companies to their commitments, hundreds of workers are now fearful of losing their jobs, and over 9,000 pensioners are terrified that their pension plan may be wound

up and that they will lose a significant portion of their hard-earned retirement benefits.

That is why the motion before us today concludes by calling on the government to take immediate action to ensure pension benefits remain fully funded and protected, including amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to protect worker pensions in the event of bankruptcy.

Allow me just to expand on this a little further.

Whenever we mention pensions and USW Local 1005, old rumours begin to resurface about how the current bind can largely be attributed to the Rae government in Ontario. I am no fan of Bob Rae, but this misinformation campaign is readily disproved by the facts. The contention is that it was the NDP government in Ontario that threw the floodgates wide open for corporations to underfund their pension plans, and that is why we are in such difficulty now. That is complete nonsense.

Let me once again set the record straight. It is true that a number of companies approached the government in the early 1990s with a request for pension contribution holidays during what was then a very serious recession. The government did approve a limited number of those requests, but only on the condition that companies had to file detailed plans with hard deadlines for repayment of the plan. Every one of the companies approved by the NDP government met those conditions. Every pension plan was repaid.

Stelco did not apply for its contribution holiday until after Mike Harris came to power in June of 1995. Stelco filed its election to pay penalties rather than fund the pension plan in June of 1996. The Harris Conservatives allowed that to happen without any requirement that a pension plan repayment schedule be either filed or met. Without such a binding requirement and without any enforcement, underfunded pension plans began to abound in Ontario. That is how we ended up in the mess that has now become a full-blown pension crisis. That is why we need to pass the motion that is before us today on an urgent basis.

The workers and pensioners at U.S. Steel deserve the government's support. They did not approve the foreign takeover that led us down this path; the government did. While an apology to Hamiltonians for not securing a net benefit for our community would be a good start, concrete action on full disclosure and pension security would offer real assistance to the innocent victims of this sweetheart deal with U.S. Steel. Frankly, steelworkers and their families deserve nothing less.

• (1820)

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to the motion from my colleague regarding the acquisition of Stelco by U.S. Steel in 2007, under the Investment Canada Act, I rise today to speak to the importance of foreign investment to Canada's continued prosperity.

Private Members' Business

This motion implies that U.S. Steel's current situation is indicative of a flawed foreign investment policy. We disagree. Trade and investment, both into and out of Canada, provide the foundation for Canada's continued economic growth, wealth, and job creation. Foreign investors have recognized that Canada is open for business under the Conservative government and have been attracted to the opportunities provided by a strong, dynamic Canadian economy.

We have created a transparent, stable, and predictable economic climate that benefits both Canadian business and foreign investment. Our government is committed to creating the market conditions that will continue to attract international capital, technology, and innovative ways of doing business.

The benefits of foreign investment are well recognized. First and foremost, foreign investment creates high-paying jobs for Canadians that contribute to our overall economic productivity.

Second, foreign investment provides new capital, which Canadian firms need to fuel growth and make the investments needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy. This includes introducing new technologies and innovative business practices to Canadian enterprises, which, as a result, can prove crucial to the expansion and development of important sectors of the Canadian economy. This is especially true for Canada's abundant natural resources sector and our domestic manufacturing base.

Third, foreign investment exposes Canadian businesses to the knowledge, capabilities, and management expertise of world-leading businesses. Such knowledge transfers can increase the productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness of Canadian firms. At the same time, Canadians benefit from lower prices that may result from these efficiencies and gain greater domestic access to innovative products and services.

Finally, foreign investment also provides Canadian businesses with valuable access to new markets. Canada is, and always has been, a trading nation, from our earliest days as a country. Foreign investment can play a valuable role in integrating Canadian firms into global value chains. In addition to expanding the capabilities of Canadian business here at home, foreign investment can provide an unparalleled opportunity to tap into the world's fastest growing economies and secure these markets for Canadian exports.

To reap the benefits of foreign investment, Canada must maintain the economic conditions necessary to attract foreign investment in the first place and foster a welcoming environment for such investments to thrive.

I would note that Canada's economic performance under our government has been very strong compared to our peer countries in the aftermath of the economic downturn of 2008. Since that time, Canada has achieved one of the best job creation rates and economic growth rates in the G7. This achievement is remarkable, given that it took place against the backdrop of global economic uncertainty and a slowdown in exports stemming from economic problems experienced by our key trading partners. Despite these economic headwinds, recent studies by the Bank of Canada and the International Monetary Fund note that Canada is poised to continue to be among the lead G7 countries in economic growth in the years ahead.

Canada's strong economic performance is due in large part to our government's commitment to economic fundamentals. In a global marketplace, with strong competition for foreign investment, it is crucial that Canada provide an economic climate in which Canadian and international companies can succeed and thrive. Our government has worked hard to create the necessary conditions for Canadian businesses and workers to succeed.

We have kept taxes low for Canadians and Canadian businesses to support job creation, growth, and investment in all sectors of the economy. Our government's economic action plan has resulted in significant investments to promote innovation and foster research and development. It has measures to ensure that Canadians are equipped with the skills and training they need to succeed in a globalized economy.

Businesses operating in Canada also benefit from the advantages provided by our sound financial institutions, our highly skilled labour force, and our world-leading capabilities in science and technology.

In addition to these measures, our government, through its trade agenda, is committed to open borders and free trade. History has shown that trade is the best way to create jobs and growth and boost our standard of living.

● (1825)

Our government has worked tirelessly to open new markets, increase exports of Canadian goods and services to global markets, and provide new and diverse opportunities for Canadian companies. Toward this end, since 2006, Canada has concluded free trade agreements with 38 countries and is pursuing trade agreements with many more, including large markets such as India and Japan.

The government will continue to bring the benefits of foreign investment to Canada by maintaining favourable economic conditions. At the same time, this government recognizes that not every foreign investment will be of benefit to Canada. The foreign investment review regime under the Investment Canada Act is a key part of Canada's economic framework. It promotes investment and ensures that Canadians reap the benefit of those investments.

Under the ICA regime, Canadian businesses can capitalize on international trade opportunities, tap into deeper pools of global capital, and obtain greater access to the resources and markets they need to expand, innovate, and create. Ultimately, foreign investment makes Canadian firms and workers more competitive in the global economy.

Adjournment Proceedings

The foreign investments that have been reviewed and approved under the ICA have boosted Canada's productivity, created jobs, and enhanced research and development. They have also demonstrated to the world that Canada is open for business.

Our government has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that Canadian businesses can compete in both domestic and international markets. In order to prosper, create jobs, and maintain a high standard of living for Canadians, it is important to adopt policies that encourage trade and investment. Failure to do so will harm our ability to compete worldwide and damage our prospects for economic growth and future prosperity.

Foreign investment is an important component of Canada's economic success in the present day and in the future. Our government, through its economic policies, its trade agenda, and the foreign investment review regime under the ICA, has acted to ensure that foreign investment will contribute to the economic well-being of all Canadians.

Under our government's policies, I am confident that Canada will continue to attract world-class companies with high-paying jobs, leading to the continued success, economic growth, and prosperity of our country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1830)

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member of Parliament for Sydney—Victoria and I raised a series of questions on the inadequacy of the government's response to protect Canadian producers as a result of the loss of our access to the United States Perishable Agriculture Commodities Act. For those who do not understand the background on this issue, let me explain what happened.

Until now, Canadian exporters have had the same rates as American suppliers to recover payments quickly and efficiently if a buyer refuses to pay or declares bankruptcy with unpaid bills. That seriously impacts producers, as we know. When farmers grow products, process them and send them into a business, they expect to be paid. In fact, the consequences of non-payment of those bills could force a single producer or supplier out of business.

Canadian exporters have had special access to the United States Perishable Agriculture Commodities Act, or PACA, as it is best known by, and that access has been revoked. The fact is that our trade in fresh produce with the United States is worth about \$1.6 billion. There are a lot of dollars at risk and a lot of risk to Canadian producers in the supply chain.

The Canadian government knew for a considerable time the protection was at risk because the United States had been warning of the loss of that special privilege. However, the Conservative government failed to be prepared when it happened and, as a result, both Canadian producers and consumers could be seriously affected.

There are 140,000 Canadians employed in the fresh fruit and vegetable industry and without the protection of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, the risk of someone not paying his or her bills for produce that has already gone to market would be multiplied many fold.

I know the parliamentary secretary will respond that consultations are ongoing and, yes, I recognize that. However, the problem is that consultations are a two-way street and government has to listen to what industry and producers are saying. The proposal from the government is not acceptable to producers and they have made that clear.

As I said in my question, that proposal from the government will not work and the industry has told that to the government. The facts are that Canadian fruit and vegetable sellers have had long-standing protection under the United States law, and they no longer have that protection as of October 1. As a result, jobs and Canadian farmers are at serious risk. Industry has made it clear that it needs a Canadian-made perishable commodities act, and that is the only option to protect produce suppliers. Why not implement that viable option?

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond today to comments by the hon. member for Malpeque on payment protection for Canadian fresh produce sellers in the United States and to set the record straight on our government's action to the fresh produce industry in Canada.

The hon. member, as usual, is clearly mistaken in saying that Canadian fruit and vegetable sellers no longer have protection under the U.S. Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, or PACA. Canadian fresh produce sellers will still be able to access PACA benefits. PACA officials confirm that most Canadian seller disputes with U.S. buyers are settled informally and that it is only during the formal complaints process that a Canadian seller would need to post a bond.

Moreover, U.S. legislation requires all U.S. buyers to honour their financial obligations to all foreign and domestic sellers of fresh produce. Accordingly, Canadian fresh produce sellers will be treated fairly and on equal footing with all other exporters of fresh produce to the U.S.

The recent action by the U.S. does not impact Canadian buyers of U.S. fresh produce. Therefore, there are no anticipated impacts in terms of availability and cost of fresh produce to Canadian consumers or to jobs in Canada. Our government and the United States department of agriculture committed to establish comparable approaches to protecting Canadian and U.S. fresh fruit and vegetable growers from buyers that defaulted on their payment obligations. We did not commit to identical outcomes or to implement the U.S. law, as the member has suggested.

Adjournment Proceedings

Surely the Liberal member recognizes that the Government of Canada must work within its constitutional, political and legislative framework in developing a made-in-Canada solution for Canadian produce sellers. The implementation of a single dispute resolution body would enhance the business environment in Canada by providing greater stability through a single unified set of rules governing instances of slow, partial and/or no-pay situations. This would address the majority of non-payment issues and would reduce the risk of fraudulent practices, making Canada an importer of choice.

• (1835)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I know this is not the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, but clearly from the remarks, the government, or whoever is talking to the industry, is certainly talking to different players in the industry than we are. The story the member purports to tell on behalf of the government is not what we are hearing from industry.

Industry believes it needs a perishable commodities act that would do the same as the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act in the U.S. did. What is on the table, as industry tell us clearly, will not do what was previously in place. This is what industry is asking for.

However, what we see in the exchange here is that the government seems to go by its own agenda and does not really listen to

producers. I am saying that the government should listen to what producers are saying and help them out.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, our government does understand the importance of Canada's fresh produce industry and its contribution to the economy. On this side of the House, we listen to farmers and deliver on our promises. That is why, as part of Canada's economic action plan, we introduced clear legislation to provide a single dispute resolution body that would help reduce issues of non-payment faced by the fresh produce industry.

We will continue to expand markets for our fresh fruit and vegetable growers beyond the U.S. and into new markets such as Europe and Asia. Our government is committed to supporting Canadian producers and exporters, and we will continue to review this issue.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:38 p.m.)

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