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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 5, 2015
(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 5, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 12 petitions.

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ANTI-TERRORISM ACT, 2015

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House at the conclusion of the debate later today on Bill C-51, an act to enact the security of Canada information sharing act and the secure air travel act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, all questions necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the said bill be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, May 6, 2015, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

I believe you will find unanimous consent for that motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

IRAQ

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first is from constituents and others

who have asked our government to give serious consideration to offering protection to Christians who are being the special targets of persecution in Iraq by putting in place a special program to bring these Christians into Canada if they would like to come.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is to do with gender selection abortion. The petitioners ask Parliament to condemn the practice of discrimination against girls through gender selection abortion.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to present three petitions to the House. The first petition calls for a national public transit strategy noting that Canada is the only OECD country that does not have such a strategy and it calls upon the House to provide a permanent investment plan to support public transit in Canada.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to the issue of climate change, noting that the economic costs of climate change to Canada range between \$21 billion and \$43 billion. The petitioners call on the House to allocate scarce resources to programs that help Canadians adapt to climate change.

PEACE TAX

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is with respect to a peace tax legislation. The petitioners note that the Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and religion. The signatories to the petition call on the House to establish a peace tax by passing into law a bill such as the conscientious objection tax.

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present three petitions.

The first petition has to do with Canada's public broadcaster. These Nova Scotian citizens want Parliament to establish a system to ensure that our public broadcaster, Radio-Canada/CBC, can have a sustainable future.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have two different petitions from two different parts of Canada. They are both identical and pertain to Bill C-51.

The first petition is from residents throughout Vancouver Island. Over 140 petitioners from Campbell River, Duncan, Comox and Victoria call on the House assembled to reject Bill C-51 as an assault on Canadian constitutional rights.

The second group of petitioners, just shy of 170, from throughout the GTA, are all calling for the House to reject Bill C-51.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition that, sadly, informs the House that Karen East was tragically killed by a drunk driver, a person who chose to drive while impaired. The East family has been left devastated.

Families for Justice is a group of Canadians who have lost loved ones to an impaired driver.

The petitioners believe that impaired driving laws in Canada are much too lenient. They want the crime to be called what it is, “vehicular homicide”, which is the number one cause of death in Canada. They want mandatory sentencing for those convicted of impaired driving causing death.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is with respect to national pharmacare. It is from various communities and people throughout the Thunder Bay—Superior North riding.

The petitioners basically want three things. They want to establish a Canada-wide prescription drug program that would cover all citizens; they want to reduce the cost of prescription drugs through bulk buying by the government; and, they want to ensure that all new drugs are evaluated through sufficient evidence-based research.

•(1010)

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also from various communities and people in Thunder Bay—Superior North and northwestern Ontario, including Schreiber, Nipigon and Manitouwadge.

The petitioners are concerned that the Nuclear Waste Management Organization is planning or hoping or at least considering burying nuclear waste in northern Ontario. They would not like that to happen and they would not like to have high-level nuclear waste transported through northern Ontario communities.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by dozens of Vancouver residents, many in Vancouver Kingsway, who are concerned about the shipment of illegal whale meat through Canadian ports. It has been discovered this happened last year.

Since 1972, Canada has banned commercial whaling in Canadian waters and Canada is signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species which has listed the fin whale and other endangered whales under the category requiring the highest level of protection against commercial trade.

The petitioners are calling upon the Canadian government to join with the U.S. and Germany to take concrete action to prevent the trade of endangered whale meat in our respective territories and for Canada to be an international leader in protecting all endangered species.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 1115 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 1115—**Hon. John McCallum:**

With regard to government communications: for each message event proposal prepared since January 1, 2014, (a) what is the (i) originating department, agency, or crown corporation, (ii) date, (iii) file number, (iv) title or description of the event, (v) event type, (vi) desired headline, (vii) key messages, (viii) media lines, (ix) strategic objectives, (x) desired soundbite, (xi) ideal speaking backdrop, (xii) ideal event photograph, (xiii) tone, (xiv) attire, (xv) rollout materials, (xvi) background, (xvii) strategic considerations; and (b) for each message event proposal, did the message event take place, (i) if so, what was the date and location of the message event, (ii) if not, why not?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many message event proposals are submitted in the language of origin only. Producing and translating the information requested would involve thousands of records and is not possible in the time period required for this response.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1116 to 1118 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

[Text]

Question No. 1116—**Hon. Wayne Easter:**

With regard to the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) and the Canadian Criminal Real-Time Identification Services (CCRTIS): broken down annually since 2006, (a) what is the detailed budget for CPIC and CCRTIS; (b) how many Criminal Record checks have been submitted to CPIC and CCRTIS; (c) how many Criminal Record checks have been processed; (d) how many Criminal Record checks have been backlogged; (e) how many Vulnerable Sector checks have been submitted to CPIC and CCRTIS; (f) how many Vulnerable Sector checks have been backlogged; (g) what is the average processing time for Criminal Record checks; (h) what is the average processing time for Vulnerable Sector checks; and (i) how many staff have been employed to work on CPIC and CCRTIS?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1117—**Hon. Wayne Easter:**

With regard to federal correctional facilities: (a) what is the prison population of each such facility; (b) what is the maximum inmate capacity of each such facility; (c) what was the number of correctional officers and personnel at each such facility in each of the last ten years; and (d) what was the prison population of each such facility in each of the last ten years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1118—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With respect to proposals for the mid-sized-projects component of the Enabling Accessibility Fund submitted to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for the period from October 2010 to January 13, 2011: (a) what is the name and the sponsoring organization for each of the 167 proposals that met the initial screening criteria; (b) what were the internal assessment scores of the Department for each proposal; (c) what was the Department's passing grade for the internal assessment of each proposal; and (d) what were the top 25 proposals selected for the external evaluation team?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT, 2015

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC) moved that Bill C-51, An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today as we enter the final debate after months of discussion and amendment that have been brought to the anti-terrorism bill, I am convinced more than ever that our country needs this bill. Our country needs tools for our police and those who are there to protect us and to keep us safe.

To begin today, I would like to quote from an article that was written in the *National Post* last week by Danny Eisen. He is the co-

founder of the Canadian Coalition Against Terror, and lost a relative on the American Airlines flight on 9/11.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the opposition members to listen to this important speech for the safety of our nation and to feel free to comment afterward during their period for questioning, and to show respect for someone who stands up for our country and who actually lost someone from an act of terrorism. I know the opposition members have a hard time calling a spade a spade, but in this very place on October 22 we were under attack by a terrorist.

Let me go back to my speech and quote Mr. Eisen. I thank him for coming to this Parliament in support of those important measures. I would invite those members who seem not to take the terrorism issue seriously to listen to what he said and what was written last week in the *National Post*:

The assaults on the World Trade Center; the slaughter in India's business centre [in] Mumbai; the thwarted plans of the Toronto 18 (which included an attack on Toronto's business district [here in Canada]); and the attacks on Kenyan malls, to name a few, were designed, not only to kill, but to target countries by undermining their economies.

Members have heard me many times saying that there is no liberty without security. I would add that there is no prosperity without security. That is why we are now being given the opportunity to support those anti-terrorism measures. This morning, I am given the opportunity to present them, and I would like to thank my colleague, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who is the member for York—Simcoe, as well as my Conservative colleagues who have been supportive through this journey where, since October 22, we have crafted measures that are specifically designed to face the international jihadi threat that our country is facing.

● (1015)

[Translation]

Through its actions and commitments, our government has demonstrated that it will stand up to those who want to spread fear, and that it will respond in a measured fashion. It will not remain idle against this threat. That is why we introduced measures to combat terrorism.

One of the first measures came from the recommendations made following the most serious terrorist-inspired aviation disaster Canada has ever experienced, the Air India crash. We are responding to a recommendation that was made at the time to allow the various federal government agencies to share information related to national security.

That is why we want to move forward with the security of Canada information sharing act. This legislation proposes much-needed changes to how federal departments and agencies can share information that could be crucial in identifying potential threats to national security.

[English]

Some critics have falsely claimed that this legislation would target protesters or would drastically expand the size and scope of the government. This is not the case.

Government Orders

Let me quote Justice John Major, the author of the Air India commission report, who said, "...citizens who are not validly under suspicion will not have some manufactured reason for their private lives to be interfered with".

[Translation]

Our government organizations have always complied with privacy laws, as well they should. However, it has become very clear that legal impediments to information exchange can, in some cases, interfere with the government's ability to detect national security threats. The question is simple: are we going to let terrorists use the fact that the government operates in silos to attack Canadians?

The answer is clear: no.

We are doing this while respecting people's privacy and the Constitution and by giving federal agencies the ability to share information that could threaten national security. I would like to point out that in the amendments to the bill, it was made clear that protesters will not be affected by this ability to exchange information.

The threats we are facing today are increasingly diverse and complex. It is time we implemented a stronger security framework that will enable information exchange in support of our national security objectives. We know that government organizations will wield these powers responsibly, with respect for privacy and security, and in accordance with Canadian laws.

• (1020)

[English]

What is more, there are appropriate mechanisms already in place that would counterbalance the new authority created by this act, such as review by the Privacy Commissioner and the Auditor General.

I will turn now to the second improvement to the bill, the passenger protect program. There are two significant changes in this regard. The first is to put the program on its own solid, legal foundation—namely, the secure air travel act.

[Translation]

As the House has heard, so far the program has been operating under the authority of the Aeronautics Act because it has been used solely as a tool to ensure air security. Its current mandate is to identify individuals likely to pose a threat to air security and take measures to counter that threat, such as preventing them from boarding an aircraft.

Basically, right now, if a person wants to attack a plane, the law makes it possible to put that person on a high-risk passenger list and prevent him from boarding a plane. However, if we are in a situation such as the one we saw a few weeks ago, when some young Montrealers wanted to fly to the Middle East to commit terrorist acts, and that information comes to the attention of the relevant agencies, this law will make it possible to prevent them from boarding a plane. People leaving the country to commit terrorist acts is anathema to Canadian values. Moreover, if they return to Canada, they pose an even greater threat to our national security.

[English]

Jihadi terrorist travellers are now an increasing threat, both to populations abroad and to Canadians, if and when these jihadi extremists return home to Canada as hardened jihadi warriors.

That is the reason why we need to improve our current law; that is what our anti-terrorism measures are doing; and that is why I certainly invite all members to reconsider their position and support this important legislation.

[Translation]

This will strengthen our ability to respond to this growing concern by giving the authorities the ability to take action in cases where it is not yet possible to arrest people and lay charges.

This broader mandate will necessitate the use of appropriate security measures, such as refusing permission to board or carrying out additional inspections at the airport.

[English]

Of course these changes are supported by the airline industry. Let me quote Marc-André O'Rourke of the National Airlines Council of Canada, who said that they:

...understand the need to update Canada's passenger protect program in light of the evolving nature of security threats, and we continue to support the program under...

Bill C-51, our anti-terrorism measures, which are so needed to increase the capability of our police and our intelligence officers to keep us safe from those threats.

Additionally, this bill would make an important enhancement to the mandate of CSIS. CSIS is the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, whose members are there to protect us. We want to help them have better tools to fight the modern terrorist threat.

[Translation]

At this time, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's role is strictly limited to collecting intelligence concerning threats to our security. CSIS has been doing this in a very professional manner for over 30 years now. It collects intelligence and forwards it to the Canadian government. CSIS investigators do this by conducting their activities in Canada and abroad.

As a result, they are often the first to detect threats to the security of Canada. They are at an early stage of the process, which makes it possible to detect security threats, particularly terrorist threats.

However, as we speak, they have neither the mandate nor the legal authority to take action to disrupt threats that come to their knowledge in the course of their investigations.

I had the opportunity to clarify that the Canadian service is practically the only one among our allies that is unable to exercise this capacity to reduce the threat and take action early on to avoid unfortunate, if not disastrous or fatal, consequences.

Government Orders

• (1025)

[English]

Frankly, this limitation results in important missed opportunities to disrupt threats early, before they have had time to develop. It also neglects the full potential of CSIS' expertise at a time when we can least afford it.

Let me remind members of what Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, President of American Islamic Forum for Democracy said:

It is amazing to me that...disrupting...is...[currently] prohibited. Disrupting doesn't mean arresting these individuals or violating their personal property rights or taking them out of commission. You're actually just disrupting a plot.

Many Canadians believe that CSIS could do this, while it cannot. However, with this bill, CSIS would be able to disrupt the threat, like any other similar agency of our allies. Its officers will also be able, for example, to talk to the parents of young individuals who are lured by radicalization, to prevent them from falling into that path, even at a pre-criminalization sphere.

That is an important part of the bill that addresses the four pillars of our counter-terrorism strategy, the first of which is prevention. Anyone who would be willing to support prevention measures when talking about radicalization has a very good reason to support and be in favour of this bill, because CSIS officers will be able to disrupt this threat at an earlier stage.

[Translation]

These officers are another real example to show that the measures of the bill are sensible, reasonable and balanced. We currently have these resources and these officers, but they are prohibited by legislation from carrying out these actions. We are going to enshrine in law the capacity of service officers to act and, should there be a violation of privacy or rights, the officers, much like police officers in Canada have been doing for decades, can seek a warrant from a judge, who will have the latitude to authorize, modify or even refuse the requests.

Contrary to the many misleading statements that have been made in recent weeks and months, there is nothing really new in Canada, particularly since provisions already exist that allow the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and police forces to routinely gather intelligence. Do those who are opposed to these provisions lack confidence in our justice system? Do they lack confidence in Canadian judges? Are they questioning our judges' independence and skills? We need to ask them that. On this side of the House, we have confidence in our institutions, and we have complete confidence that Canadian judges will be able to continue to do what they have been doing for intelligence officers and police for decades with regard to intelligence gathering.

It is also clear in the bill that some activities, such as those that could cause death or bodily harm, are prohibited and will never be authorized or undertaken. It is important to remember that CSIS has been serving Canadians for 30 years. It is also important to remember that CSIS and its activities are very closely scrutinized by another Canadian body that is the envy of the world, the Security Intelligence Review Committee. The SIRC is an extension of parliament. During the debate, we heard some parliamentarians express the desire to address security issues. They can do that here.

We have a security committee where parliamentarians are free to call any witnesses they see fit to call. They can also do that in the Senate. As we saw earlier, there is the Privacy Commissioner and the Auditor General. It is important to remember that other countries do not have the same model as Canada, which allows access to the field of operations. Other oversight bodies where parliamentarians are sometimes involved are only able to meet with senior officials and do not have the opportunity to observe what is happening on the ground. The Supreme Court recognized this model as one that strikes a balance between rights and national security.

Today and in the days ahead, parliamentarians will have the opportunity to rise and take action to ensure that those who protect us have the tools they need. For example, we are going to criminalize the promotion of terrorism. We have had hours of debate. I want to thank all of the witnesses who testified in committee and who spoke so eloquently, like Louise, the sister of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, who came to tell us that Canada needs Bill C-51. Let us step up and not disappoint Canadians, who expect us to protect them from the terrorist threat.

• (1030)

That is exactly what the measures before us in the House today do.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely disappointed that the minister launched this third reading debate with an attack on the opposition by saying that somehow we are not concerned about terrorism. As one whose partner lost one of his best friends in the plane that went from Boston into the twin towers, and as one whose own mother was on a plane that day and we did not find out for many hours whether she was safe, and as one who has worked in international human rights where some of my best friends have been killed by terrorism, I resent the remarks of the minister saying that because we disagree with him, we somehow do not take terrorism seriously. There are other members in this caucus who had friends and acquaintances who were on the Air India flight that was bombed, which was one of the largest terrorist attacks. I take great exception to the minister's remarks that we do not either understand or take terrorism seriously.

The minister cited witnesses and he likes to cite partially what witnesses said at committee. By my count, there were 45 out of the 48 witnesses at committee, including the government's witnesses, who said that Bill C-51 was flawed. He likes to cite Justice John Major. John Major said in answer to a very specific question that the bill was incomplete without additional oversight. The minister also likes to cite Raheel Raza from the Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow. She said that the bill needed better oversight for SIRC and appropriate limits on CSIS' disruption powers.

Government Orders

Why is it that the minister cannot take seriously the people who have come forward in good faith and said that this bill was flawed and that while we need to do something about terrorism, we also need to make improvements and changes? Why have the Conservatives rejected all 112 opposition amendments to this bill?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, in my comments I was referring to an article printed in the *National Post* when I heard heckling from the other side of the House. Let me finish quoting what Danny Eisen, the co-founder of the Canadian Coalition Against Terror, said:

Put plainly by Osama Bin Laden, “The enemy can be defeated by attacking its economic centre.” This tenet was evidenced just recently by threats from Somali terrorists — not against synagogues, churches or MPs — but against malls in England, the U.S. and Canada.

I believe this is a serious debate, and I always welcome constructive comments.

Raheel Raza spoke strongly in favour of the bill. May I remind my hon. colleague that had he listened to my comments, he would have been made aware that SIRC has the authority to look into the additional powers that this bill enables, particularly for CSIS to operate and disrupt threats. There is a specific mandate for SIRC to look into those extended powers. Therefore, the powers of SIRC, a Canadian watchdog model, are enhanced. At the same time, I would invite the member to consider the fact that in the budget, we are doubling the funding for SIRC, which is a good reason for the member not only to support Bill C-51 but also to support the budget of our Canadian Conservative government.

• (1035)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that the government has lost the opportunity to provide good, solid, robust legislation that would have had more of an impact in fighting terrorism in Canada while at the same time providing parliamentary oversight and protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals and groups in Canada.

The Liberal Party supports the bill because we recognize that Bill C-51 does have some positive attributes that would provide safer communities as a whole.

However, I want to go back to the issue of the government's refusal to recognize the important role that parliamentary oversight could have provided all Canadians. It is a major flaw. All of the Five Eyes countries, which are Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand, and the United States, have recognized the importance of parliamentary oversight. They already have parliamentary oversight, except for Canada, which stands alone on this issue.

The current Minister of Justice used to support parliamentary oversight. We listened to the presentations at committee and the debate in the House. The issue is why the government did not allow for parliamentary oversight. We see this as a fundamental flaw within the legislation and it could have improved the quality of the legislation had the government incorporated it. The Liberal Party is committed to incorporating it into our election platform in the next election.

Why will the minister not allow for parliamentary oversight in this legislation?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, we are no strangers to Liberal promises, and this reminds me of a European song about empty words called *Paroles, paroles*.

However, I would still like to take this opportunity to point out that my colleague and his political party support this bill. To answer his question, my colleague could ask his own party the same question, since when the Liberals were in power they never bothered to make the changes that they now want to make. Now, all of a sudden they have woken up and decided to make these changes.

On this side of the House, we continue to move forward. Just last Friday we appointed Pierre Blais, a Quebec judge with an impeccable reputation, to the committee. He is a representative of the riding of Dorchester and Bellechasse. He is joined by four expert members. This is a team made up of judges and investigators.

Once again, it is important to remember that the review committee is a model that is the envy of our partners, the United States, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, because it has the ability to investigate at all levels of the intelligence agency.

I therefore urge my colleague to do the right thing and support the bill, which will double the budget allocated to the review committee, an international model.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand that freedom and security go hand in hand and that Canadians expect us as parliamentarians to protect both. Our Canadian model of third party, non-partisan and independent oversight of our national security agencies is superior to the political intervention in the process, especially when we see the opposition's attitude on this file.

Would the minister share with the House the safeguards included in the bill to ensure that the privacy of law-abiding Canadians is respected?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells comes from the great community of Surrey, a community that is faced with a lot of challenges. That is why in the last budget we increased resources, so while we are tackling terrorism, we are also continuing to work with the Province of British Columbia to ensure the safety of the town of Surrey, which is an important issue for that community.

In answer to the question, it is fairly simple. When CSIS or the police are operating, they have to seek consent from the Attorney General, for the police in the case of making preventive arrests, and in those cases, they can move forward and seek a warrant.

Once again, that is a Canadian exception. To my knowledge, CSIS is the only intelligence agency in the world that will have to seek a warrant from a judge to conduct certain types of operations. We are going to great lengths to show how seriously we take the privacy of Canadians and their rights.

Government Orders

As I have just said, once those operations are conducted, we have this robust oversight and review mechanism, SIRC, which is the envy of the world. For the last 30 years, it has examined and scrutinized the activities of CSIS. In the meantime, they have increased their accountability and have been referred to by the Supreme Court as a model that is doing a great job of being the watchdog of our intelligence agency for Canadians.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand and speak today to one of the most significant pieces of legislation to come before the House, certainly while I have been a member of Parliament. It is indeed a piece of legislation touching on the two most important topics that we ever deal with in this chamber: national security and our civil liberties.

I am proud to speak to Bill C-51 as the member of Parliament for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, a riding which plays a key role in our national security as the home of CFB Esquimalt and our Pacific fleet. I am also proud to speak today as the NDP public safety critic and as a member of the official opposition. Ours is a party whose leader has taken a strong and principled stance in opposition to Bill C-51, even when at the outset the bill appeared to be overwhelmingly popular.

I remember quite clearly the first scrum on Bill C-51 that I faced as the NDP public safety critic after we announced our opposition to the bill. Journalists asked me how we could oppose something that was so popular, when 82% of Canadians polled said that they supported the bill. My answer to the media that morning was that I believe it is the role of the official opposition to inform public opinion, not to run away from it.

It was clear that the government intended to marshal the politics of fear to stampede Bill C-51 through the House. We knew this would be an uphill struggle, but I trusted at the time that few Canadians knew exactly what was in the bill. I also trusted that when they did know what was in the bill, they would likely not like what they saw.

What the poll told us at the time was that Canadians believed that the threats from terrorism are very real, and we all acknowledge that fact. It also told us that Canadians believe that the government has a responsibility to do something about those threats. It told us nothing about what was actually in the bill.

I believe, as most Canadians do, that the government's responsibility is to protect both public safety and our fundamental freedoms. Instead, the Conservative government has chosen to risk sacrificing our freedoms for security.

What the Conservatives are proposing in Bill C-51 fails on two grounds. Incredibly, it manages at one and the same time to constitute a threat to our basic civil liberties while also putting forth measures, many of which would be either ineffective or unnecessary. Unfortunately, the government is pressing ahead, refusing to listen to legal experts, civil society organizations, and the tens of thousands of Canadians who have turned out at rallies across the country to express their concerns about Bill C-51.

Unfortunately, the Liberal Party wilted almost immediately in the face of the pressure created by the government to stand with it or stand with the terrorists. We heard yet another example of that this morning from the minister in his opening remarks. Before Canadians had any chance to find out what was in the bill, the Liberals had

already promised to vote for the bill and to do so even if the Conservatives refused to amend the parts of the bill that the Liberals said they were concerned about. The Liberals were even heard saying publicly that they did not want to get on the wrong side of public opinion on terrorism. Well, I firmly believe that they now find themselves on the wrong side of Canadian public opinion.

As the debate on this bill draws to a close under the 94th use of time allocation by the Conservatives to limit debate, let me review my major concerns about both the ineffectiveness of Bill C-51 and the threats it poses to our civil liberties. In the time I have, I want to focus on four major problems that I see in this bill.

The first has to do with information sharing. The Conservatives pretend that Bill would correct problems with sharing information on the use of violence and involve C-51ment in terrorist activities. This information sharing within government is of a kind with which few would disagree. If someone is involved in terrorism or the use of violence, obviously, government organizations need to be able to share that information.

What Bill C-51 does instead is it creates sweeping new powers to share information among a vast array of government departments and agencies on almost anything, not just on terrorism and violence. Yes, there would be information sharing on terrorism, but also on national security, which is given a new and very broad definition, one which includes threats to Canada's economic stability, threats to Canada's infrastructure, such as pipelines, and even threats to Canada's diplomatic relations with other countries. The list goes on for an entire page of legal descriptions of the kinds of things about which information could be shared.

It is quite easy to see why Canadians are legitimately concerned that there would be a significant loss of their privacy contained under the excuse of necessary information sharing about terrorism. The information sharing proposed is so broad that the Privacy Commissioner concluded that it would potentially allow the government to create a personal profile on each and every Canadian.

• (1045)

We tried to have the Privacy Commissioner appear before the committee. He is an officer of Parliament. He is officially our advisor, as parliamentarians, on privacy rights. Therefore, we put the motion to the committee that he should come so we could discuss his concerns about the bill. The Conservatives blocked the Privacy Commissioner's appearance at the public safety committee.

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Conservatives like to insist that legitimate dissent could not possibly be caught in this information sharing, yet we had a police witness testify in committee that this was exactly his concern. He also raised the question of the ineffectiveness of collecting too much information on Canadians. The argument is often made, especially in the law enforcement community, that looking for terrorists is like looking for a needle in a haystack, and the last thing the police need when they are doing this is more hay. Collecting information about all of us would pile up information so that we would risk missing the real threats to our public safety.

The Liberals, on this point, say that the bill could be fixed later, after the Conservatives are defeated. However, it is important to note that the information-sharing part of the bill is not one of the parts they propose to fix. They actually support this broad information-sharing, even though it presents a great threat to our civil liberties.

The second area about which I have great concern is the granting of new powers to CSIS to disrupt terror threats before they take place. This is also a provision of Bill C-51 supported by the Liberals. These activities of CSIS, first and most importantly, would conflict with the existing activities of the RCMP. The very reason CSIS was set up was to divide information-gathering from the disruption of terrorist threats. There is a redundancy created here that is a great danger, which even Justice Major, whom the government likes to cite, acknowledged might create confusion about who is actually responsible for what when it comes to disrupting terror threats.

What is most disturbing about this is the very broad granting of power to CSIS this bill proposes. Bill C-51 specifically says that CSIS's new powers would only be limited by prohibiting murder, sexual assault, and interference with the justice system. This is an amazing granting of power for secret activities in a democratic society and would be of great concern to all Canadians.

The government likes to say not to worry, because it requires a warrant. Well, these CSIS activities do not always require a warrant. It is left to CSIS to decide. If it believes its activities might violate a charter right, then it would apply for a warrant. What is allowed without a warrant? There are a whole range of things that would clearly be allowed.

One of the concerns that has been raised by those who work in the Internet industry is that it might involve CSIS going online and changing people's posts or deleting their posts, things that may not necessarily violate a charter right and therefore, in CSIS's mind, would not require any kind of warrant.

The government goes further and asks why we are concerned, as these warrants are just like the warrants now used by the police. The problem is that they are not at all like the warrants used now by the police. The warrants police seek now in criminal cases are to make sure that their activities comply with the charter. They are not warrants to violate the charter. What is proposed in the bill is exactly that: a judge would be asked to authorize, in advance, charter violations. This raises serious questions about the role of the judiciary in our society and very serious questions about the rule of law.

The other thing that is different in these warrants is that when police seek a warrant in a criminal case, that warrant ends up back in

front of the courts as part of that criminal case, so there is supervision both at the front end and at the back end by police when it is a warrant under the Criminal Code. There is supervision at the front end by a judge and at the back end by a judge when it is a warrant under the Criminal Code. Neither of those things are true when it comes to these new warrants, which would authorize CSIS to violate the charter. They would be carried out in secret and judges would never see what has happened to a warrant should they grant one.

The third concern I want to talk about today is another favourite of the government. It would create a new offence of supporting terrorism in general and recklessly. "Recklessly" is a term we do find in the Criminal Code, but supporting terrorism "in general" is not a term we find anywhere in the Criminal Code. This would create a criminal offence lacking the basic requirements of a normal criminal offence. A criminal offence involves intent plus action. What is the intent involved in supporting terrorism in general? It is very difficult to see that there is an intent to do anything. What is the action? Clearly, there is no action involved here.

● (1050)

Some have concluded that this new offence really amounts to a kind of thought crime, that for one's opinions, one might be subject to a criminal prosecution. It is certainly an offence that would produce a chill on free speech in this country as Canadians tried to understand what on earth this new offence would mean.

It also raises a question about why it is needed. Given the record we have in Canada of successful prosecutions under the existing Criminal Code, why do we need a new offence that would produce such a chill on free speech? It has simply not been established.

In committee, I asked the Commissioner of the RCMP if he would have been able to prosecute the perpetrator of the attack here in Ottawa last October. He said very clearly that, yes, the existing legislation would have been sufficient to prosecute him.

We had successful prosecutions of the Toronto 18. We have a prosecution going on in British Columbia right now. Clearly, the police do not lack powers to pursue those who are actually involved in violence and terrorism.

A fourth concern I have is one that runs in several places in the bill. This is about lowering the standard for police action from reasonable grounds to suspicion. It particularly applies to the idea of preventative detention and recognizance with conditions.

Currently, for the police to detain someone, there have to be reasonable grounds. In common language, that means that there has to be evidence. However, the bill proposes to allow the police to detain someone preventatively on the basis of mere suspicion.

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I think this is another element that is of great concern to many Canadians, because we have a disturbing record in Canada on detention in times of crisis. We need only look at the detention of Ukrainians, Germans, and Italians during World War I; or in World War II, at the detention of Japanese Canadians; or even in the 1970s in Quebec, at the detention of many people under the War Measures Act, some 500 people, who were never subsequently charged with any offence, let alone convicted.

Many of the concerns we have expressed about the bill involve this apparent conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and many witnesses expressed those same concerns.

We asked the government to table in committee the advice it received on the constitutionality of the provisions in Bill C-51. We expressly asked the Minister of Justice, and he used a very strange excuse. He said that this advice could not be tabled in committee, because it would violate solicitor-client privilege. What he did was stand solicitor-client privilege on its head. He is not the lawyer; he is the client, and clients can always waive that privilege. He could have very easily tabled the advice, and it makes one wonder how firm the opinion of the Department of Justice experts was on the constitutionality of Bill C-51.

The Conservatives were clear, on Bill C-51, from the beginning, about two things. The first, I would say, is that they really did not want Canadians to know what is in the bill. Second, they did not intend to listen to Canadians when they actually talked about what is in the bill.

When I allege that the Conservatives did not want Canadians to know, how do we know that? Well, they both rushed and limited the debate in this House. It is an important part of democracy that Parliament allows the public to know what the content of a bill is through the debate we engage in within this chamber. The debate was limited at second reading to three days. That sounds long, but when we look at how Parliament functions, it means that the official opposition, with 90-some members, was limited to six speakers on a very important bill.

The Conservatives attempted to limit the witnesses appearing at the public safety committee. They initially proposed three meetings and 18 witnesses. Now, I cannot, of course, talk about discussions that went on in camera, but at the end of those discussions, we ended up with eight meetings and 48 witnesses, but that was still fewer than half of those who wanted to appear before the committee. The Conservatives also insisted on a very short deadline for those witnesses to appear. In the end, we ended up having 36 witnesses appear before the committee in four days.

If we wanted the public to be able to follow the debate and understand what witnesses were saying about the bill, we would not schedule 36 witnesses in four days.

●(1055)

This schedule also meant that some very important witnesses were not able to appear before the committee, because they were given only a very limited choice of dates: four days. Some witnesses were not available because of personal and other obligations on those days. One very important witness had a medical procedure scheduled, while another had professional obligations outside the

country. If they were not available during those four days, they could not appear as witnesses.

It was clear last Thursday, when we began report stage and third reading debate, that the government was determined not to have the full ability to debate this bill, because it introduced time allocation for the 94th time. Conservatives prefer to call this scheduling, but in fact, we know what it is. It is closure. Therefore, we ended up with only two days of debate at report stage and with only today for third reading debate on this bill. I know that many of my colleagues in the NDP caucus who would like to stand in the House and represent their constituents are going to be denied that opportunity because of this limit on the debate.

I have also alleged that the Conservatives did not intend to listen to what Canadians had to say. Let me give some examples of why I believe that to be the case.

First, there were limits on the number of witnesses and a refusal to hear some witnesses. I have already talked about the government blocking the Privacy Commissioner from appearing before the committee.

Second, there was the treatment of witnesses before the committee. Some of it was reminiscent of the tapes I have seen of the U.S. McCarthy hearings in the 1950s. Shamefully, government members asked representatives of Greenpeace if they were or were not a threat to national security, and then they were told there was no time for them to answer that question.

The first Muslim witness who appeared, from the National Council of Canadian Muslims, was accused of being soft on terror, and Amnesty International was accused of supporting terrorist organizations and was given no opportunity to reply to that smear on its reputation.

Finally, of course, I would cite the fact that all 112 opposition amendments put forward were rejected by the government. The only changes to Bill C-51 came when the government adopted three of its own very minor and deceptive amendments.

On information-sharing, the Conservatives agreed to an amendment that says that information will have to be shared according to law. Of course it does. That is a meaningless amendment to this bill. They agreed to put in a provision that said there would be no arrest powers for CSIS. Of course, no one ever thought there were arrest powers under the Criminal Code for CSIS.

New Democrats moved a subamendment to put a ban on detention and rendition by CSIS, the taking of people into custody abroad and turning them over to other powers. Government members said there was no intention to have CSIS have detention and rendition powers, so we asked them to vote for this amendment and put in the bill that CSIS would not have the power to detain Canadians inside or outside Canada and would not have the power to turn Canadians over to foreign governments. They voted against that amendment.

As to the no-fly list, which the minister mentioned in his speech, it is going to be expanded, but it remains just as ineffective, and without a good appeal process, as it is now.

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On the amendment the minister talked about, representatives of the airlines appeared at committee and said they had some problems with the bill. First, they had not been consulted before it was introduced, and second, there was a clause in the bill saying that the minister would have the power to order airlines to do anything to meet threats to national security. The airlines felt that the power to order them to anything was just a bit broad, so the government's amendment now says that they can be ordered to do anything that is reasonable, in the opinion of the minister. It is not much of an amendment.

Here we are now under time allocation, just one day away from the passage of Bill C-51. It is clear that the Conservatives have not been listening, but it is clear that Canadians have been listening. They have seen what is in the bill, and they do not like what they see.

The Conservatives are stubbornly pressing ahead with Bill C-51 despite ongoing opposition from four former prime ministers, five former Supreme Court justices, almost all witnesses at committee, including their own witnesses, and despite the clear opposition of the vast majority of Canadians. This will leave Canadians opposed to Bill C-51 little choice in October but to defeat the Conservatives while at the same time remembering that electing the Liberals will not help on this one, because it is only the NDP that has pledged to repeal this dangerous and ineffective bill.

The good news is that 2015 is here, and in a few months, Canadians will get a chance to replace the Conservatives with the first national NDP government.

In conclusion, New Democrats believe that Bill C-51 is unfixable in its current form. That is why we moved to delete all of its clauses at report stage and voted against the bill. It is also why I am going to move the following amendment.

● (1100)

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"this House decline to give third reading to Bill C-51, An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, because it:

- (a) threatens our way of life by asking Canadians to choose between their security and their freedoms;
- (b) provides the Canadian Security Intelligence Service with a sweeping new mandate without equally increasing oversight, despite concerns raised by almost every witness who testified before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, as well as concerns raised by former Liberal prime ministers, ministers of justice and solicitors general;
- (c) does not include the type of concrete, effective measures that have been proven to work, such as providing support to communities that are struggling to counter radicalization;
- (d) was not adequately studied by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which did not allow the Privacy Commissioner of Canada to appear as a witness, or schedule enough meetings to hear from the many other Canadians who requested to appear;
- (e) was not fully debated in the House of Commons, where discussion was curtailed by time allocation;
- (f) was condemned by legal experts, civil liberties advocates, privacy commissioners, First Nations leadership and business leaders, for the threats it poses to our rights and freedoms, and our economy; and

(g) does not include a single amendment proposed by members of the Official Opposition or the Liberal Party, despite the widespread concern about the bill and the dozens of amendments proposed by witnesses.

● (1105)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The motion is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Malpeque.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy working with my colleague on the public safety committee, as he would know, and oftentimes we work together. However, he did go a little far in his remarks by saying that the Liberal Party had wilted, and he used some other adjectives, I might admit.

What his motion does is spell out where the NDP really is. He said that the bill would threaten our way of life. I hope the member did not have selective hearing at the committee, because witnesses have come forward who have been opposed to this bill but have also said that we need the security aspects of it.

What I find absolutely troublesome is that on the government side we have the government that is all about security and to heck with civil liberties; on the NDP side, what we have is all civil liberties and to heck with national security. The only party that has a reasonable and responsible position is the Liberal Party, which wants to find some balance.

My question for the member is this. The NDP amendment would throw this bill out. Does the member not believe that we need balance, that we need better security and protection of our civil liberties, which is the position of the Liberal Party? Does he not believe that we need balance in this bill and that throwing it out could put Canadians at risk?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I guess the simple answer is no. I do not think we trade off security and civil liberties. The government's responsibility is to protect both at the same time.

Do I support this bill? No, the amendment is trying to prevent this from going forward. This bill is so seriously flawed that it cannot be fixed.

We need a government that will actually devote the resources needed to combat terrorism, not continue cutting the budget. We need a government that will stop cutting the budget of the RCMP, CSIS, and the Canada Border Services Agency. We do not need a Liberal government that promises everything and does the opposite.

On this bill, although the Liberals say they are going to fix it, they do not plan to do anything about CSIS powers and they do not plan to do anything about the information sharing powers. These are two fundamental threats to our civil liberties that would do nothing to address the terrorist threat. I simply cannot understand the Liberal Party's position on this bill.

•(1110)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the NDP critic.

[*English*]

I have here a quote from the NDP member for Brome—Missisquoi who said:

I am confused about what motivated the government to introduce—

—the combatting terrorism act.

...because, since 2007, nothing has happened in Canada. The country has not been subject to terrorist attacks.

Where was the member on October 22 and October 20, and what about all those plots that have successfully been derailed by our intelligence service?

My question for the hon. member is this. Does he agree with the member with the false statement, or would he ask him to apologize, set the record straight, and call a spade a spade, and call the terrorist attack on October 22 a terrorist attack for what it is?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have learned from the minister is to watch his partial quoting of witnesses and members of Parliament.

It is very clear that he is back to the same thing he tried in the beginning, to say that the NDP does not take terrorism seriously. Once again I have to say very strongly that I have a great deal of personal experience with terrorism. I have lost friends to terrorism.

I resent the minister continually standing in this House and implying that we do not see terrorism as presenting any kind of threat. We have said that there are effective ways to meet terrorism in this country and that Bill C-51 is not one of those.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think what is very disturbing in this all-out attack on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is that the leader of the party that founded and brought forward the Charter of Rights and Freedoms stands up and says that he will not defend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it would be difficult for him. It does not matter that it is difficult for all the Canadians who lose their rights and freedoms.

I remember Pierre Elliott Trudeau from when I was young. He would never shy away from standing up in a fight for individual liberties, civil liberties, and the rule of law.

Why does my hon. colleague think that the Liberal Party over in the corner has become such a spineless shadow of a once-proud party?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I have already said, as I have done many times both in committee and here, that I cannot understand the Liberal Party's position, because it speaks against the bill but is voting for it. It simply makes no sense to me.

The other part of the Liberal promise, to fix this later, really passes over the damage that could be done in the interim. For people who end up subject to terrorist threats because we collected too much information and have missed the real threats, it is not much comfort to say that it will be fixed later on, two years down the road. For

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those who say we can go to court and challenge it, well, that would be four or five years down the road.

I believe we have a bill that actually interferes with our ability to meet terrorist threats and compromises our civil liberties. It is not good enough for me to say we will fix it down the road. It is time to defeat this bill now.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my hon. friend, and I want to underscore this point because, as he will know, the Green Party has opposed the bill from the very beginning. We are very glad that the official opposition has taken this up and is fighting it in a principled way. We lament the fact that the Liberal Party, while understanding the bill is dangerous, is still prepared to vote for it.

What I want to underscore is the testimony from former Supreme Court justice John Major, who conducted the Air India inquiry. I am astonished that earlier today the minister would quote John Major, clearly out of context. What John Major actually said is, “The system just doesn’t work if there isn’t some way of ensuring that you have information-sharing”. By this he did not mean information sharing about all Canadians as in part 1 of the bill, but information sharing between CSIS and the RCMP. He went on to say, “...there’s no way from what I’ve seen that the present proposed legislation is going to do that”.

We have also seen expert testimony from the Senate side where Joe Fogarty, a British security expert, said that currently because of this lack of oversight, because of the lack of exchange of information between the RCMP and CSIS, we are “...sitting on top of a tragedy waiting to happen”.

I want to ask my hon. colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca if what I just heard him say is the position of the official opposition, because that is the position of the Green Party, that the bill, if passed, must be repealed.

•(1115)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is quite right about former justice John Major. As I mentioned in my speech, the minister has only quoted part of what he had to say. What he had to say was what we continue to say: not only does the bill threaten civil liberties, but it also threatens our ability to deal with threats to security because of its inefficiencies.

I appreciate that the Green Party is opposed to the bill, although I have to say last night, unfortunately, when the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands introduced two amendments to improve the bill, we were unable to support that because we believe the bill at this point is unfixable and should be defeated.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the unfortunate events of last October, there have been a number of arrests involving either people who subscribe to the jihadist philosophy or people who have no such affiliation but are considered a terrorist threat. That got me thinking.

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Since the new measures in Bill C-51 are not yet in force, as we are still considering them, I wonder whether this is just a problem of resources. After what happened in October, the government realized that it may have neglected to put certain resources in place. Since our budgetary philosophy on these potential threats was reviewed, the authorities have been able to arrest people who are considered a threat without the need for any legislative change.

The question is this: does the problem have to do with the legislation or with budgets and resources?

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to say we should support the budget because it would provide more money for national security. When in fact, after cutting more than \$300 million from the budget last year, Conservatives would put back \$57 million, it is some kind of new math to think that people received more resources out of that.

The RCMP Commissioner and the director of operations of CSIS appeared before parliamentary committees and said they did not have enough resources to combat the terror threats, and this will remain the case in the next budget year.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to outline our position on Bill C-51 at the third reading stage of this debate.

We see areas of the bill which are important for the public safety of Canadians and we see areas of the bill where the government has gone much too far with respect to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a fair balance with civil liberties and freedom of expression versus public safety and national security.

If Parliament were allowed to function the way it should, the bill could have come out of committee a much better one. There were four amendments at committee, three of which were along the lines of the Liberal Party's proposals, and I will get to those in a moment. However, there other amendments were direly needed, and we will propose those in our forthcoming our platform for the perceived election this fall.

Legislation similar to Bill C-51 is required and is in evidence in virtually every country with which Canada is allied or has shared values. Countering the growing threat of foreign and domestic terrorism is a reality that must be confronted by the modern state. In saying that, it must be confronted in a joint way by countries around the world as well.

However, in combatting that threat, it is important for any government to ensure that the steps taken to combat it do not propose a different threat to its citizens. That is partly what the debate was about with the NDP remarks as well, and I recognize that.

The Liberal Party supports provisions of Bill C-51 and has made that position clear from the outset.

We have also maintained there are provisions of Bill C-51 that are excessive and would, in our opinion, represent an intrusion by the state security agencies into the lives of Canadians, which are far too severe.

First, let me make note of those who have participated in a very public campaign and who are strongly opposed to Bill C-51. I think people who pay attention to their emails, and I have tried to respond to them all, have to recognize that we get thousands of letters, emails and phone calls from people across the country who are opposed to Bill C-51. Some of them, of course, do not know the amendments that have been made. I have asked them that question when I talked with them recently and they still think the bill is just as it originally was, and that is fine. However, I want to thank them for participation.

Even though we may be somewhat on opposite sides of the arguments, I am one who firmly believes that a demonstration of activism of opposing or supporting legislation is a good thing and it is important in a healthy democracy.

Here is one of the most important amendments made to the bill, because there are too many of those who are opposed to Bill C-51. Obviously some people, for political purposes, are saying that we should throw the bill out, to heck with security. Some continue to say that there have been no changes made to the bill. Yes, there have been.

One of the most egregious sections of the bill, under the interpretation section, states, "For greater certainty, it does not include advocacy, protest, dissent and artistic expression". A lot of letters of concern were related to that.

● (1120)

What do we consider a lawful protest? I was also concerned, as a former activist in the farm movement. Everything we do in a demonstration, whether it is shutting down a highway with tractors or blocking a road in a union protest or demonstration, is not exactly lawful. We were concerned about that, as were other parties, and we moved an amendment to take the word "lawful" out, and that passed. That gives some certainty, or at least some satisfaction, to those who were opposed to that clause in the bill.

A lot of people have been writing us letters are saying that this is a new secret police. No, it is not. There is an infringement on liberties that go overboard, but this is not a new secret police. Therefore, an amendment was moved by the government, due to the concerns it and others had expressed, to clarify that. It reads, "For greater certainty, nothing in subsection (1) confers on the Service any law enforcement power".

There was a narrowing of the no-fly list and on how information could be shared. Those were the two other amendments.

For those who been demonstrating and strongly opposing Bill C-51, congratulations, they did make some gains. Some of the amendments they asked for are in fact in the bill. To not recognize that would be wrong. I support all those amendments. I only wish the government would have gone further in some of the other areas that we would liked to have seen addressed in the bill, but it failed to do that.

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When we look at the witnesses who came before committee, I would have liked there to have been a longer hearing process with greater time for each witness, and the government failed to allow that. We did hear from 46 to 48 witnesses. However, if people, both on the government side and the New Democrats, were really listening to the witnesses, none of those witnesses said that they wanted the bill as it was, and very few of them said that the bill should be thrown out. They wanted it balanced. Witnesses and Canadians believe, and I certainly believe, that it is possible for this chamber, the House of Commons, to find the balance, to do what needs to be done on the security side and balance it to ensure that the civil liberties and freedom of expression, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms are enhanced and protected as well. That did not happen.

The New Democrats, just in their remarks, can be as pure as they like, but the fact is that even those who were opposed to the bill, also suggested that we needed to take measures on the national security side.

What do we do as parliamentarians when security agencies and police forces, both within Canada and around the world, say that to us that there needs to be additional measures taken to enhance the national security of Canadians? Do we ignore them, as the New Democrats do? I do not think we can. We have a responsibility in that regard. The government failed in its responsibility to make amendments to be absolutely sure that those powers did not go too far.

• (1125)

The government has absolutely failed in the past in not utilizing the already existing laws in section 110. It failed to use those authorities when, as the minister said, there were somewhere around 80 individuals who the government knew had violated Canadian law. What were they doing, and what are they still doing out there on the street, when the government already has some authority within the law to detain and arrest them?

My point is that witnesses asked for better balance. That did not happen, and that responsibility rests with no one else. I meant what I said earlier. The government is too far on the security side. For the Prime Minister to take the attitude, which he has taken with the promotion of this bill from the beginning, and to foster the fear that there is a terrorist under every rock is absolutely the wrong approach.

Fear will divide Canadians and pit them against each other. Yes, Canadians need to be watchful and ensure that there are no problems that could lead to terrorism or to individuals getting involved in terrorist activities. However, to use the fear factor is not the proper way to go.

The NDP, on the other hand, has taken the approach of saying “be very afraid of civil liberties”. People should not worry about national security. They should be afraid of their civil liberties. Both those parties have gone to extremes at both ends. Ours is, at least, a balanced position and would work if, under the Conservative regime, Parliament were allowed to exercise its rights, allow amendments, real debate and changes to legislation, as this place should work.

We do have an advantage, because there is an election, likely on October 19. Those measures that we were unsuccessful in getting

through committee will be in our election platform. Canadians will have the opportunity at that time to decide if they want sunset clauses that would make the bill cease to exist in certain areas after three years, a mandatory statutory review after three years that would look at the good, the bad, and the ugly in the legislation, and national oversight of all of our security agencies, as all our Five Eyes partners do, by parliamentarians. I will come to that in a moment. We will have those measures in our election platform.

Early in the debate about Bill C-51, my colleague, the member for Mount Royal and I joined four former prime ministers, including three Liberal prime ministers, and others to issue an open letter underscoring two fundamental responsibilities of government to ensure the safety of Canadians. These are:

—protecting Canada from terrorist attacks; and ensuring that initiatives in this regard are consistent with the rule of law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and, particularly, are subject to comprehensive oversight, review and accountability mechanisms.

However, in the course of committee hearings, when we proposed amendments to those three essential areas, they were either ruled out of order or rejected.

In that letter, the former prime ministers said:

The four of us most certainly know the enormity of the responsibility of keeping Canada safe, something always front of mind for a prime minister.

They went on to talk about oversight more than anything else. That letter was signed by prime ministers, former attorney generals, ministers of justice, retired Supreme Court justices, and so on.

• (1130)

They know the need for accountability. They know that proper oversight actually protects the government and ministers from agencies that may go astray. I am disappointed that the government failed to recognize that fact.

When we listened to the responses of the minister and the parliamentary secretary at committee when we brought those issues up, it was as if they do not trust their own members. Every other country around the world thinks that parliamentarians are capable of doing those responsible tasks. Why is the Conservative government so opposed, especially when its own current Minister of Justice, you, Mr. Speaker, and its own Minister of State for Finance, along with myself and some others, sat on the committee and recommended just that, a parliamentary oversight committee of all security agencies, based on a study that we did in the U.K., the United States and Australia? Why has the Minister of Justice changed his mind? He was one of the key promoters on that committee, and now for some reason he no longer believes in what he calls partisan oversight. It does not have to be partisan. It is really just in the last eight years under the current Prime Minister that this place has become a place of almost hate, fear and partisanship to no end, rather than looking at what good we can do for Canadians as a whole, and how to build legislation for Canadians as a whole. That is one of the sad realities of this particular Parliament.

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The issue of oversight of our security intelligence agencies has long had the support of the Liberal Party. In the wake of 9/11 and the first anti-terrorism legislation, it was a Liberal government, with the support of the members of the government and the NDP, that brought forward Bill C-81, legislation to create a committee of parliamentarians who would provide that oversight.

What did the current committee hear from witnesses with respect to that at the hearings which just concluded? Hugh Segal, a former Conservative senator and chair of the special anti-terrorism committee of the Senate, said:

Accountability on the part of our security services to the whole of Parliament is not needless red tape or excessive bureaucracy. In fact, it is the democratic countervail to the kind of red tape and bureaucracy which might unwittingly lose sight of the security mission appropriate to a parliamentary democracy, where laws and constitutional protections such as the presumption of innocence and due process must protect all citizens without regard to ethnicity or national origin.

Ron Atkey, a former Conservative MP and first chair of SIRC said:

I have been both a parliamentarian and a watchdog, a professional watchdog. The answer to whether Parliament or a specialized agency should have the power to review our security agencies is easy for me. Canadians should have both. Under our system of government, Parliament is the ultimate watchdog and is directly accountable to the people. The party having the most number of seats at each general election usually is called on to form the government, but Parliament itself remains the watchdog.

As I said earlier, the Minister of Justice and the government as a whole rejected that particular proposal.

Let me conclude by saying that there is no question there is a lot of debate around this bill in the community, which is a good thing. As I said, I welcome that debate with those who have different views and are willing to express them. There have been some minor amendments proposed, I think some that would take the word "lawful" out, et cetera, which would go some distance to satisfying that expressed concern over an infringement on civil liberties.

• (1135)

I still believe there are some problems relative to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and at some point in time the court may in fact rule on that. Regarding those measures that the government failed to accept and put in the bill, such as oversight, sunset clauses and mandatory statutory review at the end of three years, the Liberal Party will put those measures in our election platform and Canadians can decide at that point in time.

We need a balance between national security and civil liberties. Parliament should be able to find and exercise that balance. The government failed to allow that to happen.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to make it very clear that every one of us sitting on this side of the House, and I am sure on both sides of the House, are absolutely opposed to any acts of terrorism. To imply anything else through speeches just does not do us any good. It undermines the work we do in the House.

Second, like others, I am very concerned that we have not had the kind of robust committee study or debate in the House that is needed in order to have good legislation. I respect my colleague down the aisle here, but I am really puzzled by the speech he made. He talked about what is wrong with the bill and yet the Liberals said right from

day one, even before they read the bill, that the bill is bad and it has flaws, although I do not know how they could have known that. Even after looking at the bill they were willing to say that they would support it anyway and fix it later.

The leader of the Liberal Party has said that he is willing to compromise and support the legislation during this session of Parliament, but propose amendments during the next federal election campaign. That begs the question as to why we have Parliament anyway, if we are going to let those who have the majority run over us. Do Liberals believe that giving the Conservatives a blank cheque is the best way to protect Canadian freedoms?

• (1140)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, one thing the Liberals have never done is give the government a blank cheque. That is a myth which the NDP is trying to portray, but not all that successfully. New Democrats can do all the propaganda they want, but the fact of the matter is, as I have said many times in this place, the Liberal Party has been the only party that has proposed balance in the House.

Yes, when the bill was introduced, we did say there needs to be additional national safety and security measures. We would propose those and amendments to the bill to try to fix the imbalance as it relates to civil liberties and freedom of expression.

With regard to what the member said in the initial part of her remarks, I would point out that no one has ever said, at least from this end, that anyone in this place is in favour of acts of terror. Certainly, no one in this place would be in favour of that.

The question, though, is what do we do to the full extent possible to ensure that those who would be involved in acts of terror do not have the ability to do so and that we prevent those acts of terror from happening. Some of the measures in the bill would actually do that. That is why we support that part of the legislation.

Given how Parliament works under the leadership of the current Prime Minister, we have no choice but to put the measures necessary into our election platform, because the House does not operate as a place of debate where compromise and amendments are allowed. There is no choice for us but to put those amendments in our platform so that Canadians can see them and see what we would actually like to do.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Malpeque knows that I am heartbroken that his party has chosen to do the wrong thing on Bill C-51. It will not be fixable later. It will need to be repealed, and that is the position that all opposition parties should take.

We just heard the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness say that this is the only legislation in the world that would ensure that a judge oversees decisions about allowing CSIS agents, or intelligence agents in other countries, to take the steps that are proposed in the legislation.

Government Orders

I would ask the member if he would agree with me, as someone who was listening to the evidence and looking at the bill, if this is because no other country in the world, no other democracy would imagine such a thing as a secret hearing, with only the government represented, to allow for a warrant for an intelligence officer to violate the constitution. No such constitutional breach warrant has ever been contemplated by any other democracy. That is terminology that I have lifted from the testimony of Professor Craig Forcese. A constitutional breach warrant is so deeply offensive that that is why only Canada has a judge overseeing it. No other country would allow it.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from my colleague, the leader of the Green Party, I have two points.

The member said that all opposition parties would repeal the bill. No, that is not true. The leader of the NDP made it clear in the beginning that, no, the NDP will not repeal the bill. I see an hon. member looking quizzically at that, but I can table those remarks at some point in time if she should wish me to. On the one hand, NDP members are saying that they are strongly opposed and would defeat the bill, but on the other hand, they are not making a commitment to repeal it.

On the point of judicial oversight, a very important point, the member is absolutely right. All of our Five Eyes partners, with the exception of us, have proper parliamentary oversight, as we should have, but the government is failing in terms of allowing that.

The minister tries to claim that there is judicial oversight. There is no such thing. There is judicial authorization for CSIS officers and security personnel to be able to do certain things, but there is no secondary review on that. When that warrant walks out the door, that is where it ends.

There is no counterbalance in terms of the CSIS official coming before a judge. There is no counterbalance there to argue the other side, as we see in our normal legal arrangements in this country. Simply put, the judicial oversight is not oversight at all. Rather, it is authorization for CSIS to do certain things, and some of it is authorization to break the law, which puts judges in an extremely difficult position, which I do not think any of them really want to be in.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit bewildered to hear my Liberal colleague's comments because I think that the NDP was very clear. We think this legislation has no place among our Canadian laws.

I think that Canadians will not be fooled by the Liberal member because they know that the NDP fights tooth and nail for Canadians' rights and freedoms and that security and liberty must go hand in hand.

That being said, a number of experts who testified said that Bill C-51 is inconsistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Why do the Liberals want to vote against the charter by supporting this extremely flawed bill?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, that is kind of a joke when he asks why Liberals are voting against the charter. We are not. This is a piece of legislation. We are the party of the charter. I know the government does not want to talk about the charter very often, but we are the party of the charter. The leader of my party often talks about the charter and the rights provided to Canadians as a result of that charter.

There very well could be problems with the charter in this bill. I do not accept the assurance given by the Department of Justice because too many other legal opinions have concerns that if this bill in any way infringes upon the charter, the Supreme Court or other levels of the courts will certainly turn it back. If the bill is in violation of the charter, as six other bills have been, the government runs the risk of losing cases that have been started under this bill in terms of the protection of Canadian people and losing them down the road. All the work by security agencies and police authorities could be lost. Why the government would run that risk I do not understand, but it seems willing to do so.

I would tell the hon. member that maybe he should go back to the speech by his leader and see what he said he would do if the NDP was to form government. New Democrats did not say they would repeal this bill, so they are playing a bit of a game within the NDP itself. The Liberal Party has balance, and we know that.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Pickering—Scarborough East.

It is my honour to be here today and to speak in support of this very crucial national security bill, the anti-terrorism act, 2015. I am proud of the manner in which our Conservative government has managed this important file of national security.

Whether it be the response to the tragedies of late October, which we along with Canadians recognized instantly as terrorist attacks, or our measures to protect the value of Canadian citizenship, it is an honour to stand with our government on issues of national security.

It is a privilege to advocate for measures that keep Canadians safe, which is of course the first priority of any government. Regardless of the bill or motion that has been up for debate in this House, I feel a strong sense of duty when advocating for positions that Canadians truly care about, such as the mission in Iraq and Syria. Canadians will not tolerate the scourge of terrorism on our shores, which is why we must not allow the evils of ISIL to spread.

I would like to take this opportunity to first thank the members of the Canadian Armed Forces, to whom we are all very grateful. I would also like to thank the men and women who keep us safe on our shores, the RCMP, CSIS and police authorities across the country, who work tirelessly to keep us safe.

We, as parliamentarians, have an obligation to do what we can to help them in that very important job that they have. We have passed the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act to protect the sacred values of Canadian citizenship. We have passed the Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act to clarify the ability of CSIS to operate overseas.

Government Orders

Now, we are advocating for the anti-terrorism act, legislation that would enable our national security agencies to keep pace with the ever-evolving threats to our national security. Canada, like our allies, needs to modernize our laws to arm our national security agencies in the fight against Jihadi terrorists who we know have declared war on Canada.

The anti-terrorism act would protect Canadians by allowing the federal government to share information that the government already has across departments, within government, for national security purposes. Today's threats evolve too quickly to risk vital information being trapped in bureaucracy. For example, if a consular services officer has information of suspicious activity that could actually prevent an attack, he or she must be able to inform the appropriate authorities.

The anti-terrorism act would protect Canadians by expanding the passenger protect program, also known as the no-fly list, to allow the government to deny boarding to all terrorist suspects, not merely those who we can prove are a risk to that specific flight. Today, radicalized individuals can board planes so long as they are not a risk to that aircraft. These people could disappear into terrorist training camps and fall off our radar, and then make their way back to Canada after receiving training. I do not know how the opposition could advocate against something so simple, something that makes so much sense.

The anti-terrorism act would protect Canadians by criminalizing the advocacy and promotion of terrorism and allowing the federal government to seize radical jihadi propaganda. Canada is a free and accepting society but that does not mean we must tolerate hateful propaganda that advocates violence against Canadians. Canadians recognize that terrorist propaganda is dangerous and contrary to Canadian values, and that the government should do all it can to ensure that it does not poison the minds of our young people.

The anti-terrorism act would also enable CSIS to disrupt threats to our nation. This is an important part of the bill that, again, just makes sense. In fact, when I speak to Canadians across the country in roundtable discussions, they cannot believe that CSIS does not already have the power to disrupt threats.

It is inconceivable that a CSIS agent cannot take a very minor action, such as intercepting mail to prevent a meeting between a radicalized individual and a known terrorist group, to protect Canadians. Again, this is a common sense policy proposal that the opposition willingly and wilfully exaggerates the powers being proposed.

• (1150)

CSIS is not and will never be a secret police force. The opposition members know that. CSIS cannot and will not operate without strict oversight and review. That is why disruption powers would be subject to judicial review and also why the government's new balanced budget that we proposed would double SIRC's resources. The Security Intelligence Review Committee, or SIRC, is a robust Canadian model that has provided effective expert oversight of CSIS for decades. CSIS agents are often in the right place at the right time to disrupt threats early. Given the increased number of foreign fighters and jihadi terrorists threatening our nation, it is very

important that we empower the men and women of CSIS to keep Canada safe.

Finally, the anti-terrorism act would further strengthen Canadian citizenship by ensuring that national security agencies are better able to protect and use classified information when denying entry and status to non-citizens who pose a threat to Canada. Again, that is another proposal that Canadians would see to be very important and just makes sense. Canadians know that only the Conservative Party, led by this Prime Minister, can be trusted to keep Canadians safe from the threat of terrorism.

Whether it is on the issue of citizenship; our international security obligations; budget increases to national security agencies, which they continually vote against; or on a crucial bill that would modernize our security tools, the New Democrats and Liberals oppose, confuse and obstruct.

That is why I am proud to be a part of this Conservative government. I am proud of our strong record and the leadership of the Prime Minister on issues of national security. I will be voting in favour of this very important bill, and I encourage all other members to do the same, to help keep Canadians safe from terrorists who wish to do us harm.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly we are very concerned about the scope of this bill. Many very competent expert witnesses, from outside the House, came to tell us that this bill goes much too far.

I would like to ask a specific question: would the law allow CSIS to disrupt environmental groups, first nations or any other activist groups whose tactics include blockades to bar access to infrastructure?

[*English*]

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear from the outset that average Canadians who take part in law-abiding protests to make their views known to the government or some other agency would not be a concern here or to CSIS. I would ask the opposition members to make it clear. Which part of the civil liberties of average, law-abiding Canadians would be intervened upon and restricted by this bill? The opposition members come up with scenarios that are not very clear.

What is very clear is that this bill is intended to give the RCMP and CSIS the tools they need to keep Canadians safe from terrorists, those terrorists who wish to do us harm here on Canadian soil or possibly have put together plots in other parts of the world to hurt Canadians here. That is exactly what this bill would do. It is why most Canadians support this bill and that is why we will be voting for this bill.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what really scares me about this bill is the extent to which it can restrict people's rights in the name of security. We recently saw what can happen. On October 22, life in Parliament completely changed because of an individual who probably suffered from a mental health problem. We must act to ensure that the government does not restrict MPs' rights. During the October crisis in Quebec, we also saw the Liberals put in place war measures because of possibly 30 to 35 people who were making threats.

It is a disproportionate reaction. I am very scared. Canadians are scared. People in my riding of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles are afraid that the reactions will be excessive. Can the member reassure us about that?

[English]

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, I think the concern is that the NDP continuously talks about not being able to do two things. We believe that it is important to have security to protect our freedoms, and the NDP just does not.

I would ask the member to maybe sit down with those constituents who are concerned and talk about the fact that we would be criminalizing the advocacy or promotion of terrorism offences. Why does the member not agree to counter terrorism recruitment by giving our courts the authority to order the removal of terrorist propaganda online? How could she be against enhancing the power of CSIS to address threats to the security of Canadians, while ensuring that the courts have oversight, or of providing law-enforcement agencies with an enhanced ability to disrupt terrorism offences and terrorist activity?

When I speak to Canadians, they cannot understand why CSIS does not have the power now to disrupt possible terrorist attacks. The bill would allow CSIS to do that. The bill would give the RCMP, CSIS, and other security agencies across the country the tools they need to keep Canadians safe. I would encourage the member to speak to her constituents. If she explains this properly to them, how could they be against something like that? If they read over the bill, they would end up supporting it.

● (1200)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in this House today to support the anti-terrorism act, 2015, because the international jihadist movement has declared war on Canada.

From the time I fought in Afghanistan as a military engineer in the Canadian Armed Forces in 2007, a lot of things changed on the international scene, with an increase in terrorist attacks against our civilization and freedoms. Canadians are being targeted by these terrorists simply because these terrorists hate our society and the values it represents.

Jihadi terrorism is not a human right. It is an act of war. This is why our government has put forward the measures we are discussing today to protect Canadians from these terrorists who seek to destroy the very principles that make Canada the best country in the world in which to live. That is also why Canada is not sitting on the sidelines,

as some would have us do, and is instead joining our allies in supporting the international coalition in the fight against ISIS.

I am very proud to stand in this place to support this historic legislation.

Our government has already increased the resources available to our police forces by one-third. The Liberals and the NDP voted against those increases each step of the way. Economic action plan 2015 would further increase the resources to CSIS, the RCMP, and CBSA by almost \$300 million to bolster our front-line efforts to counter terrorism. Our government will continue to ensure that our police forces have the resources they need to keep Canadians safe.

Tom Quiggin, of the Terrorism and Security Experts of Canada Network, said that Canada has a series of deep networks whose aim is to create further extremism in Canada by recruiting young Canadians overseas to die in places like the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Somalia, and elsewhere. These networks have been set up by the Muslim Brotherhood. He said that confronting these extremist networks in Canada will be the work of a generation and that budgetary support for the RCMP, CSIS, and CBSA is a positive step in the right direction,

Canadians are speaking loud and clear. They know that our Conservative government, led by the Prime Minister, is on the right track to protect Canadians from the threat posed by the so-called Islamic State.

I would like to focus my comments on the first part of the bill, the security of Canada information sharing act.

Knowledge is power, as the old saying goes. In this day and age, the government has a lot of information about a wide swath of activities of the people of Canada. While some may argue that a succession of Liberal prime ministers expanded the size, scope, and reach of government far too intimately into the lives of Canadians, that is a question for a different day.

The fact of the matter is that whether it is an examination of tax records, information obtained by officers at the border, or things observed by consular officials, there is a great deal of information under the control of the Government of Canada that could be relevant to national security investigations.

Shockingly, right now it is prohibited for agencies of the Government of Canada to share most information with their counterparts in the national security field.

Let me give members an example given by the Commissioner of the RCMP.

An individual who has travelled abroad to engage in terrorism arrives at a Canadian embassy to seek consular assistance. The individual in question has recent bullet wounds and clearly looks as if he has been engaged in fighting. The individual asks for Canadian travel documents so he can return home immediately. The embassy employee is prohibited from passing on their concerns that this individual may be involved in terrorism to the RCMP. They have to orchestrate a chance meeting with their RCMP liaison officer in the hallway so that they can become aware of the risk posed by this individual.

Government Orders

It is completely ridiculous that the right hand of government cannot know what the left hand is doing. This is why I am pleased to support the bill.

Some, particularly members of the NDP, will tell us that this legislation would go too far. It would cause information to be given to CSIS regarding peaceful and legitimate dissent, and ordinary people would find themselves accused of being terrorists.

To that I respond with a question. How?

• (1205)

As I read the bill, it in no way targets protesters. In fact, it prohibits the sharing of information regarding protest or dissent.

Further, even if somehow a peaceful protest spontaneously turned into a threat to national security, I fail to see what possible information the government could be sharing that would cause such great offence.

What seems to be happening here is that the New Democrats' continuing talking points about civil liberties are a fig leaf to hide their real agenda. They are simply opposed to any measure at all to increase national security. We do not have to look far to see this. Every time our government brings forward new financial resources for security, they vote against it. They voted against the Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act. They even voted against making it a criminal offence to travel overseas for the purpose of engaging in terrorism. I hate to say it, but I believe this stems from the fundamental NDP left-wing ideology.

The NDP member for Pontiac was previously a candidate for the Communist Party of Canada, and part of his platform was the repeal of all national security laws, including the no-fly list. This is absolutely preposterous, but it does explain their opposition to the common-sense measures before us today.

Let us listen to what credible Canadians are saying about the bill. Ms. Raheel Raza, president of the Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow, said that this legislation is important to combat radicalization and that we need better tools to track jihadis who travel overseas. She said:

...unfortunately we are living in a post-9/11 world, and times are such that personal information needs to be shared. That's the reality and I don't have a problem with it.... Again, the larger picture is that of the security and safety of Canada.

Tahir Gora, of the Canadian Thinkers Forum, said:

The government's proposed Bill C-51, when passed by Parliament, shall help Canadian Muslims to curb extremist elements

Canadian experts support this important legislation. I will vote in favour of this legislation, and I encourage all my hon. colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we should put that on YouTube to show the idiocy of the Conservative Party position on that.

We are told that the willingness to defend the charter of rights, which is a fundamental of our country, and I do not know if my colleague has ever read the charter of rights, stems from a leftist ideology that he says comes from the Communist Party. I would say that sounds moronic, but I know that might not be parliamentary.

However, it shows the level of ignorance the government will go to to attack people who are not afraid to stand up for basic civil rights in this country.

I notice the government has had zero money in four years to deal with deradicalization. There has been nothing. There is no money to go after terrorist financing, yet it will go after charities. The Conservatives have consistently attacked charities. Why do they go after charities? It is for the same reason they are going after New Democrats. They say that charities that stand up for the environment are some kind of foreign radical threat.

This is an attack on civil liberties, and that man should be the poster boy for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to the hon. member, I just remind all hon. members to maintain not only the letter of the parliamentary rules but the spirit of them as well in terms of debate in this place.

The hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East.

• (1210)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, even though he is not listening and he is leaving the chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Members are not allowed to state whether another member is in or out of the chamber. In this case, I would go back to the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear any question from the member regarding the bill. He made preposterous allegations against the bill and against Canadians who are working in the police, the RCMP, and CSIS. They have an allegiance to respect the laws of this country.

This member was implying that these members will somehow not respect the charter of rights.

Regarding the fact that the NDP voted against any measures regarding the security of Canadians, I do not have another way to say it except to encourage the members to vote this time for the security of Canadians.

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell you why the NDP did not have a question about the statement he just made, and it is because the NDP has not read the bill.

It has been very clear since Bill C-51 was first introduced that there has been a lot of misinformation pushed out by the NDP, whether it is intentional or whether it is because of a complete lack of understanding. It is also interesting that yesterday one of the members of the NDP actually referred to the two terrorist attacks that took place in Canada back in October as very unfortunate incidents. New Democrats simply cannot come to terms with the term "terrorism" quite yet.

Government Orders

I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his commitment to keep Canadians safe. I would like to ask him how dangerous it would be if Canadians actually listened to the rhetoric from the opposition party instead of the credible witnesses that we brought to committee who had more than 30 years of experience in law enforcement and security intelligence and also those who have been studying terrorism for more than 10 years.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, I want to outline a few of things that this bill would do. It would allow Passport Canada to share information of potential terrorist travellers with the RCMP. It would stop known radicalized individuals from boarding planes bound for terrorist conflict zones. It would criminalize the promotion of terrorism in general. For example, statements like “kill all the infidels wherever they are” would become illegal. It would allow CSIS agents to speak to the parents of radicalized youth in order to disrupt terrorist travel plans. It would give the government an appeal mechanism to stop information from being released in security certificate proceedings if it could harm a source. All of these elements are opposed by the NDP.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Beaches—East York.

I would say that it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-51 were it not for the contents of this bill and the direction in which the government is taking us in such a worrisome fashion.

Let me pre-empt my comments by confirming that the primary role of government is to keep its citizenry safe from threats, both domestic and foreign. Those are threats that can be borne out by groups. They can also be threats to our liberties and security borne out by a government itself that no longer has the ability to maintain any semblance of balance and understanding of what it is to live in a free and fair democracy.

The Conservatives were so concerned about privacy and freedoms that they cancelled the long form census because it was such an intrusion on the privacy and rights of Canadians, yet they are now embedding in Bill C-51 the right of the state to have warrantless search and seizure powers without any oversight from a judge. Consider that for a moment. The Conservatives did not want the government knowing how many bathrooms Canadians have in their homes, but now they say that they want to legitimize and legalize the act of a warrantless search not only on homes, but on people's emails and phone conversations in their very private lives. There was no extension of power granted of oversight to the public or to any oversight body at all when handing out these extraordinary powers to the spy agency of Canada.

The Conservatives have made no case whatsoever of the need for this bill. They have not been able to cite an incident where a terrorist activity took place but would have been prevented had this bill been in place. In fact, there have been a number of arrests in Canada over the last number of years involving potential terrorist threats well before they even happened, yet the Conservatives say that they need to hand CSIS these broad powers.

If it is not for legitimate security reasons, then what is it for? One does not have to go too far back into the Conservative history to realize that the Conservatives do have an agenda here.

The Conservatives time and time again have shown who their enemies are. We all recall the famous enemies list. The Prime Minister's Office called it the list of friends and enemy stakeholders, back in 2013. This was a memo from the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada asking government officials to compile a list of stakeholders who were friends and stakeholders who were enemies, in their words. Fast forward to the then natural resources minister, now the Minister of Finance, who, in attacking opponents of his pipeline dreams in northern British Columbia, said that opponents were foreign-funded radicals and enemies of the state.

Take those two comments for what they are, that people are enemies of the state for opposing an industrial project, a pipeline that is highly controversial and in fact opposed by two-thirds of British Columbians. Is that what enemies of the state have become? Are they anybody who happens to have an opinion and anyone who happens to have the audacity to be against a government's policy or industrial proposal which, by the way, threatens our very way of life in northern British Columbia?

There are three points of this bill that are most worrisome.

First of all, the definition of terrorism has been vastly expanded to include things like economic interests and countering government policy. If the net is cast so broadly to include anything as a terrorist activity that happens to contravene something that the government of the day wants to push forward, we have to ask ourselves what type of country we are living in and what type of country is imagined by the Conservatives.

The second point is something that has already been struck down in court from a previous bill that tried to counteract money laundering and terrorism, but here the Conservatives go again with warrantless search and seizure. The ability to go in without a warrant and conduct searches was struck down recently by the Supreme Court, but here the Conservatives go again, trying it again. At the foundation of what this democracy and any free and right-thinking democracy stands for is that the state simply cannot, without the purview of a judge and without rational and proper discourse, go in and interfere with the private lives of Canadians.

● (1215)

The last point is an important one. The level of oversight is already so weak that we have heard from commission after commission looking into the Air India bombing, for example, that oversight needs to be improved. What have the Conservatives done? They have expanded powers but they have not improved any oversight.

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After some tragic events in my riding, one involving Ian Bush, a young man who when interacting with the RCMP in a confrontation was killed, the Bush family and many right-thinking British Columbians fought for years to bring more public oversight to the RCMP. The Conservatives rallied against this saying that public oversight of our police forces was unnecessary and that we were somehow demeaning security and police forces by even asking for it. Lo and behold, British Columbia was able to bring in public oversight of the RCMP just as police oversight has been brought in in Alberta and Ontario. The United States is finally contemplating the very same thing. With extraordinary power comes extraordinary responsibility and it is right for the public to ask for some level and measure of oversight.

We see in this bill that if the lawyers for CSIS, the spy agency itself, determine that CSIS may contravene our charter or interfere with people's civil liberties by some action it is undertaking, such as spying on them, tapping their phone or breaking into their email accounts, then under this law CSIS may go to a judge and seek a warrant. Some would say that is enough for oversight, but the judge never sees CSIS again, and off it goes on its merry way. Did CSIS expand its search and investigation of Canadians or go beyond? The judge and the public would never know because Parliament has no oversight capacity.

We have implored the government through dozens of amendments to take on some of these basic and reasonable requests. Of the 48 witnesses who appeared before the committee, many of them called by the Conservatives, 43 said that this bill is flawed and needs major fixes. Many witnesses, experts in matters of security and civil rights, said that the bill had to be scrapped entirely. Former Supreme Court judges, former prime ministers, both Liberal and Conservative, called this bill what it is, which is an affront to basic Canadian values. For me, as someone who has great faith and pride in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to see the impact on those rights and freedoms proposed by this bill, with little to no justification at all, is incredibly worrisome.

We would think with all of the terrorist threats and certainly with all of the rhetoric we hear from the Conservatives that going after money laundering and terrorist financing would have been the first order of the Conservative government. In the last four years we have not seen any increase in CRA's budget to do just that, to go after money laundering and terrorist financing. There has been nothing, no increase at all. However, there has been an increase in Canada Revenue Agency's budget to go after charities, birdwatchers, environmental groups, first nations groups, anybody who had the audacity to suggest an opinion that was different from that of the government, who had the audacity to suggest that they disagreed with some Conservative policy or another. Here we are with a government that claims to have the security interests of Canadians, yet so often and so consistently it disregards our civil liberties, our rights and freedoms, and infringes on the values that Canadians so cherish.

Coming from the northwest of B.C., I will suggest this. The Conservatives have managed to pull off some rare feat. They have managed to bring gun owners, environmental groups, first nations, loggers, and groups from across the political spectrum in my part of the world to come to a place of agreement in their opposition to this

bill. It is a rare feat in politics to bring so many different divergent groups together in unity in opposition to an idea. That idea is expressed in Bill C-51. It is an idea that is abhorrent to Canadian values, is contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and is contrary to any sound policy-making.

If the intention is to protect Canadians, let us protect Canadians from true threats to our security and from threats by a government that wishes to abuse its powers.

● (1220)

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, that speech proves that NDP members have either not fully understood the bill, perhaps did not read it, or they are intentionally misleading Canadians.

When I hear such things, that the bill contains the ability for CSIS to conduct warrantless searches and seizures, it is absolutely ridiculous. Actually, right in the bill, there is a requirement that CSIS would have to obtain a warrant.

In fact, we heard from many witnesses on this particular issue. One of them was Ray Boisvert, who is the former assistant director of CSIS. He talked extensively on the warrant process, and that it is one of the most onerous warrant processes of any of its kind. He also went on to say that, "My sense from reading the legislation is that those safeguards are protected and are further enhanced."

Once again, we have a situation where NDP members are perhaps woefully misleading Canadians, whether it is intentional or because they just simply have not read the bill.

I would like to ask the member specifically if he could point to the page, the clause and the sentence so that Canadians can actually reference this bill and see exactly where he is misleading Canadians.

● (1225)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, of course, to suggest an hon. member would mislead Canadians is contrary to the rules of this place.

We look through the bill and we find numerous instances in which the requirement of CSIS to seek a warrant is at the discretion of CSIS. My friend says, do not worry, the spy agency in all matters will seek out a warrant before it infringes upon the rights of Canadians. Who is going to determine that? Not Parliament, not a judge, but CSIS would determine it first. CSIS may wonder if they would break anyone's rights, maybe, maybe not, but if CSIS determines it, then CSIS goes ahead.

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I do not know what happened to the Conservative Party. I remember there used to be a certain libertarian streak within the party that thought about the sanctity of individual rights and freedoms. Privacy was an important thing for Conservatives. I remember that was their main argument on the gun registry. It was certainly their argument on cancelling the long form census, which was an idiotic move that was condemned on all levels and across the political spectrum.

Privacy was paramount to the Conservatives, yet without any justification, any proof that there are certain threats that would require this type of extension of government powers over Canadians, this type of intrusion into our private lives, we have a government that says if we oppose its policy one is an enemy of the state. Those are not our words. Those are the words of the current Minister of Finance.

Well, $a+b=c$ in this case, and it is clear where the Conservative agenda is. Conservatives are spending more money going after charities than they are terrorists. One wonders what the true agenda of the Conservative Party is in this matter.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the Conservatives are misleading Canadians by claiming that it is crucial to pass Bill C-51.

The measures adopted after the 2001 legislation were only used after the events in October. Recently, there have been more arrests of people who represent a threat.

Does my colleague think the issue was a legal problem that tied the hands of those involved or the poor use of existing resources and options and the underfunding of certain agencies responsible for security? Did we need more money or more laws?

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, we know that between 2009 and 2014, the Conservatives cut the RCMP budget by \$420 million. That is a fact. I wonder how Conservatives square that with their need for this bill. Between 2012 and 2013, CSIS itself had its funding cut by \$44 million. Therefore, bleed them of resources, bleed them of expertise, and claim that there is a crisis so great that we have to trample over the rights of Canadians. That is the situation that the Conservatives have claimed.

Parenthetically, my disappointment, the only word I can use properly today, with where the Liberals stand on this is devastating, simply because I am looking for the justification as to why a party that brought in the charter, with our help and support, is now so willing to join with the Conservatives in taking out vast sections of the charter with the bill. The Liberal leader said that this conversation might be different if we were not months from an election campaign, but we are. Therefore, there is a political element to this entire conversation that is worrisome.

We can do much better than this. We can defend the rights of Canadians and protect Canadians from threats. Those two things have to happen at the same time as they are born from the same root. It is what Canadians expect legislators to do, rather than play the kinds of politics that we see the Conservatives doing day in and day out.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-51 at third reading. Of course there was only ever one proper way to dispose of the bill and that was some time ago in the legislative process at second reading and as per the reasoned amendment put forward by my NDP colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, which suggested that we decline to give second reading to the bill. I was pleased this morning to second another such reasoned amendment, which was in effect to throw the bill out so that we did not discuss this and the bill never became law.

I want to take a moment to thank the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and the member for Alfred-Pellan for leading our caucus in vigorous opposition to the bill, because the bill is unworthy of any Canadian government to lay before the House, as the Conservative government has done. Certainly it is unworthy of any opposition support, as the Liberals have done. It is so because what is rotten about the bill lies at its very heart, with the bill's premise that it is only by way of sacrificing the rights and freedoms of Canadians that we are able to make Canadians safe.

I have listened carefully to Conservatives and Liberals trying to rationalize this premise. They cannot. They compensate with hyperbole, with an extremism in their language, all of their own. Liberals, the self-proclaimed party of the charter are the Conservatives' allies in this. They are afraid of what the Conservatives might do to them if they disagree. They have turned on the charter and have agreed to support a bill in which our rights would not be rights anymore, because if we considered them so, goes the logic of the bill and of the Conservatives and Liberals who support it, we could not and would not be safe here in Canada.

This is what it has come to, their consent to a bill that would give the Canadian Security Intelligence Service new radically altered authorities. CSIS was originally charged with a broad mandate but limited power, certainly, no so-called kinetic powers, no powers to disrupt, arrest or, in the terms used by Force and Roach, "to do things to people in the physical world". This is not only no longer the case, but through the bill CSIS would be provided with such kinetic powers with little constraint, restricted only from committing bodily harm, obstructing justice and violating a person's sexual integrity.

The provisions of Bill C-51 would provide CSIS with the authority to take measures both at home and abroad to disrupt threats when it has "reasonable grounds" to believe that "there is a threat to the security of Canada". Activities to disrupt threats are not to contravene a right or freedom guaranteed under the charter, unless authorized by a warrant under the act. Here, the bill turns the idea of judicial warrants on its head. In the normal course, judicial warrants are designed to ensure the preservation or integrity of charter rights, specifically to protect against unreasonable searches and seizure. The special warrant system laid out in Bill C-51 would pre-authorize the violation of absolute rights such as, for example, the right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment.

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This represents a departure from our constitutional tradition in Canada and the role of the judiciary in that tradition. Section 1 of the Charter allows rights to be violated where such violation is considered “reasonable” in a free and democratic society, but only when prescribed by law, which usually means specified by statute, which is something determined, democratically, here in the House. It depends in turn on some rigorous, legal justification. This tradition does not permit a judge to make a new exception to a charter right, but the bill would, or at least it seeks to.

Let me heap a few complications on top of this situation. First, the bill does not provide for any oversight of CSIS' own determinations of whether or not it ought to, or needs to, seek a special warrant. The bill leaves such decisions to CSIS absent any check or scrutiny of those decisions.

●(1230)

It is only in the instance that something goes wrong or when its activities morph into criminal investigations led by the RCMP that such decisions may come under some scrutiny, potentially, it is worth noting, threatening the prosecution of the case. It is worth noting, too, that where warrants are brought forward by CSIS, seeking pre-authorization by the court of the violation of a charter right, such considerations are to be dealt with in secret.

Forcese and Roach illustrate the problem by way of their comparison of the open and public discussion in the British Parliament of the validity of exclusion orders for British citizens who have joined ISIS or ISIL. Whatever one might think of those exclusion orders, the fact of parliamentary debate stands in stark contrast to the provisions of this bill, which would have such discussions take place with only a judge and the government side present, and in the absence of any person or representative body to argue against the charter breach.

Perhaps a system of special advocates and advocacy will emerge or be adopted by the courts, to be seen. We are left most certainly, inevitably under this bill with the decisions of the judiciary to deny or permit violations of the absolute rights of Canadians being made in secret and being kept secret, far from the scrutiny of anybody.

Another problem is the matters before the judiciary, under this special warrants system, are not restricted to matters of terrorism. It is a far broader scope of matters and conduct that fall subject to this system. Terrorism is only one such form of activity that falls under broadly defined security concerns of the bill; so does interference with critical infrastructure, and so does interference with the capability of the government in relation to, for example, the economic or financial stability of Canada.

This broad language, potentially at least, brings first nations most obviously but also any civil society group making territorial claims in response to development projects, such as mining or other extractive activities, into the ambit of this bill and subject to the special disruptive activities of CSIS and special warrants process of the courts.

This broad language again, potentially at least, brings any civil society group, environmental groups for example, that Conservative ministers have been known to refer to as eco-terrorists, engaged in civil disobedience activities investigations with respect to energy

infrastructure, for example, into the ambit of this bill and subject to the special disruptive activities of CSIS and special warrant processes of the courts.

None of this, none of what I have said today, is to deny the very real threat of terrorism to the safety and security of Canadians. How can we? From 9/11 onwards at least, we have recognized the threat, our vulnerability and the need to respond to protect ourselves.

Whatever that hate is that moves ISIL to do what it does, we cannot but acknowledge that it has inspired some Canadians to leave here and join them, and it has inspired at least a couple of Canadians to turn that hate on their own here at home. We cannot forget Corporal Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent. We cannot forget October 22, when all of us in this place wondered, for at least a moment, if that was to be our last moment.

The impossibility of supporting Bill C-51 was captured most simply and elegantly by the Leader of the Opposition when he said that we cannot protect our freedoms by sacrificing our freedoms.

Our challenge is not to forsake who we are and what we believe in when we are afraid, when we are tested. Our challenge is to ensure that Canadians are safe and secure in a Canada that protects their rights and freedoms. That vision of Canada is the New Democrats' vision of Canada. It is different from the Conservative vision represented by Bill C-51. It is different from the Liberals' vision represented by their fear of not supporting Bill C-51 and by their fear of Conservatives.

It is the only vision offered here today in this House that is consistent with the long, proud history of this country, and the only vision that will ensure that we have a long, proud future.

●(1235)

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again we are hearing about the bill containing unreasonable search and seizure, which is absolutely not the case. In the NDP member's speech, we heard that this would give CSIS the powers to do whatever it wants. That is absolutely not the case. In fact, to inform the member opposite, right now law enforcement makes the decisions when warrants are required. Police have to apply for a warrant, and the same process would occur with CSIS.

I want to clarify for the record that, once again, the NDP is pushing out information that is inaccurate, whether it is intentional or whether it is simply because of a lack of understanding of the bill. With respect to the bill itself, there are multiple conditions that would have to be met for someone to apply for a warrant and, as well, the judge might place conditions on that warrant. So all of those safeguards would be in place.

Does the member believe that our national security agencies, including local law enforcement in his area, are incapable of determining when a warrant is required?

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• (1240)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, it would most certainly not be the same case as the current system of judicial warrants that are sought by police. Those warrants are sought to ensure that there is no invasion of charter rights, that the integrity of the charter is upheld, and that is what judges determine, and those warrants are monitored by judges from the beginning of the criminal process to the end. This would not be that process. This, in fact, would turn that process on its head. These are warrants explicitly intended to seek a breach of somebody's charter rights or freedoms. That process would occur not in open court subject to the scrutiny of the public, but in secret courts, in secret trials.

The Conservative Party is a party that has turned Canada, through this bill, into a country of secret trials and secret hearings, and this is not the Canada we support and believe in. The parliamentary secretary would be wise and would make a far better member of Parliament by acting in good faith and speaking honestly in this House about what is really in the bill and not continuing to misrepresent what Conservatives are doing to Canada, to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of this country, through the bill.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Beaches—East York for his very thoughtful presentation today. He talked about threat disruption, and said activities to disrupt threats would not contravene a right or freedom guaranteed under the charter unless authorized by a warrant under section 21.1 of the act. It would be left, as he pointed out, to CSIS to determine whether such a warrant should be sought from a judge, in secret, without the benefit of a special advocate or others who might know the security-tested information and participate effectively.

I had the honour of being appointed by the former minister of justice, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, to play the role of special advocate. I ask my hon. friend, as a lawyer, if he thinks this is consistent with Canada's commitment to rule of law to have no one there except CSIS and a judge talking about these unprecedented powers, without the benefit of someone like a special advocate to test the evidence, which was found to be constitutionally required elsewhere. I wonder why not here, and does he think this squares, therefore, with the rule of law?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, it is a fine question, probably better addressed to an actual lawyer, which I am not. However, most clearly, the bill is very simple in what it ultimately puts forward. It puts forward a judicial system in this country that is not consistent with constitutional traditions of Canada in that it does not respect the rule of law. We have seen judges under current law criticize CSIS for not seeking warrants when it should have. For the government to suggest that no oversight is required of CSIS to ensure that it is not seeking warrants when it knows full well that there is a potential breach of someone's charter rights is extraordinarily naive or misleading.

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Thornhill.

I am very pleased to provide my views on the important subject of what our Conservative government is doing to combat terrorism. Terrorism is not some far-off problem for others to deal with. It hits us right here at home.

That is because the international jihadi movement has declared war on Canada and its allies. The members of that movement hate our values, our freedom, and our prosperity. In fact, Canadians have been targeted specifically for our values that make Canada the best country in the world to live, work, and raise a family. Tragically, we saw the most horrific manifestations of this in late October. Two brave members of the Canadian Armed Forces were killed in cold blood by jihadi terrorists. That is what brought about the legislation that is before us today, the anti-terrorism act, 2015.

I am proud to support this important legislation that builds on our strong record of protecting Canadians from violent terrorists. We have taken action to limit the ability of terrorist organizations to fund-raise within Canada, through the Criminal Code terrorist-listing process. We passed the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, which allows victims of terrorism and their families to hold state sponsors of terror financially accountable. We passed the Combating Terrorism Act, which makes it a criminal offence to travel overseas to engage in terrorist activity. We also passed the Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act, which modernizes the tools available to our national security agencies. This is a record of which Canadians can all be proud.

It is shocking but certainly not surprising that the NDP has opposed us every step of the way.

There are four key elements in the legislation before us today: one, this bill would allow for information sharing internal to the government; two, it would enhance the passenger protect program, known as the "no-fly list"; three, it would criminalize the distribution of jihadi terrorist propaganda; and four, it would give CSIS the tools to disrupt terrorist plots before they end in tragedy. These are very common-sense changes that would protect us from the real jihadi terrorism threat. On this side of the House, we know that this threat is real. We have heard it in witness testimony. It has evolved, it is growing, and it is real.

We have also seen attacks planned and carried out both in Canada and in other western countries. I would remind this House of the chilling words of the Islamic State:

If you can kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be.

Government Orders

That threat is very real, and we must take action to degrade and destroy this threat. That is why our government will not sit on the sidelines, as the Liberals would have us do, and why we are joining the international coalition to defeat ISIS. Credible Canadians know that we must take action to deal with this threat, specifically the action outlined in our bill, the anti-terrorism act, 2015.

Professor Elliot Tepper of Carleton University said:

Bill C-51 is the most important national security legislation since the 9/11 era.

[It] is designed for the post-9/11 era. It's a new legislation for a new era in terms of security threats. While it's understandable that various provisions of the legislation attract attention, we need to keep our focus on the fundamental purpose and the fundamental challenge of combating emerging types of terrorism.

Professor Salim Mansour of the University of Western Ontario said:

Bill C-51 is directed against Islamist jihadists and to prevent or pre-empt them from their stated goal to carry out terrorist threats against the west, including Canada.

...the measures proposed in Bill C-51 to deal with the nature of threats that Canada faces, I believe, are quite rightly and urgently needed to protect and keep secure the freedom of our citizens.

Scott Tod, deputy commissioner, investigations, organized crime, Ontario Provincial Police, said:

Bill C-51 offers improvements for the federal police to share information among our justice sector partners, security partners, but more importantly and hopefully, with the community partners and government situational tables designed to reduce the terrorist threat and improve community safety and well-being.

It is clear that our measures would protect Canadians from those who wish to harm us.

●(1245)

The first duty of any government is to protect the safety of its citizens, and that is exactly what our Conservative government is doing. The anti-terrorism act 2015 would ensure that our police forces have the tools they need to protect Canadians against the evolving threat of jihadi terrorists. We reject the argument that every time we talk about security, somehow our freedoms are threatened. Canadians understand that their freedom and security go hand in hand. Canadians expect us to protect both, and that is exactly what we are doing with this legislation because there are safeguards in this bill.

The fundamental fact is that our police forces are working to protect our rights and freedoms and it is jihadi terrorists who endanger our security and would take those freedoms away. What is more, we will never apologize for taking jihadi propaganda out of circulation. In fact, if companies that provide website content hosting services or other businesses are profiting from this type of horrific material, they should seriously reconsider their business models and lack of commitment to the values we cherish here in Canada.

Across this country, businesses, large and small, depend on a strong economy, clear rules of marketplace conduct, dependable transactions, and secure data. The reality is that there is no profitability without a stable security environment, both physical and virtual. This legislation would strengthen our national security and would benefit businesses, as well as all consumers.

It is clear that our Conservative government can make the tough decisions necessary to keep all Canadians safe, and I hope that when this bill is voted on tomorrow night, all members of the House will stand with me in supporting this very important piece of legislation.

●(1250)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the hon. member's speech, and I would really like her to explain the difference between keeping Canadians safe and expanding the rules that restrict our rights and take away our freedoms.

As we speak, an online group has gathered 205,000 signatures from people who oppose this bill. Some 82% of people were in favour of it, but after just two days, now only 33% support it. The more Canadians know about the bill, the less they want it.

Why is the government refusing to amend the bill or agree to any amendments?

[*English*]

Ms. Roxanne James: Mr. Speaker, we heard from credible witnesses throughout the testimony, those with law enforcement and security intelligence experience and those who deal with terrorism. Every one of the individuals who went before the committee agreed that the threat of terrorism is real, it is evolving, and we need to deal with it on an urgent basis.

The legislation before us has the safeguards to protect both the privacy and the freedoms of Canadians. This bill targets terrorism. It targets terrorists. Again, we are dealing with misinformation that has been pushed out by the New Democrats, whether intentionally or because they completely do not understand the contents of the bill. If we read the legislation, we see the safeguards are very clearly there, and I am very proud to say that I will be supporting this piece of legislation.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will say the Green Party completely agrees with the NDP and is actually committed to ensuring this bill is repealed after an election, not just amended or fixed. It cannot be fixed.

I am not surprised to hear the parliamentary secretary repeat that somehow those of us in opposition who oppose this bill do not understand it. I can assure everyone that I understand it fully. This bill is dangerous, and it is dangerous precisely because it would not make us safer from terrorists, as we have heard from many security witnesses, both in the House committee and now before the Senate committee.

The bill would create silos. RCMP operatives and CSIS operatives would be given powers to disrupt, with no pinnacle control or command, no one to know whether the CSIS operatives were giving permission or commitments to witnesses that they would never be called, who may be part of an RCMP investigation that needs that witness' testimony. The way in which this is being set up, in the words of security experts, particularly Joe Fogarty, who is a British security expert, is that we are "sitting on a tragedy waiting to happen". This is not good legislation to protect us from terrorists, and it would certainly be unacceptably intrusive and destroy charter rights and freedoms through secret trials.

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Ms. Roxanne James: Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely false. There are measures contained in this bill. Again, she referred to the activities of CSIS. CSIS would have to obtain a warrant from a judge. A section of the charter would actually be applied in order to determine whether a warrant is required. CSIS would have to provide pages and pages of documentation with respect to the activity it would undertake. Therefore that is absolutely false.

I have to say that in committee the officials tried to explain something to the member, and she completely disregarded what the officials said. Again, I stand on this side of the House speaking very clearly about the importance of this legislation, what the measures are that are contained within it, and why is so important to make sure Canadians are kept safe.

•(1255)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the parliamentary secretary cite the importance of Bill C-51 and the sharing of information between the RCMP, CBSA, CSIS, and others?

Ms. Roxanne James: Mr. Speaker, most Canadians would expect that this is already being done, but it is not.

When I spoke to my constituents about this issue, they found it completely unbelievable that our current security agencies did not have the ability to share pertinent information. The provisions in Bill C-51 would create a new information sharing act which, just as the hon. member mentioned, would allow agencies to share information pertinent to national security.

Witnesses in committee spoke about the importance of pieces of information coming from various sources that, when pieced together, created a puzzle. With this, they are able to determine more with regard to security threats.

This is absolutely crucial to national security and to keeping Canadians safe. That is why I am supporting the bill.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to participate in this important debate today.

Recent polls have shown us that national security and the fight against jihadi terrorism is one of the most important issues for Canadians from coast to coast. I regret that so many of my hon. colleagues on the other side of the House refuse to use that modifier to describe this new and very dangerous form of terrorism and they refuse to recognize this as one of the most important issues facing Canadians.

The vast majority of my constituents in Thornhill share that concern. I have received any number of phone calls over recent months, from folks who want to know precisely what we will do to keep our communities safe from jihadi terrorists.

I am proud to respond to each and every one of those phone calls to explain the content of the bill before us today, the anti-terrorism act, 2015, because it gives me an opportunity to highlight the strong record of this Conservative government.

First, we tabled the economic action plan 2015, which would invest nearly \$300 million in the fight against jihadi terrorism. This is above and beyond the fact that we have increased the resources available to our national security agencies by one-third since coming

to office. We have listed dozens of new groups as terrorist entities to prohibit them from operating, from recruiting, from fundraising and from doing business in Canada. These include the Islamic State, Jabhat al Nusra, al Shabaab and al Qaeda.

We passed the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act to allow the families of those who had been killed in terrorist acts to seek compensation from state sponsors of terror.

We passed the Combating Terrorism Act to give new tools to stop individuals from travelling overseas to engage in terrorism.

We passed the Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act to modernize the tools available to CSIS when investigating threats to Canada.

Also, we introduced the bill which is before us today, the anti-terrorism act, 2015.

The bill, I would remind the House, would do four key things. It would create a system for internal government information sharing. It would improve the passenger protect program, colloquially known as the “no-fly list”. It would criminalize the dissemination of terrorist literature and propaganda. It would also give CSIS the ability to disrupt planned terrorist attacks before they happen.

These measures are just good old-fashioned common sense. It makes no sense that the right hand of government should be prohibited from knowing what the left hand is doing. That is why we are eliminating the silos and the roadblocks that potentially act as roadblocks to the safety of Canadians.

It makes no sense that individuals we suspect may be travelling abroad to engage in terrorism would be allowed to board an airplane. It makes no sense that we allow terrorist recruiters to post propaganda online with impunity. It makes no sense that we would prohibit our national security officials from taking action to foil a terrorist plot.

That is why we are moving forward with the legislation. It simply makes good, common sense. However, as the old saying goes, common sense is not always all that common.

The NDP member for Beauharnois—Salaberry said, “Bill C-51... will only increase this disproportionate representation in our prisons”. That is ridiculous.

Let me clear. The bill would be targeted at terrorists. It would not be targeted at protesters, or environmentalists or whatever other voter bloc the NDP wants to confect. To fearmonger by suggesting that the legislation would somehow lead to the incarceration of aboriginals is simply irresponsible. Any individual who is not engaging in terrorist activities or distributing jihadi propaganda would be able to continue to go about their daily lives without feeling the slightest impact of the legislation.

•(1300)

Members do not have to take my word for it. Former Supreme Court Justice John Major had this to say, “citizens who are not validly under suspicion will not have some manufactured reason for their private lives to be interfered with”.

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Going even a step further, Ray Boivert, a former senior official at CSIS, said, “anybody who had an issue they’d like to protest will now become a target of the security establishment. I think you should not...flatter yourself to that degree”.

A fundamental fact is that we are taking action to prevent Canadians from being targeted by jihadi terrorists.

Not long ago, barely six months ago now, we suffered two terrorist attacks on our own soil. We lost two brave members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We must never forget those attacks, particularly in the context of discussing the modernization of our national security legislation.

While the NDP and the Liberals put their collective heads in the sand and wish that national security was not an issue that we are faced with, our Conservative government will continue to make the tough decisions.

While the NDP leader has fantasized any number of times of conspiracy theories, most notably his skepticism over the death of Osama bin Laden, and while the leader of the official opposition has refused to accept that Canada has in fact been attacked by terrorists, our Conservative government will continue to make the tough decision.

While the Liberal leader makes juvenile one-liners about whipping out CF-18s, our Conservative government will continue to make the tough decision.

The fact is that Canadians know they can only count on the Conservative government to make the tough decisions to keep Canadians safe from terrorists threats, from specifically jihadi threats.

As my times draws to a close, I am reminded of comments at the public safety committee by Louise Vincent, the sister of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, who was killed in cold blood by a jihadi terrorist. She said:

If C-51 had been in place on October 19...Martin Couture-Rouleau would...have been in prison and my brother would not be dead today.

When I vote on this important legislation, I will be keeping those words in mind. I hope my NDP, Liberal and other opposition colleagues will do the same.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I care about what happened to Warrant Officer Vincent's family every bit as much as my colleague does. In that regard, of course, everyone in the House feels the same.

However, if I had as much time as my colleague to ask my question and if I wanted to be as insulting as the countless examples he hurled at us for 10 minutes, things could get ugly in the House today.

The Conservatives like to say that they are tough on crime and that they are making tough decisions, and I have to wonder if the reason they have refused to accept any of the amendments suggested by anyone in the House is in order to appear tough.

Is it to please their electorate, to appear tough, or is there actually a valid reason behind all this?

● (1305)

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

[*English*]

I think it is very clear, and we have heard any number of times during the debate today and in previous days of debate in the House, that our government listened very closely to the spectrum of witnesses that came before the committee. We have been listening to those concerns and responding with a number of amendments. We have listened as well to the expert advice that in fact this new phenomenon of jihadi terrorism requires new abilities within the security agencies of our country.

I and our government are convinced that Bill C-51 would provide a balance between recognizing and protecting essential Canadian rights and also ensuring the security of our country against these new threats of terrorism.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to pose a question regarding the government's inability to incorporate parliamentary oversight into the legislation. That is sad, given that other countries and Canada's allies, in particular the Five Eyes, already have parliamentary oversight.

When the member for Mount Royal was the Liberal minister of justice, he brought in legislation and the current Minister of Justice actually supported parliamentary oversight.

It seems to me that this legislation could have been much better had the government simply adopted what seemingly all of the stakeholders and people before committee acknowledged was needed, which is more oversight. Maybe the member could provide some comment as to why he believes that parliamentary oversight was not provided for in this bill when so many people wanted to see it.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has asked a very thoughtful and reasonable question.

As we have explained in the House any number of times, we believe that third party, non-partisan, independent, expert oversight of our national security agencies is a better model than political intervention in the process.

The member has referred to any number of times in this debate our Five Eyes partners. I would remind him of something said recently by the former legal chief of Military Intelligence, Section 5, and Military Intelligence, Section 6, or MI5 and MI6 as they are popularly known. The former legal chief said that judicial oversight is something which is lacking in the British system. At the time, the former legal head of MI5 and MI6 praised the French system, because it does have exactly that, and said that it removes the non-expert, political contamination of some national security cases, and in fact, through the expertise, knowledge, and maturity of a judge, it provides the right to balance the interests of national rights, human rights, civil rights, and security issues.

Government Orders

•(1310)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about Bill C-51. It will be an honour for me to represent the people of Pierrefonds—Dollard over the next 10 minutes. I have received many emails and inquiries about this bill.

I recently visited the Gérald-Godin CEGEP. I was surprised at how interested the students there were in certain political issues, including federal ones. Sometimes we get the feeling that this stuff is not very relevant to their everyday lives. I was especially surprised to see that they know this bill by name and were able to provide a brief summary of Bill C-51 when I mentioned it. This means that the bill is quite important to them and that people in the community are talking about it.

Before I continue, I would just like to say that I will be sharing my time and that I will give a 10-minute speech on Bill C-51.

Today, as I have done for the past four years, I am speaking on behalf of the people I represent. I would like to share their concerns with the House and the Conservative government.

I was in this place, with my baby, during the shooting last fall. The next day, I even returned to this place with my baby, because I knew that it was important not to give in to fear and intimidation. I was also confident in Parliament's ability to protect the parliamentarians, tourists and Canadians who were here. If there was one hope that sustained us following those tragic events, it was the hope that parliamentarians would work together to find a solution that was really in line with the seriousness of the situation, while avoiding a knee-jerk response to this threat, this intimidation, this fear.

Unfortunately, I get the impression—and I am not the only one—that Bill C-51 is the kind of response that many of us were hoping to avoid following those tragic events. It is a reaction that makes use of arguments based not only on fearmongering and partisan politics, but also—and this is the most important part—arguments that have not swayed the official opposition and that ignore all of the criticisms, comments and suggestions made by experts and community groups across Canada.

In such an important and sensitive debate, a responsible government has a duty to unite people around a fight and intelligent measures, instead of creating divisions and spreading information that can seem partisan and inflammatory.

Earlier I mentioned my constituents, those who have written to me.

[*English*]

I have received approximately 50 emails, letters and phone calls in the last few weeks from people I represent in the House of Commons who are concerned about Bill C-51. I want to thank them for participating in their democracy, but also for sharing their concerns with me.

Madam Fine wrote:

I'm writing to call on you to take a firm stand against the government's reckless, dangerous and ineffective Bill C-51. I'm asking you to side with Canadians and vote against this legislation.

I will do just that. I will vote against Bill C-51. She said also:

If this bill passes, the government could spy on anyone, at any time, and we wouldn't even know when we've been a victim. Surely we don't want to create a shadowy and unaccountable secret police force that will trample on our freedoms.

I thank Madam Fine for writing to me. She is not the only who wrote to me with those kinds of concerns. Those concerns are based not only on what the opposition is saying, because the government tried to blame the opposition for scaring people about Bill C-51, but experts and groups have also raised concerns and informed the Canadian population about Bill C-51.

•(1315)

There was a study done at committee recently. It is a shame that the government did not consider or pay more attention to the advice that was given by our Canadian experts on that matter.

I have another email from someone who does not live in my riding, which is interesting. He lives in Baie d'Urfé, which is a municipality represented by a Liberal member of Parliament. Of course, he did not have an open discussion with his member of Parliament because the Liberals said vaguely that although they were not in favour of Bill C-51, they would indeed vote in favour of the bill. We do not necessarily understand why, but we know that his member of Parliament would not support him.

Mr. Lahey writes:

Many people—I include myself—are deeply concerned about Bill C-51 passing.

I have reviewed the bill itself and have concerns over the loss of privacy that will be hard to reverse, the implications for active covert operations...and even the allowance of torture seems covered.

Further on he writes:

The bill is clearly taking advantage of that event—

He is talking about the tragedy that happened last fall in Parliament.

—to drive this massive redesign of the intelligence system, at the expense of every citizen's personal sovereignty and privacy.

Further on he wrote:

Please—make a bit of noise over this issue during this final reading and debate period.

The nation does not need and does not WANT this bill to pass. Of this I am pretty sure.

I thank Mr. Lahey for taking the time to look at the consequences. I fully agree with him that this bill has to be stopped.

Mr. Mojtahedi wrote, “I wanted to thank you and the NDP for standing against Bill C-51”.

He continued:

We should not remain silent when the government spends massive amounts of public resources and most importantly limits our civil liberties instead of fighting more serious threats to public security.

Another constituent wrote:

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I note now that certain polls are indicating that support for the bill is falling, and that continued criticism is increasing. Mr. Allan Gregg, former Conservative pollster, has just come out strongly against it. Could you reassure me that you are continuing the good fight in Parliament and would you please inform me of any further actions on a local level that might help you?

I can assure Mr. Roloff that I will continue to fight against Bill C-51 with my NDP colleagues. The fight is not over.

We went door to door with a lot of volunteers to inform people about Bill C-51. We asked them what they thought about it, and we showed them a petition. One man specifically told me that he was totally against Bill C-51 but he did not want to sign the petition. He was scared to give his personal contact info, because he was scared that the government would spy on him with the passage of Bill C-51. That shows that people are scared of those new powers and the impact of Bill C-51.

[Translation]

Many other people wrote to me to share their concerns. They want Parliament to oppose Bill C-51. They at least want parliamentarians to think carefully and listen to the concerns of Canadians and experts. That is why the NDP is here, and that is why we want the Conservatives to pay closer attention to the concerns raised all across the country.

● (1320)

[English]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's statement quite intently. We hear the words "secret police" a lot from the opposition, which just baffles my mind. The reason it baffles my mind is that as a retired police officer, I know that I can walk out these doors and speak with an RCMP officer who is not secret. I can go to any border crossing and speak to CBSA officers. They are not secret.

CSIS is a spy agency, it is not a police agency. I wonder if the member could clarify to the House what the secret police is. I would like to meet them as well because I do not know who they are.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He obviously paid attention to certain parts of my speech, and I am sorry if the words I used offended him or anyone else. I was quoting a number of people in my riding who wrote to me. I am not saying that there is a secret police force or a conspiracy of some kind.

However, what we need to take away from the emails from the constituents who wrote to me is that they are concerned that these new powers are being given without the oversight system required to ensure that these new powers for our law enforcement agencies, which play a very important role in our communities, are used in a fair way and do not violate any rights or freedoms.

Bill C-51 does not provide this guarantee, and that is why people are concerned.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member making reference to reflections on constituents and what they bring to her and how she is bringing that to the House. I would like to add to those reflections.

The incident that occurred here on the Hill last fall was followed by numerous discussions among my constituents. When I say numerous, I could not think of an issue in the last four or five years that was more talked about by my constituents, whether it was at the local McDonald's restaurant, public meetings, one-on-ones at doors or groups of seniors. They talked a great deal about what was happening in Ottawa and they were genuinely concerned about the issue of terrorism.

In addressing the issue of terrorism, there are some aspects of Bill C-51 that deal with some of the concerns that were raised. Does the member not agree that the legislation could have been a whole lot better if the government had accepted amendments? The one amendment that I would have loved to have seen is parliamentary oversight. Because of the government's refusal to accept amendments, we do not have the robust legislation that we could have had.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. I agree with him.

If the government had been more open not only to what the experts said in committee, but also to the opposition's amendments, then we might have been able to come up with a bill that everyone could agree on and that responded to people's concerns.

I agree with my colleague that the threat is real and that concrete and effective measures need to be taken to protect all Canadians. It is Parliament's duty to do so, and it is an important one. We agree on that. The thing we disagree on is the approach. Bill C-51 is a threat. Canadians should not have to choose between their safety and their right to privacy. We can and must have both. This bill imposes severe restrictions.

For example, Mr. Mercier told me that very vague terms are used to define some key words in Bill C-51, which leaves room for abuse by people in high places. Mr. Mercier asked that I oppose this bill.

That was one of the dangers pointed out by our experts. The wording of this bill opens the door to abuses. Instead of reviewing the wording used in Bill C-51 and making significant changes to respond to the concerns, the Conservatives moved forward, which is regrettable.

● (1325)

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week we are commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, in which the allies fought to defend freedom and democracy. I cannot help but make a link to the bill we are debating, because it will reduce our hard-won freedoms. Did we learn nothing from those ordeals? Today, this government is showing all Canadians that it thumbs its nose at the central tenets of democracy. The government is muzzling the opposition by shortening debate on a bill about something as important as security.

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The reason for this gag order is simple: in committee, 45 witnesses indicated that the bill as it now stands is flawed and should be amended. We are talking about 45 witnesses. That is a lot, particularly when we know that most of them were government witnesses. Given this testimony and such overwhelming opposition from civil society and experts, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Prime Minister should have understood that Bill C-51 was not the best solution to the public safety issues we are facing. This bill was not developed in consultation with the other parties, all of which recognize the terrorist threat and support the adoption of effective, concrete measures to keep Canadians safe. That is not what Bill C-51 does. Instead, it violates our rights and freedoms, the fundamental rights of first nations and the right of various groups in civil society to protest, just to give a few examples.

When we received the budget, almost two months late, I was hoping to see a big envelope for the fight against terrorism. When I looked to see what was allocated in the budget I was surprised to see that the money was not there. For the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the envelope was a little less than \$300 million over five years. Five years. Before 2017, these agencies will collectively receive less than \$20 million to combat terrorism. That is a drop in the bucket and it is an insult to the work being done by our police services. These agencies are overburdened and are being forced to reassign staff to do the work they are being asked to do. This budget gives them nothing but crumbs to do their job.

When a government claims to want to protect our communities, our cities and our entire country, in order to serve Canadians and to protect our national security, it needs to put its money where its mouth is. It needs to allocate the money needed. The government needs to redirect money and ensure that our law enforcement agencies have the funding they need to take action. However, there is nothing to this effect in Bill C-51 or in the 2015 budget tabled by the Conservative government. I am extremely disappointed to see the lack of leadership from this government and its obvious failure to take seriously the fight against terrorism and radicalization. There are a lot of things missing in the Conservatives' botched approach. For example, it would have been nice to see the Conservatives propose ways to combat radicalization. Various stakeholders have spoken about this. This kind of work is being done in some of our regions and communities, as well as in the United States.

The language of the act is both extremely vague and extremely broad at the same time. It is so broad that any act of protest could be considered an act of terrorism.

• (1330)

The bill defines terrorism as:

...any activity...if it undermines the sovereignty, security or territorial integrity of Canada...interfere[s] with critical infrastructure...or the economic or financial stability of Canada.

At first glance, it is hard to see terrorism in there. This definition casts its net far too wide, so much so, that anyone in the House could be convicted of terrorism for opposing a pipeline. The problem is similar to the one with preventive detention. I have to hand it to them, the Conservatives know how to play with words.

More specifically, a judge could authorize preventive detention, and not just when he is absolutely certain that it is a matter of terrorism, because a suspicion will do: "believes on reasonable grounds that a terrorist activity may be carried out". The judge can thereby order the arrest of a person if it "is likely to prevent the carrying out of the terrorist activity".

Therefore, absolute certainty will no longer be needed to determine the action to be taken. Instead, that decision will be based on suspicions. That is not how the legislation is supposed to work. Intelligence on law-abiding citizens will be compiled and forwarded to the police. What we have here is the listing of people. People will be listed! One of the worst instruments of totalitarian regimes is indeed seeing the light of day here, in Canada. Big brother is watching us. What about the right to privacy set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

I am hearing members on the other side of the House argue that it is for the security of Canadians. However, who will provide strict control over this collection of information if no judge verifies the practices and if no mechanism or authority controls the agency's work? It is like having a fox guarding the henhouse. Counter-measures and safeguards need to be put in place to prevent any excesses and abuse.

With this bill, the Conservatives want us to believe that there is a conflict between security and freedom. They want Canadians to have to choose between their rights and their security, claiming that the two do not go together.

That is not the NDP's position. We feel there is no choice to be made. Both are possible. They always have been, and they always will be.

Ultimately, terrorism has won. By using fear, the Conservatives have succeeded in making us give up our freedom. If the Conservatives believe they are acting in the public interest, they are completely wrong. They are headed in the wrong direction, and it is our duty to take a stand against any measure that will be detrimental to our most fundamental principles.

More security, yes, but at what cost? The Conservative government is betraying this country's most fundamental commitments, betraying our historic values and betraying all Canadians.

What will we tell our children?

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, misinformation is being relayed to Canadians from the NDP. Whether it is intentional or because of a complete lack of understanding is still up for debate. Even in committee, with the very first amendment that was brought forward by the NDP critic, the officials who were present at committee had to correct him and indicate he was wrong. It is absolutely unbelievable that we are still hearing the same things from the NDP, that the bill targets protesters and whatnot. Very clearly, New Democrats do not understand the bill.

Government Orders

Also, I would like to point out that the information sharing act would be the responsibility of the privacy commissioner, who could review any of those agencies respecting the information sharing act, as well as the auditor general. In addition, internal processes would be developed.

I have been hearing throughout debate with the NDP that somehow the ability of CSIS to obtain a warrant is going to be done in some private court and there would be no representation from the other side. When law enforcement officers obtain warrants, it is not in a public forum. There is no representation from the person they are seeking a warrant against. Imagine for a moment that a police officer seeking a warrant for a wiretap has to bring in the person he wants to do the wiretap against, to defend himself.

I would like to ask the member whether she believes that our national security agencies have the intelligence and capability of determining when warrants are required?

• (1335)

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the preamble of my colleague's question. We are telling the truth. Forty-five witnesses commented on the bill, among them former prime ministers. We are not relaying misinformation, as my colleague claimed.

As for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, in the past it misled its oversight body. In 2014, the Security Intelligence Review Committee stated: "This investigation also found that SIRC had been seriously misled by CSIS on this same point."

It is right there in black and white. I am not making anything up, these things do happen. That is why we are asking for guidelines and safeguards to at least protect the collection of this information and to see what the agency is doing. Organizations always need oversight and monitoring.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the member's concluding comments, she stated that the terrorists have won. I beg to differ. I believe that the resilience of Canadians is something we can all learn from. I would suggest that Canada, more than most countries, has weathered the issue of terrorism exceptionally well. When we look at specific situations that have arisen over the last decade, we can be very proud of the way things have evolved.

I would agree that there are many shortcomings in this piece of legislation. The legislation could have been better had the government been more receptive to listening to Canadians, other stakeholders, and members of the Liberal caucus. I know that the critic for the Liberal caucus did a fabulous job bringing forward amendments. Had the government accepted the amendments, we could have had some of the most robust legislation in the world to deal with terrorism.

Would the member agree that with amendments, this could have been a much better—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what my Liberal colleague said. However, I am sorry to see that, even though the Liberal Party is saying that the bill is not good, it still plans to vote with the Conservatives. The Liberals need to get their story straight.

Next, let us talk about consultation with the other parties and about the amendments that the government should listen to. I said it in my speech: unfortunately, as usual, the Conservative government does not want to listen to experts, scientists or members of Parliament. What is more, the Conservatives are not giving us enough time to debate an issue as important as security.

When I say that terrorism has won, it is because these two parties are unfortunately playing on the fear of voters and saying that only they have the power to protect Canadians.

• (1340)

[English]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Tonight we vote on this important legislation, the anti-terrorism act, 2015, and I am very proud today to stand in support of it. This is really an important bill that would protect Canadians from those who have openly vowed to do us harm, particularly the international jihadi movement.

This bill has strong support from my constituents in Calgary Centre and from Canadians from coast to coast to coast in every province and in every single demographic. Still, there are a lot of myths being perpetuated about this bill, many of them by the opposition, and we have heard that today. Today I would like to debunk them.

Here is the reality. Unfortunately, we all know that the threat environment we face in Canada today has escalated considerably from what it used to be. We have seen the recent ISIS-inspired acts of terror against soldiers in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and here in Ottawa. In the House, we all lived through the shooting on Parliament Hill on October 22, 2014. Believe me, it brought home to me and to many Canadians the need to take these threats on our soil very seriously.

Thankfully, authorities have foiled planned attacks in places as close to home, for my constituents, as the West Edmonton Mall.

This bill would protect our security by giving CSIS the authority to act on serious threats to protect Canadians.

In the past, if CSIS had information on a planned terrorist attack that was about to take place in Canada, it had no authority to go out and disrupt that terrorist plot. This legislation would not only give it the power to disrupt terror plots but would allow the security agencies to receive information from other government departments so that they could protect Canadians from terrorists. It is important to note that CSIS's actions are subject to a review afterward by a committee of experts in the field, SIRC, the Security Intelligence Review Committee.

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Contrary to what we keep hearing from the NDP, the right to protest would be protected. In fact, we have listened to Canadians, and we specifically excluded protests from this legislation right from the get-go. To make it crystal clear, in response to feedback from Canadians, after the fearmongering of the opposition, when the anti-terrorism act, 2015 came to committee, we reviewed it and reworded the bill. The bill was changed from allowing lawful advocacy, protest, and dissent to removing the word “lawful” so that Canadians' right to protest in general or to participate in civil disobedience would not be affected.

We listened. The right to protest is an important freedom to Canadians, and this bill and our government fully recognize that.

We also recognize our duty to update our laws in the face of new threats so that we can keep Canadians safe.

There are four key measures contained in this bill. The first would create a system for internal government information-sharing. The second would improve our passenger protect program, known as the no-fly list. The third would make it a crime to disseminate jihadi terrorist propaganda. The fourth would give CSIS the ability to disrupt planned terrorist attacks before they happen. This is absolutely common sense, and Canadians get that.

People in my riding are concerned about the threat to Canada by the jihadi terrorist movement, and they told me again as recently as last weekend. They are also concerned, frankly, about the response of the NDP and the Liberals to terrorists.

The NDP has consistently put its head in the sand about the fact that Canadians are being directly targeted by jihadi terrorists that oppose our values and our way of life. The NDP leader even refused to call the horrific attacks in October what they were, jihadi terrorism, despite very clear evidence. The Liberal leader made juvenile jokes about Canada wanting to show the size of its CF-18s when it moved to confront this terrorist threat.

Let us debunk some other misconceptions advanced by the NDP and the Liberals. If it is through lack of doing the homework Canadians expect of them, I can help them with that.

Some have said that aboriginal and environmental protests could come under surveillance by CSIS, so let us read the text in the bill. It says that information could be shared between government institutions regarding “interference with critical infrastructure”. If one read that and only that, one might suppose that protesting the construction of a pipeline could, in theory, meet that definition.

● (1345)

However, if one read slightly further, one would see that it would not meet the core of the definition, which is an activity, or activities, that “undermines the sovereignty, security or territorial integrity of Canada or the lives or the security of the people of Canada”. That is a very different measure and distinguishes between peacefully protesting against a pipeline, which is protected, and bombing a pipeline and endangering the lives of Canadians, which is not.

I have already debunked the myth that CSIS would not require warrants to disrupt this kind of serious threat. That is just not true.

Right now, CSIS is restricted from engaging in any disruption activities. It could not even approach parents of a suspected radical and encourage them to dissuade their son from his radical beliefs. Without Bill C-51, CSIS can only talk to parents to gather intelligence. Under Bill C-51, CSIS could talk to parents and ask them to speak to their children to help stop a threat or to stop their engaging in conversations in online chat rooms.

This hits really close to home for me and my riding of Calgary Centre. In my riding, several young men, born and raised there, have been radicalized into flying to Syria to join jihadist terrorist groups, including ISIL. Their parents are understandably distraught and have asked for help from the government. Christianne Boudreau, one of those distraught mothers, whose son went to Syria to fight with ISIS, where he was killed, called on the government to go further than just taking away the passports of radicalized young people. While she does not like all aspects of this bill, as I have said, she has called on Canada to start educating families so they can intervene before young people get to the point of radicalization. This bill would enable that.

She she has said that the propaganda is out there on social media and on the Internet and it is readily accessible.

This bill would tackle that problem by removing terrorist materials from the Internet. It would make promoting or advocating a terror act a crime, punishable by up to five years in prison. By the way, the RCMP has also been embarking on deradicalization strategies to help combat youth being lured onto a deadly path.

Here is another myth. Some people have said that this bill would curb free speech. Canada already has hate laws, but they apply only to hate speech against an “identifiable” group and as such can exclude general threats against Canada or all Canadians. These are exactly the kinds of threats used by ISIS and al Qaeda when referring to “the west” or “infidels” in their hate propaganda. The new definition would allow us to pursue the people who are radicalizing others through their propaganda and are advocating violence.

These are the tools our law enforcement agencies say they really need to face down this terrorist threat. Credible experts have widely come out in support of this bill. Scott Tod, the Deputy Commissioner of Investigations and Organized Crime for the OPP, had this to say:

Bill C-51 offers improvements for the federal police to share information among our justice sector partners, security partners, but more importantly and hopefully, with the community partners and government situational tables designed to reduce the terrorist threat and improve community safety and well-being.

That is something we all want.

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Professor Salim Mansur, of the University of Western Ontario, said, “the measures...I believe, are quite rightly and urgently needed to protect and keep secure the freedom of our citizens”.

The Heritage Foundation said that Bill C-51 is, “a balance between greater physical protection without loss of civil liberties.... There is transparency and openness”.

This is an excellent bill that would help to protect Canadians. I am proud of this legislation. I am proud of the new investments we made in the budget, and I am grateful for the nearly \$300 million earmarked to fight jihadi terrorism, which the NDP seems to pooh-pooh. I am pleased that we have doubled the budget of SIRC to allow for more robust review and accountability.

I believe that Bill C-51 would give Canadians what they want and expect from our government: a law that would protect both their safety and their freedom. The majority of Canadians support this bill, and when it comes to a vote tonight, I urge everyone in the House to vote in favour of it.

• (1350)

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not doubt the sincerity of my hon. colleague across the way, but the government really has its head in the sand on this. I do not know how the member can ignore the hundreds of emails she has been receiving from constituents, hers and others from across the country, who are expressing profound disappointment in the government and profound worry about what this bill means for our civil rights. We are talking about experts across the country. We are talking about people who really know how legislation should be crafted.

Hundreds of my constituents have contacted me. They are worried about this particular bill. I feel a responsibility to listen, and I think the government should also be listening.

How can she explain that the government just will not accept Canadians' opinions on this bill and change this badly drafted legislation?

Ms. Joan Crockett: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way knows that we all understand the New Democrats are trying to circulate their form letters out there right now.

We also understand that *The Globe and Mail* has said that there has hardly been a bill before Parliament that Canadians have been as strongly in support of as Bill C-51. That was before the four amendments we made after listening to what Canadians said.

This is what is being said against Canadians by ISIL:

If you can kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be.

This is ISIL spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani. Canadians understand that threat, and that is why they support this bill.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, for my hon. friend from Calgary Centre, it is true that CSIS did not have the powers to disrupt plots, but the RCMP did. We have not been powerless. Nor have been helpless. We have measures to confront terrorist plots. That is why the members of the Toronto 18 were arrested and that is why the VIA Rail plot was disrupted.

We have consciously and deliberately set the RCMP up as the police agency in our country. CSIS was consciously and deliberately set up as intelligence gathering only. This is for the very good reason that we can create a lot more mischief and danger by having different police forces operating differently and not controlled by any pinnacle control. That is why so many security experts have said that this still makes us less safe.

On the point about propaganda, and it is the same point I would have hoped to have made for the member for Thornhill when he spoke, the bill does not specify that it is about jihadi propaganda. In fact, it uses terminology that is so vague that none of the legal experts appearing before committee could understand what it was intended to catch. It is about terrorism in general. Unlike our laws on hate speech and unlike our laws on child pornography, this bill would not exclude private conversations. Experts are concerned that the language in the bill around propaganda would prevent people from reaching out to others and preventing their radicalization.

Ms. Joan Crockett: Mr. Speaker, I want to relate a little story for the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands because it might help her understand this bill more when she says that the RCMP already has powers of arrest.

There was an example in an airport where CSIS knew there was somebody who was a radical Islamic jihadist who was in the airport security. The agents could not do anything to arrest the individual, who was about to get on a plane. They had to have an offline conversation with the RCMP or with the security forces in the airport, telling them that they may want to walk through the waiting room and see if there was anyone they recognized there. Fortunately, that was done. That information was passed on and the person walked through the waiting room and was able to detain a radical about to get on a flight, who could very well have posed an extreme danger to Canadians.

This kind of thing just does not make sense to Canadians. Canadians wonder whether we already can share that kind of information between our security agency and our RCMP. The answer to that is no, but under this bill we could.

• (1355)

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House to speak in favour of this very important bill before us today.

The anti-terrorism act, 2015, is all about making Canadians safer. We must remember that the international jihadi movement has declared war on Canada and her allies. We heard my hon. colleague say that a little earlier in her speech. Canadians are being attacked; we have been attacked. We are being targeted solely because the jihadi terrorists hate our values. They hate our freedom and they do not want us to have it.

We must also remember what brought about this discussion. If we had asked most Canadians a year ago or more whether they wanted more action to protect our national security, they would likely have said that the previous strong actions by our Conservative government would have been enough. However, October 22 changed all of that. We were attacked twice in three days by admitted jihadi terrorists, in their own words.

Statements by Members

Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and Corporal Nathan Cirillo were killed in cold blood by jihadi terrorists. These attacks made it clear that our security legislation had to change and evolve with the times. Evidently, that is not clear to some.

The NDP member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin said that these attacks were merely unfortunate events. These comments are shocking and quite frankly offensive. I hope the member or the NDP leader will do the right thing and stand in his place and apologize to the families of the victims of these attacks.

Back to the topic at hand, I would like to highlight the fact that budget 2015 has invested nearly \$300 million to combat jihadi terrorism. This is above and beyond the fact that we have increased our funding for national security agencies by one-third since coming to office.

Given that there has been a substantial amount of misinformation spread by the opposition, I would like to highlight, in the simplest terms, what exactly Bill C-51 would do.

The bill would allow for information possessed by one agency of the government to be shared by another agency of the government when national security would be at risk. It would modernize the passenger-protected program, colloquially known as the no-fly list. It would criminalize the production and distribution of jihadi terrorist propaganda. It would also give CSIS new tools to stop terrorist attacks before they happen. These are very common-sense measures that strike the right balance.

As members know, there is no liberty without security. Contrary to what has been suggested by many members of the NDP, it is ISIS and not CSIS that poses a threat to the lives and security of Canadians, and we in the House have a duty to look to that.

The first duty of any government is to protect the safety of its citizens, and that is exactly what our government will do. The bill would ensure that our police forces would have the tools they need to protect Canadians against the evolving threat of jihadi terrorists. I have spoken to police officers in Toronto and they have told me just that. They need this bill to pass. They need these tools.

We reject the argument that every time we talk about security, our freedoms are threatened. Canadians understand that their freedom and security go hand in hand. Canadians expect us to protect both, and there are safeguards in the legislation that would do exactly that.

The fundamental fact is that our police forces are working to protect our rights and our freedoms, and it is the jihadi terrorists who endanger our security, who would take away our freedoms in a heartbeat. We have only to look overseas to see what ISIS has been doing.

What is more, we will never apologize for taking jihadi propaganda out of circulation. In fact, if websites that provide content hosting services or other businesses are profiting from the dispersal of this type of horrific material, they should seriously reconsider their business model and their lack of commitment to the values that bind us as Canadians.

Across the country, businesses, large and small, depend on a strong economy, clear rules of marketplace conduct, dependable transactions and secure data. The reality is that there is no

profitability without a stable security environment, both physical and virtual. The bill would strengthen our niche in security and would benefit businesses as well as consumers.

● (1400)

I have heard the members of the NDP say that no experts support this important legislation, and that is simply not true. I would ask them if they do not believe that Justice John Major is an expert. He said, "I don't think Parliament is equipped as a body to act as an oversight, which is what is being proposed."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The time for government orders has expired. The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre will have five minutes remaining when this matter returns before the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SECOND WORLD WAR

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 8, 1945, the Second World War ended in Europe. It began on September 1, 1939, when Nazi Germany attacked Poland, later joined by the Soviet Union, their infamy consummated by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. World War II unleashed evil of an unimaginable scale, with a cost so high it is still difficult to comprehend: the Holocaust; Stalin's gulags; the rape and slaughter of millions; forced deportations; the assault on language, culture and national identities.

The war ended and a new Cold War began with half of Europe shrouded in darkness until Communism was defeated. Today, Vladimir Putin threatens global peace and security once again, as he wages an illegal war in Ukraine and annexes territory, just like Hitler did.

World War II provided us with many lessons, and those remain relevant today and we should listen. It is fitting that the commemoration of the war's end takes place where it began: in Poland.

It is our solemn duty to Zachor to remember the sacrifices of those who fought and those who perished for our freedom and never again allow evil to flourish.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE MIDWIFE

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to mark the International Day of the Midwife, established in 1992 by the WHO to bring attention to the important work being done by midwives around the world.

Statements by Members

Midwives are extremely important to the health of mothers and children during pregnancy, childbirth and the post-partum period. There are currently more than 1,300 midwives in Canada, and this number is growing every year, thanks to our rigorous and high-level training.

Canadian midwives are recognized around the world for their expertise and the quality of their care. That is why I introduced a bill to make May 5 the National Day of the Midwife, which was unanimously passed by the House. We must recognize the invaluable contribution that midwives make to our health care system.

I want to thank the Canadian Association of Midwives, the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives and the Regroupement des sages-femmes du Québec for supporting my bill. I sincerely hope that on this day next year we will be able to celebrate the National Day of the Midwife here in Canada for the first time.

* * *

[English]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, most baby boomers will not die on the golf course. Nobody lives forever. Some people listening probably believe Elvis is still alive or that they will have a second chance as a zombie. A lot of young people these days fantasize about becoming immortal vampires. Personally, I would not want that hickey. A rare few will live long and prosperous lives and die in their nineties while having sex with their bride of 65 years.

Some people may end up in a situation like Sue Rodriguez, a victim of ALS. She asked Canadians, “If I cannot give consent to my own death, whose body is this? Who owns my life?” On February 6, 2015, the Supreme Court yelled back to Sue, “It’s your life, Sue. You decide your fate”, and with that, physician-assisted death became legal in Canada.

Let us talk about it.

* * *

[Translation]

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA ALUMNI WEEK

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a proud graduate of the University of Ottawa, I want to recognize that institution’s Alumni Week, which is this week, until Saturday, May 9. It has been officially proclaimed by the City of Ottawa and it pays tribute to the 92,000 graduates living in this region.

This year the University of Ottawa is celebrating its 50th anniversary as a public institution. My alma mater is now a world-class teaching and research institution and the largest English-French bilingual university in the world. Many other members here are also graduates. I see someone nodding.

• (1405)

[English]

On this special week, it is with pride that I invite all fellow citizens of our region to celebrate the success of this institution and its contribution to our economy.

I invite you, Mr. Speaker, a University of Ottawa alumnus, to proudly wear our school colours of garnet and grey, which I am wearing today.

I also invite MPs to join Alex Trebek, another proud alumnus of the university, to a reception in our speaker’s lounge, following today’s question period. *À bientôt donc.* He may have some questions for us to answer.

* * *

YELLOWHEAD

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure over the weekend to meet up with four separate groups of volunteers from my great riding of Yellowhead. These groups were from the Carrot Creek and the Peers 4-H Clubs and Edson’s Holy Redeemer High School travel club and its local football club.

The volunteers started as early as 6 a.m. to clean up highways around Alberta, especially around my riding so that my part of Alberta is kept clean and beautiful.

Parents, teachers and students all participated in this great community effort. I had the opportunity to drive to several spots where the clean-ups were being done and was able to meet and greet with kids, parents and teachers.

I applaud them for their community spirit. Their time and work, and that of others, makes our country a great place to live. My sincere thanks goes out to all volunteers around Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

COMPTON—STANSTEAD

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by mentioning the passing of a friend and collaborator, André Nault. A pioneering ecologist and co-founder of the Friends of the Earth, his courage and his battle for a better world will always be an inspiration to us.

[English]

Last week, I had the pleasure to welcome the great member for Sackville—Eastern Shore in Compton—Stanstead. We spoke to veterans from all across my riding and visited various sites. For instance, Ogden’s Weir Memorial Park in honour of Robert Stanley Weir, who wrote the English version of our national anthem; and Hatley village, where over 3,000 people attend each year one of the oldest Canada Day parades. We also paid tribute to Louis St. Laurent, Canada’s 12th prime minister, born and raised in Compton, where he was buried in 1973.

I would also like to pay tribute to a fantastic man, Mr. David Woodard, who devoted most of his life to helping veterans. For over 35 years at the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch No. 5, he helped many and continues to do so. Mr. Woodard is celebrating his 63rd birthday today. I wish him a happy birthday and thank him for his work.

THE NETHERLANDS

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the spectacular spring weather we have been having here in Ottawa this week, the tulips are starting to bloom and that is very appropriate because today is Dutch liberation day. It was on May 5, 1945 that the Nazis surrendered Holland to the mighty advancing Canadian troops, thereby ending five years of occupation. As we recognize the 70th anniversary of these defining moments of our history, we enjoy the bright colours of tulips here in Ottawa. They are a symbol of the enduring friendship between Canada and the Netherlands, a symbol of freedom and liberation and a source of pride for all Canadians.

We were also proud to see many Canadian flags when the Prime Minister visited this past weekend as well.

However, along with tulips and flags, ours is a mutual friendship and partnership. Canada has benefited greatly from the courage, industriousness and creativity of the Dutch people who came here following World War II and who gave birth to new generations of Canadians since.

I am blessed to have many constituents of Dutch descent in my community and we are very mindful of them today as well as our brave veterans who fought valiantly as we recognize this important anniversary in our respective histories.

* * *

MALDIVES

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation in the Maldives is a cause of concern to Canada. Canada condemns the crackdown by the Maldives government and its lack of respect for democracy.

We are appalled by the trial and treatment of former president Mohamed Nasheed. An effective review of the investigation and legal proceedings is significant to ensure that international and domestic obligations related to fair trials and the rule of law are respected. We are also concerned that the opposition leaders have been arrested. These actions go against the core principles of the Commonwealth. Canada will continue to call on the Maldives to reaffirm its commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Canada stands with the Maldivian people who have peacefully congregated to call for the release of political prisoners and the restoration of the rule of law.

* * *

TORONTO TRANSIT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Toronto, people are waiting on buses that take forever, waiting on platforms for the morning train that will arrive already full. But before relief comes for the public, billions will go to the one-in-ten families eligible for income-splitting, hundreds of millions will be sheltered by those who have money enough to shelter.

When new federal funding for transit finally arrives, Toronto's share will be a small package wrapped in red tape, enough to put a

Statements by Members

few buses on the road or perhaps a boring machine in the ground, but not both. Transit under-investment in Toronto has been costly to date and without consideration for the future of a city region expected to grow by 2.5 million people and add 1.5 million jobs over the next decade and a half.

My city is a globally relevant city with great potential not just for itself and those who live there, but for all of Canada and yet, nowhere to be found in the city of Toronto is the Government of Canada. That has to change if Toronto is to become all that Toronto should be.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

THE NETHERLANDS

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May 5 marks the 70th anniversary of Liberation Day, the day when the Nazi forces occupying the Netherlands were pushed out and a starving people ravaged by war was liberated.

During the nine-month offensive, more than 7,600 Canadians lost their lives and many more were wounded.

[English]

Thousands of Canadians lie buried far away from the homes and families they left behind. Today, the bonds of mutual respect and friendship between our communities and countries endure, forged by the sacrifices made in the name of freedom and strengthened by our shared values of freedom, democracy and rule of law.

To the Canadian veterans who played such a crucial role in the liberation of the Netherlands, we will never forget their sacrifice.

* * *

THE NETHERLANDS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today throughout the Netherlands people are celebrating and commemorating what happened 70 years ago with the liberation of the Netherlands at the hands of the Canadians and our allies. As a Dutch-born parliamentarian, I am very proud to stand on behalf of my family, my colleague from Sidney—Victoria and his family, and all of the other Dutch members of Parliament here to once again thank the one million Canadians who wore the uniform of Canada and liberated my parents. In fact, it was because of that military that my father said, "If they have a military like that, can you imagine what kind of country they come from?"

One of those heroes was featured on CBC last night, the great Ed Carter-Edwards, who was a pilot shot down and interned at Buchenwald. Last night the CBC told his very poignant story. At the end, he said he will never forget, but maybe he will forgive.

Oral Questions

On behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion and all veterans organizations that keep alive the memories of those veterans I want to say, “Do not regret growing old, it is a privilege denied to so many.”

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our low-tax plan for families is working. Under our Conservative government, the tax burden on Canadians is at its lowest level in more than 50 years. As part of that, every family with children will benefit from our new family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit.

The leader of the Liberal Party told us yesterday that he would take away our family tax cut and replace it with a family tax hike. The Liberal leader is also ideologically opposed to income splitting, and quite frankly seniors should be worried. That is why Canadians know it is only our government that can be trusted to keep taxes low and protect the benefits they already receive.

* * *

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND ELECTION

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate all candidates who put their name on a ballot for yesterday's election in Prince Edward Island. The last month has been filled with hard-working campaigns on all sides, in every corner of the province. I know members of this House are looking forward to working together with all of the new island MLAs.

I want to sincerely congratulate Premier Wade MacLauchlan and his team. The premier has been gracious and optimistic throughout the campaign and will be a true champion for the people of Prince Edward Island, focusing on prosperity, engagement and helping our small province stand tall within our great country and around the world.

On behalf of all members of the House of Commons, congratulations to Premier MacLauchlan, the new Liberal government of Prince Edward Island and all members of the Prince Edward Island provincial legislature.

* * *

•(1415)

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the leader of the Liberal Party presented a plan that focused on tax increases for middle-class Canadians. He is proposing to replace the family tax cut with a family tax hike.

The Liberal leader is promising to eliminate the universal child care benefit, which the Liberals have long said is spent by parents to buy beer and popcorn. He confirmed that he will increase taxes for families that earn less than \$60,000 a year and use tax-free savings accounts to put money aside.

Middle-class Canadian families know that they can count on our Prime Minister and our Conservative government to keep their taxes low and protect the benefits they already receive.

* * *

LABOUR LAW

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing Canadians will not tolerate, it is hypocrisy. That is why they were so surprised to see the member for Beauséjour attacking the rights of NDP employees in the media in the same week that the Liberal leader was trying to court the labour movement.

It seems as though the Liberals have realized that they cannot have it both ways. Either they protect workers' rights, through good times and bad, regardless of what the polls say, or they make empty speeches and change their tune when it suits them.

The Liberals have clearly made their choice. To quote Jerry Dias, the president of Unifor, the Liberal House leader's criticisms leave the impression that “workers' rights can be disregarded in the cause of cheap political theatre”.

We in the NDP made our choice a long time ago. We have always defended workers' rights, through good times and bad.

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[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit will benefit 100% of families with kids. The vast majority of benefits go to low- and middle-income families. The leader of the Liberal Party plans to take this all away. Instead of giving the majority of low- and middle-income families a break, he will be taxing middle-class families, taxing small businesses and taxing seniors. The opposition's position is clear: raise taxes on the middle class. That is why we are the only ones Canadians can trust to lower taxes and balance the budget. The good people of Nipissing—Timiskaming know that our family tax cuts lower their taxes and the Liberal tax plan or hike increases their taxes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the numbers do not lie. The Conservatives' economic policy is getting us nowhere. According to Statistics Canada, Canada's trade deficit has reached \$3 billion. The Conservative government's policies are making Canadian companies less competitive and getting in the way of creating of good jobs.

Will the Conservatives do something about this? What is their plan for reducing the trade deficit?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no government has done more to advance Canada's trading relationships. We concluded trade agreements with 38 different countries over 9 years. What is more, last year, Canada's trade surplus was \$5.2 billion, which was a turnaround of \$12 billion. Exports last year were up another 10% from the previous year.

Our government remains focused on creating jobs through aggressive trade promotion, while of course the NDP wants to raise taxes on the middle class. That is not what we are going to do.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative economic plan is failing Canada. Under its mismanagement, we just posted another record trade deficit, swelling to \$3 billion in March alone.

The Conservative plan is also failing families that face layoffs and growing job uncertainty while struggling with rising costs, and still the Conservatives have no plan to create even a single affordable child care space. When will the Conservatives stop ignoring the needs of Canadian families and deliver the NDP's plan for \$15 a day child care?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we recognize is that families across the country have a variety of child care needs. We refuse to dictate to Canadian families how they should be looking after their children. We refuse to say that, if they are not using a licensed daycare spot, they do not deserve support. That is not what we are saying. That is what the NDP says.

What we are saying is that every family in the country with children deserves support. That is what we are delivering in tax cuts, in direct benefits, and in other tax benefits, like our child fitness tax credit. We are supporting families. We are supporting their right to choose how they look after their children.

* * *

● (1420)

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, both the old-line parties have tax gifts for the wealthy instead of creating affordable child care spaces.

While our trade deficit is soaring, imports of industrial machinery actually fell. That is a bad sign for a manufacturing sector that suffered from Conservatives' neglect. We have lost more than 400,000 jobs under their watch alone. Fewer good manufacturing jobs means more families are struggling to pay the bills as costs like child care continue to rise. Will the Conservatives scrap handouts to the wealthy and instead invest in boosting job creation and creating affordable child care spaces?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the subject of manufacturing, in this year's budget we put forth accelerated capital cost allowance, which has been called for by the manufacturing sector for a long time.

While New Democrats may not like our policies when it comes to manufacturing, here is who is endorsing our budget: the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, the Railway Association of Canada, the Canadian Steel Producers Association, the Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada, the Canadian Plastics Industry Association, and the Canadian Tooling and Machining Association. I could go on, but those who know what it takes to build manufacturing in Canada support our government and support our budget.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night the NDP put forward amendments to scrap every provision of Bill C-51, yet Liberals and Conservatives voted to push C-51 ahead without any changes.

Legal experts, eminent Canadians, and former prime ministers all said the bill is dangerous and it should not go forward as is. How can Conservatives, who claim to stand up for individual freedoms, and how can Liberals, who say they defend the charter, continue to stand up and vote in favour of a bill that is so seriously flawed?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real question is this: how can the NDP refuse to give our police the tools they need to protect Canadians?

How can they deny the fact that there were terrorist attacks in Canada in the past six months? The truth is that our government will continue to take responsible and balanced measures to protect Canadians from terrorism.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, citizens, aboriginal communities, unions, business people, experts, prime ministers and more all agree that Bill C-51 is dangerous and unnecessary. However, that did not stop the Liberals and Conservatives from standing up yesterday and voting against the NDP's amendments to withdraw the most controversial clauses from the bill.

The final vote on the bill is being held tomorrow. How can the Conservatives and Liberals still vote in favour of such a controversial bill?

[English]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after months of hearings and words and debate, after hearing the sister of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and stakeholders from all over the country, New Democrats are still opposing measures to keep Canadians safe.

Oral Questions

We know what is right. We know what to do and we will do it. The member should stay tuned.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that we need to put in place measures to help families and the middle class, which continue to go into debt under this Conservative government. We can cut their taxes and provide larger, simpler, fairer benefits than those offered by this Conservative government.

Why are the Conservatives helping people with \$10,000 to put aside instead of helping families that are tired of steadily going into debt under the Conservative government?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the leader of the Liberal Party announced that he wants to hike taxes for those earning less than \$60,000 a year by eliminating tax-free savings accounts. He announced that he wants to replace our family tax cut with a family tax hike. The Liberal leader will take money away from families and increase their taxes. We are doing the exact opposite.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only a third of Canadians can afford a TFSA. Fewer than a quarter of that third can afford to max out. It is a tool focused on 8% of Canadians. The other 92% are no where close.

To help them, the vast majority, to help nine out of ten Canadian families, why not cut the middle class tax rate right across the board? Why not give those families a bigger child benefit, clean, simple, fair, tax-free, right across the board? Why not?

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal leader admitted that his plan for higher taxes has a \$2 billion hole in it.

The Liberal leader admitted that he would have to raise taxes on people earning less than \$60,000 a year by cancelling their expanded tax-free savings accounts. He admitted that he would replace the Conservative family tax cut with the Liberal family tax increase. He admitted that he would get rid of the universal child care benefit, yet he also admitted that after all those tax hikes, he would still have a \$2 billion hole, which he would need to cancel pension splitting for seniors in order to fill.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just repeating a falsehood does not make it true. Canadians are mocking this minister. They do not believe a word he says.

He cannot justify why this tired government is against a big middle class tax cut. He cannot justify why it is against a better child benefit, bigger, fairer, absolutely tax free for every middle-class family and all those trying to get there.

He punishes single moms and dads, but gives a \$2,000 tax break to those earning a quarter of a million dollars. Why?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal leader admitted he would raise taxes on people earning less than \$60,000 a year.

In fact, two-thirds of those who have maxed out their tax-free savings account earn less than \$60,000 a year.

The Liberal leader admitted that he would cancel the Conservative family tax cut and replace it with the Liberal family tax increase by cancelling income splitting for parents.

He would also have to cancel income splitting for seniors in order to help make up for the \$2 billion hole that the Liberal Leader admits is in his plan.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Members need to come to order. It is becoming increasingly difficult to hear both the questions and the answers. We need a little bit of order, please.

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Éleine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during his latest visit to Iraq, the Prime Minister prevented journalists from publishing images of our special operations forces soldiers for security reasons. However, he released images showing the faces of these soldiers for a promotional campaign. When the issue was raised, the video was taken off the Web. Now there is talk of posting it again. Quite frankly, that is shameful.

Does the Prime Minister realize that posting this promotional video on his website compromises our soldiers' safety?

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the safety of our troops is our number one priority. For this reason, there are protocols in place before images or videos are posted. When concerns were raised about a few specific images, these were taken down immediately so we could review whether the protocols were properly applied.

After a second review, it became apparent that two of these videos should not have been posted. We regret the error and are reviewing all protocols with respect to the publication of such images.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, reviewing them? The Conservatives should be following them.

Oral Questions

While on tour in Iraq and Kuwait, Canadian media signed and respected the directive from DND not to publish images of special forces soldiers for security reasons, but the Prime Minister's Office did not, and posted a series of videos showing the faces of Canadian soldiers.

We gather that these videos have been pulled down for now, but there remains a simple question. Why is the Prime Minister's Office breaking rules intended to protect the safety of our forces just to make promotional videos for the Prime Minister, and who over there will take responsibility for this fiasco?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we regret this error. These images were taken down and they will not be re-posted.

We are very proud of our members of the special operations forces who are stationed in Erbil, in northern Iraq, aiding and assisting the Iraqi security forces and Kurdish peshmerga to ensure we are able to defend that region and protect Canadians from the Islamic State, a death cult with genocidal tendencies.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the parliamentary secretary acknowledged that the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service looked into allegations of prisoner mistreatment in Afghanistan in 2010 and 2011. According to him, there was no mistreatment.

Now it appears that there was a second investigation, this one by Lieutenant-Colonel Sylvie Beaudry, requested by the provost marshal. Was the minister aware of this second investigation and report, and what were its conclusions?

• (1430)

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated yesterday, the government is aware of these investigations. This happened several years ago. They found that there were no grounds for any charges to be laid.

We have always said that we do not approve of any misconduct by military members. However, members of the Canadian Armed Forces consistently demonstrate tremendous professionalism, particularly with respect to protecting and promoting human rights, and working under international law when they are dealing with prisoners of war.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there needs to be more transparency about these reports if the Conservatives want the public's trust.

There was also troubling news today about a directive by the Department of National Defence that would allow Canadian forces to seek out and share information, even if it could put someone in foreign custody at serious risk of torture. We already know that this directive, which violates Canada's international obligations, is in place for four other Canadian security agencies.

Will the minister immediately disclose the contents of the directives that he has given to the Department of National Defence?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no policy in place as alluded to by the member. We always act with the utmost

professionalism and ensure that the Canadian forces have the tools they need.

I just want to remind the member why we are over in Iraq and carrying out combat missions in Syria. It is because we believe that ISIL is a threat to us in Canada. We will co-operate with our coalition partners to ensure that the ethnic and religious minorities that have been targeted by ISIS are no longer submitted to its genocidal threats.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Senate expense scandal is an illustration of this government's mismanagement.

Just as we are learning that 10 or so other senators are under criminal investigation by the RCMP, the crown prosecutor is trying to prevent a Senate report from being submitted as evidence at former senator Duffy's trial—

The Speaker: Order. I believe I have already made a ruling on questions on this issue.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think you will agree that it is the responsibility of government to ensure transparent accountability in all areas of spending.

This is very concerning, since the Prime Minister himself made a promise to Canadians that he would clean up the backroom culture of corruption in Ottawa, but that has not happened. Now we are seeing that at least 10 other senators who may have been involved in financial misconduct—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite Conservative spin, the numbers do not lie.

Canada just posted a \$3 billion record trade deficit in March, and this followed a \$2 billion deficit in February. Now we see the Conservatives starting to cave in at the TPP table. After being asked to affirm his support for Canada's supply manage sectors, the Prime Minister ducked, dodged and dissembled.

Will the government stand in the House and clearly tell Canadian consumers, farmers and rural communities that it will completely defend Canada's dairy, poultry and egg industries in all trade talks?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House, our government continues to promote Canadian interests across all sectors, in all regions of Canada at the TPP negotiating table.

Oral Questions

That has never prevented us from actually securing trade agreements that protect our farmers and promote the interests of our farmers. We make no apologies for ensuring that any deal reached must be in Canada's best interest.

As always, we will only sign an agreement that is, indeed, in Canada's best interests.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously, we cannot trust this government to stand up for Canadians. Farmers are not the only ones who are worried about the future of supply management in Canada. The agriculture ministers for Quebec and Ontario are asking the Conservatives to commit to defending supply management in the discussions on the trans-Pacific partnership. Will the Conservatives do what Quebec and Ontario are asking and confirm their support for supply management today, in no uncertain terms?

• (1435)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the New Democrats, who do nothing to promote trade, we have reached agreements with over 38 countries since we took office. We have always protected and promoted the supply management system. Poultry, egg and dairy producers are in good stead, and we are going to continue to defend all of Canada's industries.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): In good stead, Mr. Speaker? The Conservatives are saying one thing, but doing another. The Prime Minister's recent statements on the future of supply management are worrisome to Ontario and Quebec. The Prime Minister said that Canada faces "difficult choices" in the trans-Pacific partnership negotiations. He said that Canada cannot, alone, stop a deal from happening if we do not like it.

I have a simple question for the Conservatives. Will they defend supply management, yes or no?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the past is an indication of the future. In the past, we have signed free trade agreements with many countries, including the European Union and South Korea. We have always made sure to promote the interests of all industrial and agri-food sectors. I would invite the opposition members to support these free trade agreements because we know that freedom brings prosperity to Canada.

[English]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives like to brag about the number of trade deals they have done, but in March they presided over the largest trade deficit of \$3 billion in Canada's history. That makes, for the first quarter, a trade deficit of \$7 billion.

This weakness is especially worrying, given Statistic Canada's recent report that businesses intend to cut R and D spending by 2.6% this year, a worrying indicator for the future. The numbers do not lie.

When will the government stop hiding behind absolutely ludicrous talking points on the TFSA and admit that its economic policies are failing Canadians?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will put up our record on trade against the Liberal record any day.

The last time the Liberals spoke seriously about trade was in 1993 when they were threatening to tear up the North American Free Trade Agreement. Today their idea of trade is to legalize the illegal trade of marijuana.

On this side of the House, we are standing up for law-abiding citizens.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the government.

The NDP has already come out against it. Do the Conservatives oppose a tax hike for people who earn \$200,000 or more to give back to the middle class, yes or no?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals want to increase the taxes of people who earn less than \$60,000 a year.

In fact, two-thirds of people who maxed out their tax-free savings accounts earn less than \$60,000 a year. Are we in favour of the Liberal plan to increase their taxes? No, we are absolutely not going to hike the taxes of the middle class.

We are going to cut the taxes of families to help them keep more of their money. We also oppose the Liberal plan to eliminate income splitting for our seniors, because it is irresponsible.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal plan would help the middle class and those Canadians who are working hard to join it. It would include the Canada child benefit, a tax-free monthly benefit that would be bigger, simpler and fairer than the Conservative plan.

Under the Liberal plan, a family with two children and an income of \$45,000 would receive \$4,000 per year, more than under the Conservatives. Under the Conservative plan, it is the wealthy who get the tax breaks.

Why do the Conservatives not understand that they can do more for the people who need it if they do less for the people who do not?

•(1440)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader admitted yesterday that even after all of his tax increases, he would have a \$2 billion hole in his plan. Even after raising taxes on those people who use tax-free savings accounts, he would have a \$2 billion hole. Even after cancelling the Conservative family tax cut and replacing it with a Liberal family tax hike, he would have a \$2 billion hole.

We know that with this \$2 billion hole, and I think Alex Trebek would agree, under the Liberal tax increase, paycheques of Canadians would truly be in jeopardy.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, firefighters are the first responders in many terrible situations. It is our duty to help them by providing training to volunteer firefighters and treatment to those suffering from post-traumatic stress.

Despite their promises, the Conservatives and some Liberals voted against the NDP's bill. The bill would have provided volunteer firefighters with protections when they have to take time off work.

Why does the government not care about this problem and why is it abandoning those who protect our lives on a daily basis?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be part of a government that recognized the operational stress injuries of federal employees, including our soldiers.

Representatives of civil society and various fire departments and police forces are on Parliament Hill today. As first responders, these individuals sometimes face considerable challenges.

Obviously, we respect provincial jurisdictions. We will continue to work with our partners, but today, let us take a moment to recognize the significant challenges our first responders face in situations that are sometimes difficult and tragic.

I want to thank them for the important work they do for Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, across the country we are seeing an increase in post-traumatic stress disorder and suicides among police, firefighters and paramedics. Seventeen first responders have taken their lives so far in 2015. Canadians depend on these people to keep us safe and, in return, we have an obligation to ensure they have the resources they need.

The issues of PTSD and suicide among first responders must be taken seriously. Instead of claiming it is not part of their jurisdiction, will the Conservatives take concrete and specific actions to help address the health and safety needs of first responders?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we always take our responsibility seriously when it comes time to support our police officers and

Oral Questions

front-line officers. That is why, despite the lack of support from members of the NDP, we have increased our funding, and they have the opportunity to do so in supporting our budget.

This being said, operational stress injuries are not only happening in the military sphere, but in all walks of life. We will continue to work with our provincial partners and our municipalities to take the challenge. Let us recognize the outstanding work that is done by our first responders. They play a great role in our society and we thank them for that.

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TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have also neglected the tourism industry.

Tourism is responsible for over 600,000 jobs in Canada, but over the last decade, Canada has dropped nine places as an international tourism destination, from seventh to a shameful sixteenth place.

Under pressure, the Conservatives have finally decided to talk about recapturing the U.S. tourism market, but why did it take so long, and why do we still not have plan?

Will the minister tell us exactly how much money will be invested in the connecting America campaign?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that NDP members at least took some time to read the budget. They know that we are putting more money into the tourism industry and more money into U.S. advertising. It is very true. This is good news. Members in the industry asked us to put more money into the U.S. to attract more U.S. travellers to Canada. That is something we are going to do. It is a done deal.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives sat on their hands when American tourists started deserting Canada. The Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism even boasted about cutting the budget of the Canadian Tourism Commission, an agency that helps promote our industry abroad.

This morning I moved a motion at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology to point out that in Quebec City alone, tourism employs 15,000 people. It employs 600,000 people throughout Canada.

We want a number. Can the Conservatives tell us how much they will invest in order to repair the damage they have done?

Oral Questions

●(1445)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tourism industry is an \$89 billion industry in Canada. It is a very important industry, and that is why, last fall, my provincial colleagues and I reached a Canada-wide consensus. It was not the NDP that did that. It was our government that reached a consensus with the provinces to ensure that there is reinvestment in the United States. That is what we are going to do because we want more travellers from the United States to come and visit our beautiful and great country.

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[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in today's digital economy, Canadians live in a world where access to the Internet is essential to create jobs, to realize economic opportunities and to link Canadians to online services.

Last summer, our government announced the connecting Canadians program, which will connect 280,000 households to affordable, high-quality broadband services.

Could the Minister of Industry give the House an update on the other steps our government is taking to help connect rural and remote communities to high-speed, affordable telecommunications services?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we often forget but we should remind ourselves that while Canada is the second largest country in size, we are the 37th largest in terms of population. This means that our most rural, most remote and northern communities, often aboriginal communities, are completely cut off from the rest of the country, and indeed, the rest of the world.

This is why today our government is proud to announce that we have made changes that will reduce regulatory fees for satellite companies that provide rural and remote communities access to satellite services. This is essential for public safety, economic opportunities and ensuring that all Canadians have equal access to the digital world.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Shoal Lake aboriginal community was forced to declare a state of emergency because the ferry that connects it to the shore, the only way in and out of the reserve, is in such poor condition that it failed the Transport Canada inspection.

The community, which has been under a boil water advisory for 17 years, has been asking for a long-term solution for years.

Will the minister intervene immediately so that the community can lift the state of emergency?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our immediate priority is to ensure the health and safety of Shoal Lake residents. That is why our emergency management team is in constant contact

with the community. We will continue to offer help if the community needs it. To date, we have received no requests for help. However, we are also working with the aboriginal community and Health Canada to ensure that residents have access to medical services. We stand ready to provide any help required.

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's response to emergencies is always too little, too late. The state of emergency in Shoal Lake has been years in the making.

Shoal Lake was cut off from the mainland in order to provide Winnipeg with clean drinking water, leaving Shoal Lake residents dependent on an unreliable ferry and dangerous ice roads. For 17 straight years, they have been under a boil-water advisory. They need a year-round road to the mainland and potable water.

Why has the Conservative government continued to fail first nation communities like Kashechewan and Shoal Lake? When will the Conservatives finally take real action on infrastructure needs?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to take action so that first nations across Canada have the same quality of drinking water as all Canadians. That is why since 2006, approximately \$3 billion have been invested in first nations' water and waste water infrastructure and related public health activities. We have made targeted investments in more than 130 major projects and have funded the maintenance of over 1,200 water and waste water treatment projects, and we will continue in that vein.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost a decade after the Conservatives took power, Internet access in parts of rural ridings like mine still needs to be improved. The government is only now introducing a new satellite fee structure. In a country where telecom companies make huge profits and Canadians pay some of the highest fees in the developed world, I am told by satellite companies that northern Ontario is not a priority.

What is the government going to do to ensure that rural Canadians, like my constituents in Thunder Bay—Rainy River, get access to affordable high-speed Internet now?

●(1450)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a good question and I respect the member's sincerity on the matter, but of course we have taken action as a government. I just mentioned the satellite fee structure that we put in place.

Oral Questions

Beyond that, we have our connecting Canadians program. We have done an RFP, and we have had a return from all of Canada. Our goal was to have 280,000 households connected, which would take us to over 99% of all households connected in Canada, and we have exceeded that with over 300,000 households. We are going to be making announcements next week, starting in Kenora. Then we are going to go to the Columbia River valley. We are going to go all across this country. We are going to make sure that all Canadians are connected to high-speed Internet all across the country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a deep inequality among Canadians when it comes to high-speed Internet access. For many people outside of major centres, access to high-speed service quite simply does not exist or is unaffordable.

The minister announced a reduction in the cost of operator licences, but nothing guarantees that this will give Canadians, particularly those in rural areas, real access to better service at a lower cost. Once again, wishful thinking is at play here.

When will the minister take the needs of people in businesses in rural regions seriously?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already taken peoples' needs seriously. That is why we proposed providing the amount required to enhance the power of wireless and high-speed services in every region of Canada.

We will make announcements next week in each region, including Quebec. All Canadians will have access to good quality high-speed Internet. We need to involve all Canadians.

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[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Corporal Esther Wolki took a knife and began cutting into her arm in an attempt to end her own life. A decade in the military, including a tour in Afghanistan, racism, and now sexual abuse have finally broken this Inuk soldier. Corporal Wolki's experience is yet another disturbing example of the government's neglect of the women and men in uniform.

Why are the minister and Prime Minister sitting on the sidelines when action is urgently needed to fix what Justice Marie Deschamps called the culture of misogyny in the Canadian Armed Forces? Why the silence on the part of the minister and the Prime Minister?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sexual misconduct of any kind has no place in the Canadian Armed Forces. Major-General Christine Whitecross is travelling to CFB Shilo today and will discuss this case with the leadership at CFB Shilo. She will ensure that Corporal Wolki has been offered and has access to the support that she deserves and requires. The Chief of the Defence Staff has accepted all the recommendations from the Deschamps report and is acting on them.

Since 2006, our government has continuously fought on behalf of victims and enhanced the laws in this country to combat sexual assault.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, journalists covering the Prime Minister's recent trip to Iraq were lectured about not broadcasting the faces of Canada's special forces soldiers as doing so might endanger them. However, the PM's own online 24 seven propaganda channel has violated that rule. However, this is not the first time. Two months ago, the Minister of National Defence tweeted a picture of special forces soldiers carrying the coffin of Sergeant Doiron.

What is wrong with the government which is endangering the lives of our soldiers? Is it blatant self-promotion or incompetence?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier today, if the member was listening, the safety of our troops is our number one priority and for this reason there are protocols in place before images or videos are posted. We regret this error. After reviewing all the protocols with respect to the publication of these images, these images have been removed and will not be re-posted.

We are very proud of the work that the special operations forces are doing in Iraq in training and assisting the Kurdish peshmerga and Iraqi security forces in dealing with the genocidal death cult called ISIS.

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[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, several concerns have been raised about the Conservatives' express entry program.

This time, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada is sounding the alarm and suggesting that the program cannot identify registered francophone immigrants. There are more than 22,000 people in the recruitment pool, but apparently only 200 are francophone. This represents barely 2%, while the target for francophone immigrants is 4%.

How will the minister ensure that his own targets for francophone immigration will be reached with this program?

● (1455)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to be the only government in the history of Canada to have attracted more than 2,500 francophone immigrants to the provinces and territories outside Quebec every year since 2006.

The new express entry program will allow us to identify many more francophone immigrants and to ensure that they settle in all regions faster than ever.

We have provided funding for francophone communities and francophone immigration networks in the roadmap. We are taking action to enhance the francophone presence throughout Canada.

Oral Questions

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is more bad news for francophone communities outside Quebec.

The president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada has criticized the lack of measures to increase francophone immigration. The last time she appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages, Ms. Kenny even described the situation of francophone immigration outside Quebec as scandalous. She is asking the federal government to take drastic measures right away to avert disaster for the communities.

Will the government listen?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the scandal is the NDP's failure to recognize the progress that has been made in this area.

This Conservative government is the only one in Canadian history to have brought over 2,500 francophone immigrants to our country. We do not even know how many francophones immigrate to Canada through Quebec's programs and how many of them settle in other provinces. We have strengthened the capacity of all of the francophone immigration networks to receive francophones in record time in every province and territory of Canada.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families in my constituency of Saskatoon—Humboldt are pleased with the government delivering on results for 100% of Canadian families with children through our family tax cut and universal child care benefit.

Could the Minister of Employment please give the House an update on how our plan is delivering for hard-working, middle-class Canadian families?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our family tax cut and benefits help 100% of families with kids. Family tax cuts through income splitting will put up to \$2,000 in the pockets of couples. The universal child care benefit will grow to \$2,000 per year for kids under age six, and \$720 for kids ages six through seventeen.

The Liberals have announced that they would raise taxes on families. They would replace the family tax cut with a Liberal family tax hike. They would roll back the tax-free savings accounts. Even after all that, they admit that they would have a \$2 billion hole. We are lowering taxes for Canadians.

* * *

SENIORS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, raising the age for old age security from 65 to 67 years is nothing short of a Conservative attack on seniors. Conservatives claim that all seniors are flush with cash, but we know the opposite is true. Seniors and those nearing retirement make up more than 30% of bankruptcy filings in Ontario and have more debt than younger people have.

Many others face growing debt and tight cashflows. Doubling the TFSA limits will be of no help to seniors filing for bankruptcy.

Why do the Conservatives have such contempt for Canada's seniors?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for seniors who have just downsized and want to invest the proceeds of their sale, or seniors who have had one spouse pass away with a small inheritance following, the tax-free savings accounts allow them to save. That is why almost two-thirds of those who max out their tax-free savings accounts have incomes below \$60,000. However, the Liberal plan has a \$2 billion hole and that means they will not only have to eliminate income splitting for families, but they will also eliminate it for seniors.

Raising taxes on vulnerable seniors is the last thing we should be doing. We should lower their taxes.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, the Minister of National Defence committed to considering the proposal from the Duchess of Kent Legion, in London, to move into the officers' mess at Wolseley Barracks. Like so many branches of the Legion across Canada that care for and reach out to our veterans, the contribution of this Legion to the London community and our veterans is immeasurable. However, time is running out.

Has the minister made a decision on the proposal? If not, when can the Legion and the community expect an answer?

● (1500)

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, properties are rightly assessed to ensure they meet all requirements. In this case, these buildings are aging infrastructure that is almost 60 years old and is no longer suitable or required for the Canadian Armed Forces. The Government of Canada remains fully committed to the military presence in London; this includes a joint personnel support unit, a military family resource centre, and the reserve force units' medical and dental clinics located there.

This government will continue to use taxpayer dollars wisely and stand up for our forces.

*Points of Order***TAXATION**

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition parties sadly oppose our tax cuts for northern families and, instead, propose tax hikes on the middle class.

They even support a carbon tax, which would make life far more difficult for northern families.

When the Liberals were in government, they failed to meet the obligations to the people in Nunavut and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member should know that questions should touch upon the administrative responsibilities of the government, not other parties.

We will move on to the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, 126 first nation reserves have unsafe drinking water. In Scandinavia and Europe, zero communities have unsafe drinking water. One such reserve is Shoal Lake 40, in Thunder Bay—Rainy River, which has had to boil its water for 17 years.

The reserve wants to know, and the Council of Canadians wants to know. Why does Winnipeg get safe water from Shoal Lake while the first nations on that very same lake do not?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, our government continues to take action on first nations across Canada so that they have the same quality of drinking water as all other Canadians. That is why, since 2006, we have invested approximately \$3 billion in first nations' water and waste water infrastructure and related public health activities. We have made targeted investments in more than 130 major projects and funded maintenance of over 1,200 waste water and water treatment projects.

As a matter of fact, in the economic action plan of 2014, we committed a further \$320 million for two years.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, subsequent to a Bloc Québécois motion that was unanimously adopted in the House, for nearly 10 years, the Canadian negotiation policy required negotiators to keep the supply management system intact. The government said repeatedly that it would defend that position. However, now, the Prime Minister is saying that we will have to make sacrifices during the negotiations for the trans-Pacific partnership. Everything seems to indicate that the federal government is preparing to sacrifice supply management.

Can the Minister of International Trade confirm that the negotiators' mandate is still defined by the Bloc Québécois motion that received unanimous support?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what has the Bloc Québécois done for agricultural producers in Quebec and Canada? Nothing. What will the Bloc Québécois do for them? Nothing.

What we have been doing since 2006 is negotiating free trade agreements and providing economic freedom while protecting the principles of supply management. That is something concrete, and I am telling agricultural producers in Quebec that the past is an indication of what the future holds.

* * *

[*English*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of:

In the category of distinguished Canadians, this University of Ottawa alumnus is the honorary chair of the campaign cabinet of the University of Ottawa and the popular host of *Jeopardy*.

Who is—Alex Trebek?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: The hon. opposition House leader is rising on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week you allowed a question from a Conservative to a Conservative minister that touched on the Avon Maitland District School Board and whether or not they would be providing unpaid leave to an employee.

I can give you many other examples of Conservative questions to Conservative ministers that have absolutely nothing to do with the federal government at all, not government operations or government administration, but those questions are allowed.

Today we had two very relevant and pertinent questions from the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île and the member for Timmins—James Bay. Those questions touched on the ministry of justice, on the work of the Auditor General currently in examining the Senate spending scandal. Even more important, the Senate spending scandal and the Prime Minister's appointment of those senators are actually issues that have been debated in this House of Commons around appropriations bills.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, Bill C-54 was adopted and given royal assent on March 24, 2015. That was a bill that was debated in this House of Commons.

There are traditions in this House that go back for decades. Those traditions allow for questioning the government on its administrative responsibilities. Your decision today was inexplicable, and I would like to say that—

Government Orders

• (1505)

The Speaker: I will stop the hon. member there.

As the member will know, when questions fall outside the bounds of the administration of government, as today, both on the NDP side and on the government side, as it turns out, they are ruled out of order.

As I mentioned to the member the last time he brought this up, I can provide him with the ruling I gave in January 2014 and hope that will help him understand, going forward.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT, 2015

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-51, An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre has five minutes left for his response.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I left off by remarking that I had heard members of the NDP stand in this place and say that no experts support this important legislation, Bill C-51.

I would ask them if they do not believe that Justice John Major is an expert, and he said:

I don't think Parliament is equipped as a body to act as an oversight body, which is what is being proposed.

I would ask what they think about former assistant director of CSIS Ray Boisvert, when he said C-51:

...will be a very effective tool to get...[jihadist propaganda] material off the Internet.

I would ask what they think about the Canadian Thinkers' Forum, which said:

The government's proposed Bill C-51, when passed by Parliament, shall help Canadian Muslims to curb extremist elements....

The fact of the matter is that credible experts are fully in support of this very important legislation.

As my time is drawing to a close, I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to the most important thing I heard from witnesses who came to speak on the anti-terrorism act 2015. Louise Vincent, sister of slain Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent said:

Had Bill C-51 been in force on October 19...Martin Couture-Rouleau...would have been in prison, and my brother would not be dead.

That is probably the most poignant quote. That is what I will be keeping in mind when I vote on this legislation. I call on all members to put aside their ideology and support this important legislation on behalf and for all Canadians and all of Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am quite astonished that the hon. member would cite former Supreme Court justice John Major as someone in favour of this legislation. He is, as an expert, someone who does not think Parliamentary oversight is as effective as a national security advisor. That is what he repeated multiple times in his testimony, that this bill should not be passed without a national security advisor. In his own words he said that, from what he has seen with the present proposed legislation, nothing in the present proposed legislation is going to ensure adequate information sharing between the RCMP and CSIS.

In other words, the hon. member, no doubt through talking points about legislation with which he is barely familiar, has ignored the actual testimony of a former Supreme Court judge who has urged this House not to pass Bill C-51 in its current form.

• (1510)

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, I am astounded that the hon. member understands so very little. I used to be a member of the Canadian Forces and worked in a domestic operations cell, so I understand something of how our agencies work together and the co-operation and intelligence sharing that happens. I can say from my experience then and my experience today as a parliamentarian that this legislation is needed. It is common sense. We have arrived at a very different point in our history and we have to be nimble in our legislation and in the defence of our nation, our democracy, and our citizens. We have to modernize our security protocols so that all of our security agencies interact, so that all of our coordination is done with the sole intent of keeping Canadians safe and maintaining our security, our prosperity, and above all, our liberty.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member across the way, and he made reference to a specific quote by an individual. Therefore, I would like to get a sense of the government's position. Is it the government's position that, had this legislation that we are currently debating been in place, it would have prevented a life from being taken in either of the terrorist attacks last fall?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, that is a distinct possibility, because as I spoke to this individual, it was noted and noticed that where the peace bond process comes in, if there is an opportunity to seize upon an individual ahead of the commission of a crime, or a potential crime in a terrorist context, that is indeed possible. I have spoken to our police in Toronto, in my area, and others who are involved in the intelligence field, and friends I have amongst police officers through long acquaintance and service with them, and I learned that this very important legislation would allow them to identify early anybody who is suspected of being in commission of a potential terrorist act and to intervene and interdict in order to protect Canadians.

I do not want to be the guy to have to explain why a whole bunch of people got killed when law enforcement would have been able to act sooner.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am just following up on the question from our colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Government Orders

I would like to ask my colleague from Etobicoke Centre whether or not he realizes that Mr. Justice John Major was one of the signatories to the letter from the four former prime ministers, including the Right Hon. Joe Clark, criticizing this bill and indicating that oversight and review must accompany the bill or it should not pass. Is he aware that Mr. Justice Major, whom he cited in support of the bill, was a signatory to that letter?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, we have multiple quotes from multiple stakeholders across Canada, Justice Major being just one of them. We have all kinds of testimony from other stakeholders such as the former assistant director of CSIS, people in universities, and those who are acquainted with security protocols and study this for a living, including, as I just pointed out, Louise Vincent, who is possibly and probably the most poignant of these folks.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House once again to speak out against Bill C-51. Today, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl. I am proud to rise to make the Conservative government acknowledge the thousands of Canadians who are demonstrating against this bill every day.

On this side of the House, we hear them and we will not forget them. We are still trying to get the Conservative government to listen to reason and we will fight Bill C-51 to the end. We will not give up.

We have heard all kinds of surprises on both sides of the House with respect to Bill C-51, especially in the last few minutes, when one of my Conservative colleagues spoke about the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

I cannot help but to respond to that, since my colleague claimed that former Supreme Court justice John Major was in favour of Bill C-51. This is a great example of how the Conservatives like to twist words in the debate on the content of the bill, the real consequences of Bill C-51 and the testimony given at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

John Major also signed a letter with other former Supreme court justices and former prime ministers in which they outright opposed Bill C-51. I would suggest that my colleague look at the blues to see what was said in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

He could also simply read the letter that Mr. Major signed with other eminent Canadians who fiercely opposed Bill C-51. This led to an in-depth study, among others, carried out by other people who originally supported Bill C-51 but who then opposed it, explaining that they wanted to support a measure that protects us against terrorism and radicalization, but not a bill that goes this far and that violates our civil rights and freedoms.

I hope that members on the other side of the House will do their homework. Since we vote tomorrow evening, they still have a chance to change their minds and to vote with the official opposition to get rid of this bill, go back to the drawing board and come back with a more effective measure to truly combat terrorism and radicalization.

I do not have a lot of time to discuss the bill, but I really want to emphasize that more and more people across Canada are getting angry about this so-called anti-terrorism bill. What the Conservatives have really introduced is an anti-rights and anti-freedoms bill. Thousands of people have taken to the streets in Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Vancouver, Montreal and Quebec City. People have been demonstrating loudly in every city.

Thousands of people have signed online petitions against Bill C-51, and we have presented those petitions in the House of Commons. Eminent Canadians, former prime ministers, first nations leaders and aboriginal communities, members of environmental movements and very high-profile people also oppose Bill C-51. Recently, business people have also spoken out against this bill. Since the government likes to go on about how it always consults business people, it should consider their expert opinions on the consequences of this bill. Most of these people agree that Bill C-51 is both useless and dangerous.

Also, as I mentioned earlier during question period, I am concerned about the Conservative-Liberal alliance on this bill. Some Conservative members are boasting about protecting individual rights and freedoms, when they are completely undermining these same rights in this bill. Frankly, it is astonishing. In addition, the Liberals keep saying that they are staunchly defending the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, there are no similarities whatsoever between Bill C-51 and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Conservatives and the Liberals are talking out of both sides of their mouths.

● (1515)

Honestly, it is disappointing to see that the Liberals are trying to score political points with Bill C-51. Initially, people were in favour of the bill. However, the more we talked about it, the more people realized that the bill made no sense. Now, their strategy is backfiring on them.

I also deplore that the Conservatives are not listening to what the opposition has to say in the House, which is really regrettable. They have decided to limit debate several times and forced us to vote on time allocation motions. Therefore, we were required to limit debate on Bill C-51. In addition, we had to fight bitterly in committee to get a few hours with witnesses. If the Conservatives could have acted alone, without consulting anyone in committee and without conducting any studies, they would have. In fact, 45 of the 48 witnesses who testified before the committee told us that Bill C-51 should be amended or completely scrapped, and that we should go back to the drawing board. What did the Conservatives do?

Government Orders

All the opposition parties proposed over 100 amendments, and only three were accepted. What party proposed those three minor amendments? Of course, it was the Conservative Party. None of the amendments put forward by the opposition was accepted. There is nothing in the bill that was mentioned by the witnesses. We, on the other hand, based our proposals on what the witnesses said. We tried to fix anything in Bill C-51 that could have been fixed. The Conservatives systematically refused every amendment put forward by the opposition. Clearly, they want to go it alone. They absolutely refuse to listen to any criticisms of this bill. It is sad, because ultimately, this is going to backfire on them. I am thinking of the extremely important discussions we had with eminent professors. Craig Forcese and the Canadian Bar Association come to mind, as well. At committee, I asked them if the bill was constitutional in its current form. That is perhaps the very first thing the government should examine closely before introducing a bill. The witnesses told me that large parts of the bill are unconstitutional. The bill will not stand up in court.

That raised the ire of Canadians across the country. This bill will end up before the courts and they will show that it is unconstitutional. As a federal government, its first order of business was to verify whether the bill it is introducing is constitutional and this government did not even do that. According to experts, Bill C-51 is unconstitutional. I hesitate to say that this is incompetence, but it is not far from it.

The members across the way keep saying that Bill C-51 contains vital tools that the police have been asking them for. That is not so. The number one thing that the police forces and our institutions have been asking for is money. I talked to a number of police officers. We could restart the study and rehear the experts in committee. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Border Services Agency, and the municipal and provincial police are saying that the police services desperately need money. Some even told us that they could see that certain actions could well lead to terrorism. Unfortunately, they cannot do anything about it because they do not have enough manpower to deal with it. It is very serious.

There have been several arrests. I must point out the incredible work done by members of the RCMP, among others, in recent months. Several preventive arrests related to acts of terrorism have been made. We must point that out. Arrests are being made, but there could be more if they had the money they need.

Personally, I was expecting that there would be a sizeable amount of money in the 2015 federal budget in order to fight terrorism. Unfortunately, that is not the case. There is an envelope of less than \$300 million for the RCMP, the Border Services Agency and the Canadian Security Intelligence Agency. This will not be disbursed before 2017. In the meantime, these three agencies have less than \$20 million to combat terrorism.

I do not want to be lectured about how Bill C-51 contains vital tools. The basic problem is funding. This shows that the government is unwilling to listen to the agencies that work on the ground.

• (1520)

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the past few days, we have been treated to a show of mental gymnastics. The government is trying to convince us that our

rights will be protected by a law that actually seeks to eclipse them. That makes no sense. We have learned one thing, and that is the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives. In fact, they both want to make the same mistake, except the Liberals claim that they are aware of it. That is all we have learned to date.

• (1525)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle for once again pointing out that the Conservatives and the Liberals are united on Bill C-51.

When it comes to rights and freedoms, there is a less obvious problem that comes to mind. I did not get much of a chance to talk about it in my speech. I am talking about the Security Intelligence Review Committee. Although the members of this committee are good at what they do, their powers are not broad enough. This has to do with our rights and freedoms. Bill C-51 gives a lot of powers to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, as was the case with Bill C-44 a few months ago. The problem is that the additional powers given to CSIS do not come with a proper oversight mechanism. In its current form, the Security Intelligence Review Committee only conducts a review after the fact. From the beginning we have been asking for ongoing oversight to ensure that our rights and freedoms are protected at all times.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague who was fortunate enough—I am not sure if that is the right word—to sit on the committee. It is clear that this is a partisan bill, to say the least, if not outright propaganda. I would say that normally, one great thing about our democratic system is that bills are sent to a committee, where each party is called upon to improve it. If we did not choose to introduce the bill, we can at least try to improve it.

My question is very simple. I know that the NDP proposed some amendments to improve this bill, even though the party essentially agreed with it. How many amendments were accepted by the Conservative government?

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for his question. This is a problem we have run into in most committees during studies of most Conservative government bills.

How many NDP amendments were accepted? None. How many Liberal Party amendments were accepted? None. How many Green Party amendments were accepted? None. How many Bloc Québécois amendments were accepted? None. How many amendments from independent MPs were accepted? None. How many amendments were accepted in total? Three. Who proposed them? Conservatives, of course. Moreover, they were minor amendments that changed absolutely nothing about Bill C-51.

Government Orders

Anyone can see that this is clearly a bill that we should all have been able to work on together, especially since we are constantly being reminded about what happened on Parliament Hill on October 22. When that happened, we all agreed to work together to combat terrorism, radicalization and incidents like that one. However, the Conservatives decided to work in isolation, all by themselves. They made all kinds of lovely promises and kept bringing up that incident. They started by politicizing the debate. Then they decided not to work with the opposition, which is totally unacceptable. They also decided not to listen to the majority of the witnesses. I would like to remind my colleagues across the way that 45 of the 48 witnesses clearly stated that the bill needed to be amended substantially or sent back to the drawing board. If that is not working in isolation, I do not know what is.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand in opposition to Bill C-51, the anti-terrorism act, 2015. Unfortunately, terrorism is a real threat. It cannot be denied. It is a reality of life, even here in Canada.

Public safety must be a top priority of government. There is no debate on that point. However, what the whole debate comes down to, in its simplest form, is summed up in a quote from the leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, that I repeat often: "[W]e cannot protect our freedoms by sacrificing them". We cannot protect sacred Canadian freedoms by sacrificing those sacred Canadian freedoms.

This bill would give more power to the government agencies responsible for protecting Canadians, but it would give that power without increased oversight. It would be unchecked power, and that is a threat to freedom.

I was a journalist in my previous life. I was a newspaper man. I liked to say that if you cut me, I would bleed ink. These days, I would probably bleed a radio clip. I savour the freedom I had as a journalist and as a columnist to go where the story took me, to write what needed to be written, and to say what needed to be said. I was not in the business for the money, that is for sure. That is not what drove me.

In the mid 2000s, I was the editor-in-chief of a weekly newspaper called *The Independent*. My last task every week, after the rest of the paper had been edited and put to bed, was to write my own column, an opinion piece called "Fighting Newfoundlander". Before I wrote that column, I would ask myself one simple question, just one, and it was this: What am I afraid to say? Then I would say it. I would write it.

I miss that freedom as a member of Parliament. There is no freedom I hold in higher regard. However, I savour freedom in general. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the people I represent in St. John's South—Mount Pearl, and all Canadians should not have to choose between their security and their rights, or their security and their freedom. That is the Prime Minister's false choice. The Prime Minister goes too far in putting politics ahead of principle and in putting fear ahead of freedom.

I want to return for a moment to October 22, 2014. It was my oldest son's 19th birthday. It was also the day of the shootings on Parliament Hill. I remember speaking to my son on a telephone from

a safe room in the East Block after the gunfire in Centre Block. We had been evacuated from the caucus room. I remember telling my son that I was safe and that everyone around me was alive, and happy birthday.

I remember what I call my foxhole moment, lying on the floor of the caucus room, hiding behind an overturned table and locking eyes with Glenn Thibeault, the then-member of parliament for Sudbury. Like everyone else around us, we did not know what was happening. We knew that there was gunfire just outside the door. I imagine that Glenn Thibeault saw in my eyes what I saw in his eyes: terror, the fear of being shot, and the fear of being killed. That is what I mean by my foxhole moment. My foxhole moment was, of all places, in the Parliament of Canada.

The next day, Parliament resumed sitting, and I was proud. I could not be prouder of the way the country responded in the wake of such terror and tragedy. All leaders spoke in the House. All leaders embraced the nation. The nation embraced them. The Prime Minister made a statement that I have repeated often. He said:

In our system, in our country, we are opponents but we are never enemies.

In this House, we are united by the desire to better our country. As opponents, we disagree on how to get there, but we all strive for a better Canada and a better Newfoundland and Labrador. I like to think that anyway. We are opponents, but we are never enemies.

● (1530)

However, the Prime Minister said something immediately after the October 22 attack on Parliament Hill. He gave a statement that I thought foreshadowed where we are today and why I have such reservations about the bill. The Prime Minister called the shooter a terrorist, and he described the terrible event as a terrorist attack. In fact, in a statement, he said:

...this will lead us to strengthen our resolve and redouble our efforts and those of our national security agencies to take all necessary steps to identify and counter threats, and keep Canada safe here at home.

He said "all necessary steps", but this bill is a step too far. It was almost as if the government was looking for an excuse to proceed with its agenda, and it had found an excuse in the October 22 shooting.

Bill C-51 would allow all federal departments and agencies to share information that may be relevant to national security, information not just on terrorist attacks, and to share that information with Canadian intelligence and law enforcement agencies. However, Bill C-51 would still compromise the basic principle of privacy rights in Canada. That basic principle is this: information should only be used for the purpose for which it was collected.

Government Orders

Although our spy agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, and the RCMP are governed by the Privacy Act in their collection, use, and disclosure of information, many of the departments and agencies that would now be allowed to share information with them are not covered by these laws. The Privacy Commissioner is concerned that the bill would allow information on many law-abiding Canadians, as most of us are, to be collected and shared with law enforcement without reasonable cause and would potentially allow the government to build personal profiles on each and every one of us.

An even bigger concern is who exactly would keep an eye on who is keeping an eye on us. Bill C-51 would give CSIS greater powers but would not correspondingly expand oversight of CSIS, and without proper oversight, the door would be wide open for abuse, the abuse of our basic Canadian freedoms.

On top of the lack of oversight, the Conservative government continues to cut the budgets of those agencies on the front line against terrorist threats, including the RCMP and CSIS. They have both had their budgets cut each year, starting in 2012. The RCMP saw its spending decrease by \$420 million between 2009 and 2014. The budget at CSIS was cut by \$44 million between 2012 and 2013. The government cut the tools it already had to fight terrorism, and now it is increasing the scope of CSIS but would provide no further oversight of the process.

Questions have also been raised about the bill with respect to the question of what constitutes a threat to the security of Canada, especially with the terms being so broad and oversight being so inadequate. There are concerns that under the legislation, environmental or first nations groups that set up a picket line or blockade could be interrupted by CSIS. Experts warn that legitimate dissent could be lumped in with terrorism, and that is not very Canadian. It is absolutely un-Canadian. It may be Conservative, but it is not Canadian.

Questions have been raised too about how journalists, satirists, artists, and others who report on or mock statements about terrorism may be impacted by the bill. Could there come a day when a columnist asks himself or herself, “What am I afraid to write”, and then makes sure that he or she does not write that? In the words of Benjamin Franklin: “People willing to trade their freedom for temporary security deserve neither and will lose both”.

We must not allow that to happen. Our Canadian freedoms are not for trade. The Conservative government has forgotten that, which is why it has to go.

• (1535)

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's speech. He spoke much about terrorists and satirists. I wonder, perhaps, if he may be a satirist himself. I noticed that he commented that he was amazed to hear the Prime Minister say that the October 22 incident was a terrorist attack. I guess I have three questions for the member.

Was he in the opposition room on October 22? Has he seen the bullet holes that have been left in the door of that same room? If this was not a terrorist attack on October 22, exactly what was it?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, I was in this place on October 22 when the attack occurred. I was in the caucus room, down the Hall of Honour, right across from the Conservative caucus room.

I have had many tours. I have brought many people from St. John's South—Mount Pearl for tours of Parliament since then. What everyone wants to see are the bullet holes, the bullet hole in the door to the Library of Parliament and the bullet hole from the bullet that went right through the door of our caucus room and lodged in the soundproofing cushioned door on the inside. People want to see that.

Have I seen the bullet holes? I have seen the bullet holes. Was that a terrorist attack? The Prime Minister made a statement on the night of the shooting, and he called this man a terrorist. He called this a terrorist attack, but as far as anybody knew right then, this was a deranged individual, an individual with problems. The red flags went off in my mind immediately.

It was immediately branded as a terrorist attack. We did not know that. From my perspective, it was the Conservative government using this for its own agenda. Its own agenda is what we have in front of us today, Bill C-51.

• (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is in regard to oversight. The government seems to want to give the impression to Canadians that oversight is being provided through our judicial system. Yet in other nations, particularly the Five Eyes nations, of which Canada is a part, as opposed to judicial oversight there is parliamentary oversight, something we in the Liberal Party have been advocating.

I wonder if the member might comment as to why it is important that Canada have parliamentary oversight as opposed to the judicial oversight model the government is proposing.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, what is parliamentary oversight? I guess it is the ability of parliamentarians to provide oversight on bills.

I have seen so many examples of how this Prime Minister and the government have complete contempt for Parliament, complete contempt for parliamentarians. There is the number of times it has introduced closure or time allocation on bills, which I understand is the most in history. It has done it 100 times, more than any other government in history. The government, all it has is contempt.

Nothing could come sooner than October 19, election day, when we will get rid of the majority Conservative government. Parliamentary oversight? What is that?

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a sense, the bullets that were fired in this place have gone through the heart of our very charter.

The reality of the damage being done here is that this shooter has succeeded. His attack on Parliament was meant to diminish this Parliament, to diminish the value of this Parliament, and by putting this law into place, that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, the member just made a statement. The bullets fired in this place went right through the very heart of the charter.

Government Orders

They went through doors. There were bullets lodged in walls. However, the damage done that day, done to this Parliament, is what we are seeing manifest in Bill C-51. It is unforgivable.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to engage in this debate. Before I do, I will let the House know that I will be splitting my time with the hard-working member for Edmonton Centre.

I have before me the bill. One of the important pieces of Bill C-51 comes in the preamble of the bill. It says:

Whereas activities that undermine the security of Canada are often carried out in a clandestine, deceptive or hostile manner, are increasingly global, complex and sophisticated, and often emerge and evolve rapidly...

We have an obligation in Parliament to ensure that when we ask our law enforcement agencies and our security intelligence services to deal with these ever-evolving, complex and changing threats, we provide them the mechanisms to do so. To ask them to keep up with the evolution of these threats and the sophistication of them with one hand tied behind their backs is irresponsible as a government, unfair to them and unfair to all Canadians.

To assure everyone, and the Canadians participating by watching this debate, in the preamble itself and embedded throughout the 63 pages of Bill C-51, all of which I have read, studied and gone over multiple times, it states that information that is relevant to “the security of Canada is to be shared in a manner that is consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the protection of privacy”. That is embedded in the very beginning of the legislation and it is consistent throughout the bill in a number of the sections. I am sure I will have time to go over those with some of the questions members may pose for me.

Canadians want strong action to deal with the jihadi terrorists who exist today globally and who are affecting our country. That is exactly what we would do with the anti-terrorism act, 2015 and why I am proud to support it.

The bill would do four concrete things. It would create a mechanism for internal government information sharing for the purpose of protecting national security. It would modernize the passenger protect program that is colloquially known as the “no fly list”. It would criminalize the production and dissemination of jihadist propaganda. It would also give CSIS some new tools to stop terrorist threats before they end in tragedy.

The fact is that the international jihadist movement has declared war on Canada and her allies. Canadians are being targeted by terrorists simply because they hate our society and the values it represents. Jihadi terrorism is not a human right; it is an act of war.

It is why our government has put forward measures to protect Canadians against jihadi terrorists who seek to destroy the very principles that make Canada the best country in the world in which to live. That is also why Canada is no longer sitting on the sidelines. Some of us would prefer that we do that instead of joining our allies in supporting the coalition in the fight against ISIL. Our government believes it is not right to sit on the sidelines, that we have an obligation and a duty to act, and we will.

Our government has increased resources available to our police by one-third and we have allocated more resources to CSIS, the RCMP

and CBSA by almost \$300 million to bolster our front-line services in our efforts to counter terrorism. Our government will continue to ensure that our police forces have the resources they need to keep Canadians safe.

I would like to focus my remarks on the new powers for CSIS to disrupt threats before they happen. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, some of these changes are very much common sense.

Oftentimes CSIS agents are positioned to intervene at an early stage because they primarily operate in the pre-criminal space when the terrorist attack is being planned. However, shockingly, in current day agents are prohibited from taking any action to disrupt those plots. They can only collect information.

I will read a quote from Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, the president of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy. He said in committee, “It’s amazing to me that disrupting is currently prohibited. Remember, disrupting doesn’t mean you’re arresting these individuals. You’re not violating their personal property rights. You’re just taking them out of commission. You’re actually disrupting a plot”.

I think to all Canadians, it would seem common sense, that when our security intelligence services have information that they have reasonable grounds to believe there is a terrorist plot in the making, they would then have the ability to somehow disrupt that plot.

● (1545)

Sometimes that kind of action boils down to things as simple as approaching parents and speaking with them about a family member or a child who CSIS believes is becoming radicalized. Imagine, present day, when our security intelligence services knows this information, there is no provision in law for them to go into the home, engage in discussion and then engage in a plan to deal with that information and stop the radicalization to prevent it from manifesting itself further. I think Canadians would be alarmed to know that information could not allow our security intelligence services to take a simple step of talking with families or people in our country to prevent a terrorist threat.

We might hear instances where they currently do that, but that is in the context of their present mandate of intelligence gathering rather than actual threat disruption. These are examples of threat disruption that do not require a warrant and are currently legal for anyone to do. It would not make sense for CSIS officers to require warrants in order to ask parents to speak to their children or engage in conversations in online chat rooms, which are becoming more and more the mode of communication in our present day technological world.

Government Orders

As clearly outlined in the bill, CSIS would need a judicially-approved warrant for anything that would infringe on the rights of an individual or any activity that could be contrary to law. Furthermore, the judge would need to be convinced that such powers were reasonable and proportional to the threat. In fact, in those sections there are more than four stages of approach that officers have to go through prior to those warrants being authorized. Those stages are far more onerous and detailed than any other provision in criminal law that a regular law enforcement officer needs to go through. How do I know that? I have done those myself as a law enforcement officer.

The provisions contained in the bill in terms of the Canadian Security Intelligence Agency first even reaching the approval stage to take that matter before a judge is one full stage. The officers then have to demonstrate to a judge that all of the conditions would be met for a warrant to be authorized. There are no less than eight conditions for that step to take place. The judge then has the opportunity to accept or deny that request or ask for greater information and modify it. If a warrant is authorized by the judge, CSIS officers who have sought the warrant then have to ensure, under legislation, that the conditions for which the warrant was granted still exist prior to taking any action. Therefore, there are four different levels with multiple conditions under each level to ensure effective and proper oversight of the granting of any action.

I know the opposition wants to fearmonger and suppose that now CSIS can all of a sudden get warrants to interrupt and access the information of Canadians or stomp all over their rights. This is a four-stage process, including final judicial review, that puts onerous and legislative conditions on CSIS officers.

I know I have limited time left, but I know Bill C-51 would ensure the right balance between the protection and preservation of the freedom of Canadians, while at the same time ensure that our law enforcement and security service agencies have the tools they need in a modern context so they can stop these threats that, as I mentioned in the preamble of this bill, are ever-evolving, global in nature and changing daily. It is our obligation as a responsible government to ensure they have the tools to do their job to keep Canadians safe, while preserving everybody's collective freedom.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was just at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, where they are currently studying the obviously illegal financing of terrorist activities.

In preparation, I read the testimonies of people who had appeared, including a former RCMP officer who said that RCMP officers simply do not have the knowledge required to fight illegal financing, for instance. They are not specialists, but rather generalists. When they become specialists, they are promoted elsewhere.

He also said that there was no money. Bob Paulson, the RCMP commissioner, said the same thing, that the RCMP does not have the funds it needs. It has to transfer resources from the organized crime section to the fight against terrorism. It seems to me that there is a problem here.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the need to continually invest in the front-line law enforcement service, but, as the member rightfully pointed out, in every aspect and on every occasion, the RCMP does not have all the tools it needs to combat terrorism. One of the tools we are able to provide it is greater legislation. That is part of it. It is not all about money. It is not all about financial resources. Sometimes it is about policies and legislation, and Bill C-51 reflects that.

Bill C-51 also has an essential element, which is to build critical partnerships between law enforcement and security service agencies. If we were to ask the RCMP to do this on its own, it is already behind the game. However, the bill would allow information sharing between departments so all departments in the Canadian government could ensure they were partnered in this to identify and help protect and prevent these threats.

That is why we have allowed additional authority for CSIS, so one agency is not on its own trying to deal with a threat that is global in nature, sophisticated and rapidly evolving. It is not responsible for us to expect one agency in the Government of Canada to do it on its own and the bill would ensure that all agencies could work together effectively. That is what Canadians expect, and that is what we are delivering.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe a great number of Canadians were quite surprised at the degree to which we had seen the radicalization of Canadian citizens. One of the areas of concern that my constituents and, I suspect, many people have is how the legislation would impact websites and the Internet.

Given the member's background, I would ask him, in layman's language, to best explain how he feels this legislation would help law enforcement officers, in particular, and others to deal with the issue of the Internet and the potential radicalization through the Internet.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, in layman's terms, it would allow different agencies, such as CSIS, on one hand, to identify propaganda information that tries to recruit or promote terrorism activity that is being disseminated online or being utilized in blogs for a direct or generalized targeting of Canadians for the purpose of terrorism growth, enhancement and recruitment. Where law enforcement agencies did not have the ability in the past to intercept or act on them, whether it is CSIS or the RCMP, this legislation would allow those agencies to identify them. There is a portal now, and a hope and a reason, for Canadians to report the online dissemination, promotion or recruitment of Canadians using these new technologies.

As the bill states, the ever-evolving threat is coming more and more in the form of this broad-based dissemination in the technological world, in any form of social media, whether it is Facebook, the Internet, Twitter, whatever it happens to be. This would give our law enforcement agencies the tools to identify and interrupt that when they arrive.

*Government Orders***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing or special order or usual practice of the House, no later than 15 minutes prior to the expiry of the time provided for government orders later this day, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes to the amendment to the motion for third reading of Bill C-51, An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, that up to five minutes be made available following her speech for a question and comment period, following which all questions necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the said bill be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, May 6, 2015, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT, 2015

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-51, An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed and of the amendment.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to discuss the anti-terrorism act, 2015, or as we know it, Bill C-51.

I am proud to support this legislation. It is important legislation that would keep Canadians safe from jihadi terrorists. It is a part of the puzzle.

The focus of my remarks today is Canadian values.

Some members of the opposition have said that the bill before us today would somehow violate Canadian values, that it would stop protests, and that it would cause the incarceration of aboriginals and environmentalists. These arguments are, of course, nonsense. The vast majority of people who have complained to me about Bill C-51 have never even taken the time to read it. They get their information from the Internet, which is not exactly the font of all knowledge.

If we look at the text of the legislation, in several parts it states clearly, for all those who bothered to read it, that protest, dissent and artistic expression are not to be targeted. They are not to be targeted by any part of this bill. The only thing that is targeted is terrorism.

Let us look at amendments to the Criminal Code regarding the distribution of jihadist propaganda. It says right in the bill that it is about promotion of terrorist offences. These are violent acts that put the lives and property of Canadians in danger.

The opposition has said that we are limiting freedom of speech. Well, freedom of speech does not include promoting the killing of innocents simply because they have not adopted the killer's perverted view of religion. We will never apologize for taking jihadi propaganda out of circulation, and in my view, the opposition should certainly not advocate for retaining it.

Several NDP members have cited an op-ed by some high-tech business owners critical of the bill. I admit that it is nice to see the NDP supporting business in some way, but I digress. I would suggest that if websites providing content, hosting services or other businesses are profiting from the dispersal of this type of horrific material, they should seriously reconsider their business model and lack of commitment to the values that bind us as Canadians.

Let us look at what experts had to say about this portion of the bill.

Ms. Raheel Raza, President of the Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow, said, "legislation is important" to combat radicalization and that we need better tools to track jihadists who travel overseas. She also said:

...unfortunately we are living in a post-9/11 world and times are such that personal information needs to be shared. That's the reality and I don't have a problem with it. ...the larger picture is that of the security and safety of Canada.

Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, President of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy said, "By beginning to focus on those who "may" commit, you will begin to hold accountable not just the jihadists on the field of armed jihad but the jihadists in the stands who are cheering on the field warriors about to plant an explosive. You will begin to finally hold accountable the neo-jihadists at the pulpits and in the social media who glorify militant Islamism and demonize Canada, Canadians, your protection forces and your government."

Mr. Ray Boisvert, former assistant director of CSIS said:

I think it will be a very effective tool to get that material off the Internet.

Those are the facts. We must take this material out of circulation. The culture that accepts and normalizes the transmission of material like "kill the infidels wherever they may be" is not compatible with Canadian values. The fact that members of the opposition reject this common sense argument is simply astounding. These types of comments coming from the NDP, and the Liberals to some extent, simply underline the fundamental difference in how we approach the protection of Canadians and Canadian values.

The Liberals, who I believe are going to support the bill, have said that revoking the passports of those who are seeking to travel for the purposes of committing acts of terrorism runs against Canadian values. Well, for me, a Canadian value is not cutting off the head of those one disagrees with, like the so-called Islamic State.

Government Orders

If the Liberals reject that value comparison, I guess that speaks for itself. However, I suspect it is not terribly surprising that the Liberal Party may have such a shallow view of legislation to protect national security. After all, this is the same party whose leader made juvenile phallic quips about the size of CF-18s during the debate on sending our young women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces into battle in Iraq and Syria.

The NDP members are certainly no better. They have voted to allow terrorists to travel overseas to engage in terrorism without criminal consequence. They have voted against allowing victims of terrorism to receive compensation, and they have voted seven times against increasing resources for the RCMP and CSIS.

• (1600)

This is a shameful record that Canadians will remember for quite some time. We have not listened to them and we are taking action to dramatically increase the resources available for the RCMP, CSIS and SIRC.

The fact of the matter is that the international jihadist movement has declared war on Canada. Canadians are being targeted by jihadi terrorists simply because these terrorists hate our society and the values it represents and the actions we have taken to protect the people who share our values.

Jihadi terrorism is not a human right; it is an act of war. That is why our government has put forward measures to protect Canadians against jihadi terrorists who seek to destroy the very principles that make Canada the best country in the world to live in. It is also why Canada is not sitting on the sidelines as some would have us do. It is instead joining our allies in supporting the international coalition in the fight against ISIL.

I am extremely proud of the men and women serving the cause of freedom in Iraq and Syria from their bases in Iraq and Kuwait. I am proud to know many of them personally.

Further, our government has already increased the resources to our police forces by one third. The Liberals and NDP voted against those increases each step of the way.

Now, budget 2015 will further increase resources to CSIS, the RCMP and CBSA by almost \$300 million to bolster our front-line efforts to counter terrorism. Our government will continue to ensure that our police forces have the resources they need to help keep Canadians safe.

In the aftermath of 9/11, we learned that if only the security and other agencies in the United States had been talking to each other and sharing information, that awful tragedy would not have happened. Can we all imagine what the world would look like today without 9/11? It is hard to imagine. Regrettably, I think that the perpetrators of 9/11 would have simply tried to find a different soft spot through which to inflict their poison and terror. We cannot let Canada be that soft spot.

What we are proposing with Bill C-51 will simply bring us up to the same level of institutional capacity and operational interaction that is enjoyed by our Five Eyes allies: Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Our Conservative government is standing up for the protection of Canadians from those who wish to

harm us. We will continue to take strong action in this regard, while the NDP and Liberals obstruct and oppose these important measures every step of the way.

The issue of the security of Canadians today and in generations to follow is too important to not be taken very seriously.

I hope that some members on the other side of the House will reject the demands of the big union bosses in the opposition leader's office and will vote with their constituents and with their consciences in support of this important legislation.

What Canadians can count on is this government's support for the values that brought us through many dark days of other conflicts, like the Second World War in Europe, the end of which, 70 years ago, we celebrate this week. The people of the Netherlands could count on Canadians then and Canadians can count on us now.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just heard the words "vote with their constituents". The timing is good because in only a few minutes, I received a dozen tweets from people in my riding asking me to vote against Bill C-51.

I will vote the way the people are asking me to, and they are asking me to vote against it. The more people hear about this bill, the more they oppose it.

I imagine that the hon. member also has constituents in his riding who wrote him to ask him to vote against Bill C-51.

Well, will he vote "for his constituents"?

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, our constituents will react to whatever we have been telling them in a lot of respects. Frankly, I have been telling the truth to constituents. Here is the bill and here is what they have objected to.

First of all, I ask my constituents if they have actually read the bill and can identify the part of the bill that gives them concern; and 99 times out of 100 they cannot because they have not read the bill. They are listening to special interest groups or people with ideologies that they are perfectly within their rights to have. I do not deny that.

However, when people actually read the bill, actually understand it, actually sit down and debate it, most Canadians agree that we do need to protect Canadians from terrorism, that just because we are taking measures to enhance national security does not automatically mean that we are decreasing freedoms. That just does not compute.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the member's speech. He seems to have forgotten that it was a Liberal government that brought in the anti-terrorism act and he seems to have also forgotten that two or three years ago, the Liberal opposition supported the reintroduction of preventative arrests, which had sunsetted under the anti-terrorism act.

Government Orders

My question has to do more with how we ensure that any bill meant to protect the safety and security of Canadians is effective in the sense that it would not create an abuse of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which would then lead to the bill being challenged and weakened. That is a problem. When we have a bill that aims to achieve something, if it is then challenged and struck down by the courts and weakened, we have not achieved our objective.

I think it is very important that measures be taken to ensure that the bill would be solid against a challenge.

I would like to hear why the member feels the bill will not be challenged and that the courts will always agree with the bill, in all aspects.

● (1610)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I was too hard on the Liberals. I should not do that because I believe they are going to support the bill, ultimately, and I do acknowledge that, at times in the past, they have done the right thing. We hope they will continue to do that.

With respect to challenges, we cannot tell somebody not to challenge a bill. That is perfectly within anybody's rights. If they feel strongly enough about it, they can do that. We believe the bill would withstand that kind of challenge. There is oversight in the bill and we do trust the judiciary. There is judicial oversight before the fact. There is SIRC review after the fact. We just doubled the SIRC budget and the complement of people on SIRC is now up to full strength. There is considerable oversight before and review afterwards, so we believe that the bill would withstand a challenge, which I agree is probably inevitable. This is the kind of measure that does not sit with everybody.

This may sound odd, but the great thing about Canada is we have never had to face this kind of challenge on our shores. Please do not take this the wrong way, but I guess the difficulty with Canada, or Canadians, is we have never had to face this kind of challenge on our own shores and we just do not get it yet. We started to get it on October 20 and October 22. I think most Canadians continue to get it, and we do have to do something about it in a preventative way so that we do not have to face this kind of thing on our shores.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak again to Bill C-51, which is drawing to the conclusion of the parliamentary process.

I have had a lot of feedback from constituents in Vancouver Quadra. There has been positive feedback. There have been people who have said that the measured approach which the Liberals have taken gives them confidence, that the Liberal Party is the only party whose members are really talking about both the importance of improving security measures for our country and the importance of privacy and civil liberties, and how that balance would go forward together, hand in hand, under a potential Liberal government. Others have communicated with me their concerns about Bill C-51 and so I want to address those concerns.

Before I get into that, though, I do want to say that this bill is a signature strategy of the Conservative government and the Prime Minister. That strategy is to package some positive elements of public policy together with some negative elements of public policy

in one bill for political and partisan reasons. The reason would be to make an effort to divide the progressive vote.

The government wants to fragment the centre-left voters for the purpose of holding onto power. That is the intention of the Conservatives' omnibus bills. They put positive elements in a bill that has some very negative elements, and they force other parties to choose apparently to reject the positive elements by voting against the bill because of its negative elements, or to choose to accept unacceptable elements in order to signal support for the positive elements. The Conservative government has taken the view that bad public policy of packaging bills this way is worthwhile to pursue its own partisan interests for its own potential re-electability.

I would say to any citizen who is following this debate to think very carefully about what the Conservative government and the Prime Minister are trying to do with this bill. What the Prime Minister wants the progressive voter to do is to split the centre-left vote so that the Prime Minister can be returned to power in the next election. Voters should think very carefully about whether they are falling into that trap, and whether their vote and campaigns on this bill are exactly what was intended by the Prime Minister, for whom partisan gamesmanship always trumps good public policy.

I can think of several other bills that were this kind of packaging of positive elements with negative elements in order to jam opposition members and to be able to later say that members voted against this, that and the other, should the opposition members decide not to support a bill because it has some landmines in it, some points of bad public policy.

One of the examples of that kind of tactic is what I would call the Internet snooping bill. That is the bill on which the Conservative minister of the day stood in this House and asserted that opposition members were either with the Conservatives or they were with the child pornographers. That kind of approach did not sit so well with the Canadian public. There was an outcry at that kind of partisan simplification, especially on a bill such as that, which had some real weakening of Canadians' rights and which eventually the government had to withdraw because of the outcry.

The government has done the same thing with the cyberbullying bill. Again, it packaged positive things, defending young people from cyberbullying, but also included attacks on their rights and privacy with respect to access to the Internet and social media.

● (1615)

In the first example that I gave, the Internet snooping bill, the Liberals were positioned to vote against the bill. In the second case, the cyberbullying bill, the Liberals elected to vote for the bill because of its positive elements to protect young people from cyberbullying, although we were not in favour of some of the elements of enhanced access to Canadians' private information.

This bill, Bill C-51, is part of that long lineage of the shamelessly bad public policy on the part of the Conservative government in order to pursue partisan objectives. The Liberals are voting for this bill because of the positive elements, and we have laid out our amendments, representing our concern about the undermining of charter rights and freedoms and privacy in Bill C-51.

Government Orders

Permit me first to reinforce that the Liberal Party of Canada is the party that brought in the first anti-terrorism legislation after the 9/11 attacks, so we do support reasonable provisions for our security services. The Liberals have been in government, unlike the NDP, so we have members who have been inside with top security clearance and who are aware that there are real security threats to Canadians, and that it is important for a government to respond to that. After all, it is a primary objective of any government to provide for the collective security of the members of its society, and the Liberals take that responsibility very seriously.

While the Conservatives may inflate the true risks to members of our society here in Canada based on the instances of the terrorist attacks last fall, there have been some real changes to the threats to Canadians, and the Liberals accept that. We acknowledge that, and we want to see security improved to reflect that.

It used to be that a terrorist threat was more like the one that occurred on 9/11, with an organized attempt to create damage here in our country. That is still a threat that we need to guard against. In addition, the use of social media and the kinds of campaigns to radicalize young people that are being conducted by Daesh, or ISIS, are new channels for terrorist activities and threats. Therefore, it is reasonable and appropriate, and I would say it is necessary, for the government to respond and to reduce access to those channels. That is what Bill C-51 would do. That is why the Liberals are supporting this bill.

The kinds of provisions that would be brought in by this bill include provisions which, had they been in place last fall, could well have saved the life of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent. In thinking about how to respond to a bill that deliberately puts security improvements in with other measures that are not respectful of the privacy and other rights of Canadians, it is important to think about human life. The provisions for privacy and for human rights could be amended by a future government that acknowledges the importance of those principles. Clearly, the Conservative government does not, because it has never talked about them as a priority in any way.

However, should someone die as a result of an incident that could have been prevented by improving security, that is something that can never be undone. That is one reason we believe that this bill should go forward.

• (1620)

The Liberals brought forward a number of amendments to make this bill better and to address our concerns with respect to security and civil liberties. After all, we are the party of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We are the party that brought in the charter, and celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2012, unlike the Conservatives who refused to acknowledge the anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

What many citizens are not aware of is that the government did approve a number of amendments in response to issues raised by the public and by the Liberal Party of Canada. The government removed the word “lawful” from before the words “advocacy and protest” so that legitimate forms of demonstration are not captured by this legislation.

The government's amendments narrowed the scope of information sharing from “with any person for any purpose” to 17 government departments and agencies, therefore restricting the possibility for abuse. It amended this bill to limit and clarify the minister's intervention powers over Canadian airlines. Furthermore, the government clarified in law that CSIS is not a police agency and has no power of arrest.

The government has come partway toward the public's and the Liberals' concerns about lack of protection of privacy and charter rights. These are necessary and welcome changes, but they are not enough. Additional changes are needed to protect citizens' rights and privacy.

Canada is the only nation of its kind without national security oversight being carried out by parliamentarians. Canada's response to terrorism must also include a robust plan for preventing radicalization before it takes root.

The current government has not adequately legislated transparency and accountability measures into this bill. The Liberal Party is committed to making those improvements. We are committed to providing national security oversight, not just for CSIS but for the collection of government agencies and departments that have security and intelligence responsibilities.

We are committed to bringing in a robust form of prevention so that young people, usually young men but more and more young women, who are at risk of being attracted to radical ideologists and promoting terrorism here at home can actually have the support that is needed to change that path. Engaging with rather than marginalizing communities, for example the Muslim community, is a very important objective of the Liberal Party. Our party has committed funds, as well as having a plan to strengthen protection and prevention of radicalization in Canada.

Furthermore, the Liberal Party would sunset this entire bill in three years. That would provide a time period to see which of the concerns the public and the experts have are actually real concerns and which ones are theoretical. Within three years, there would be a full review of this bill under a Liberal government with improvements put in place as necessary.

I would like to point out that when the Liberals brought forward stronger security measures after 9/11, it was a completely different approach than the one taken by the Conservative government. It was an approach based on good public policy. It was an approach based on really addressing the weaknesses in the security regime in Canada, but working with members of the public and opposition to ensure that that balance with privacy and human rights and freedoms was protected.

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The Liberal government of the day had a robust set of committee hearings. I believe there were 19 separate days of hearings. It brought in a full set of amendments to reflect any concerns that were heard. That contrasts directly with the Conservative government's approach of cutting off debate, using time allocation in debate and in committee, and essentially adopting a few amendments but ignoring others that are necessary changes.

• (1625)

That is why the Liberal Party will campaign with a commitment to address the full range of concerns of experts and Canadians alike, should Liberals form government.

What should be underpinning this kind of legislation are principles, such as democracy, and the role of the Canadian public in engaging in public policy changes that would affect them. That principle was not respected by the government's process. The government is tipping the scales away from the principle of humanity and of thinking about the rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens. That is part of a pattern with the government. It eliminated the mandatory long form census, which provides real data on which to found public policy changes and address human needs in our society, reflecting the needs of newcomers, people of various cultures, religions and languages. The mandatory long form census was an important tool that we no longer have.

The government has muzzled scientists, the very people who provide evidence on how to move forward with good public policy to address the issues that face us as a society. The government has the responsibility to work with citizens and respond with law and policy to address the evidence.

I am pleased to say that it was a Liberal initiative to strengthen privacy and rights in a private member's bill. That was my private member's bill, Bill C-622. I invite anyone following this debate to go to my website and find the material on Bill C-622. It was a bill whose timing coincided with the attacks last fall, in October, so it is not surprising that it did not receive the support needed to pass. I will acknowledge the opposition members who supported this bill. One Conservative member supported it as well, but the rest of the Conservatives did not. It was a bill intended to increase the accountability and transparency of our signals intelligence agency, CSE.

Bill C-622 was developed in concert with the very experts who have been providing commentary in committee on Bill C-51, so I had the privilege of working for a number of months with experts in security in the Canadian Armed Forces, the intelligence community and the privacy community to develop Bill C-622. I am grateful for the support that I received by all Liberal members in the House.

Bill C-622 would have taken away the minister's power to secretly authorize the interception of Canadians' protected information, including metadata. It would have placed the authority in the hands of an independent judge of the court. It would have strengthened accountability and transparency internally at CSE, and established new requirements, a new mandate for the commissioner and a list of improvements for privacy and rights. It would have established the intelligence and security committee of Parliament to oversee our security agencies.

The Liberal Party is the only party committed to both strengthening security provisions as needed, as the world changes around us, and protecting and enhancing privacy and charter rights of Canadians. I invite members of the public concerned about this bill to look at the Liberals' record and the reasons for supporting Bill C-51 so that we can prevent the death of a Patrice Vincent in the future.

• (1630)

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a couple of contradictions. The member talked a fair bit about principles and about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Just at the end she was saying that the Liberal Party is there to protect both privacy and the charter. However, we know that Bill C-51 is actually an attack on the charter and the rights and freedoms of people yet the Liberal Party is supporting it. We also know that, in terms of the reasoning behind the Liberal Party supporting this, the Liberal leader said, while he was in British Columbia, that the Liberals were supporting the bill to not give the Conservative government a stake to whack them over the head with during the election campaign. That is not taking a principled stand.

With the changes to privacy and information sharing there is also the potential for a large database of information on law-abiding Canadian citizens to end up being stored in one location for some potential nefarious use down the road. In Toronto, we are dealing with something very similar to that with the issue of carding, where many individuals are being stopped by the police for no reason and having their information taken down. I would like to ask the member her opinion on that behaviour.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member bringing up the issue of contradiction. I will note that his party, the NDP, is voting against this bill but has not committed to repealing it, should it be in a position to do so.

In my remarks there was no place where I said that this bill is perfect. There are improvements that need to be made, and this bill was deliberately designed this way by the Conservative Prime Minister and government as a political partisan tool. There are improvements that need to be made. We in the Liberal Party have committed to making those should we be in a position to do so. We are clear and transparent about our commitments and we will deliver on those should we have an opportunity to form government.

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• (1635)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has done some exceptional work on the issue of oversight of our national security agencies. I would like her opinion as to why the government is so doggedly committed to avoiding oversight. For example, we know that the government will not create an oversight committee, but there is also another issue which the Liberals tried to resolve through an amendment in committee. That issue revolves around SIRC's mandate to review operations undertaken by CSIS to reduce threats to Canada.

The bill requires that the committee, SIRC, study "at least one aspect" of CSIS' activities. Why only one aspect? Why not more than one aspect? Why not all aspects?

Why is the government doing all it can to avoid oversight? What is it hiding?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is mystifying why, against all expert advice and against the examples shown by the other nations of the Five Eyes, the current government has been blocking proper oversight of the security agencies. One can only speculate. Possibly, that is part of my contention that this is a politically partisan-driven bill. It is deliberate bad public policy to strengthen a security agency while not equally strengthening the oversight. Therefore, it is about partisan objectives and not about good public policy.

What the government is missing is the fact that a parliamentary oversight committee of all of the agencies and departments that deal with security and intelligence would actually make those functions far more effective because the oversight committee would reduce the siloing that currently exists with the different agencies, would identify where there are gaps and duplications, and would make security far more effective. Why the Conservatives would not want that is beyond me.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, twice in her remarks the member for Vancouver Quadra used the word "mystified". I was a child of the sixties. My first vote was in 1968. I did not vote Liberal. I know members are shocked, but I have to say at the time we were inspired by the words that came out of Pierre Trudeau. When the Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into place it was a good thing for Canada and I give recognition to that.

However, what is interesting is we have had four previous prime ministers, three of them Liberal, 100 professors and lawyers say that this is a flawed bill and should be withdrawn. I am very much mystified as to why the Liberals would support something where the history of their own party rails against it.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP member mentions the word "freedoms" I would like to remind the member that freedoms do not exist when there are attacks that could have been prevented or guarded against. Those freedoms would be simply eroded. That is why it is important that a government keep up to date with security requirements that our changing security environment requires. That is why the Liberals are supporting the bill.

I would ask the member whether he would want it on his conscience should there be an attack that leads to deaths of Canadians because of the loopholes that the bill is attempting to fix. The Liberals are clear that the privacy and rights sides of the

equation are not properly respected by the Conservative government on purpose and those can be fixed. The Liberal Party has made a commitment to do that. We have been open and transparent about our intention to do that. It will be in our platform and it will be an urgent mandate for us should we form government after the next election.

• (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the question that was just posed to my colleague about recognizing that the Liberal Party is the party that brought in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Pierre Elliott Trudeau recognized the importance of the issue. It is the Liberal Party today that is recognizing that Canadians are concerned about the radicalization that has been taking place in different ways, about the potential threat of terrorism. Canadians as a whole are very much concerned and want government to do what it can to make sure that we are combatting terrorism and at the same time providing assurances in terms of rights and freedoms.

We know the Liberal Party's position is very clear. We will vote in favour of the legislation. If the government continues to fail to make those amendments, as it appears to, such as parliamentary oversight, the Liberal Party will take it as a part of its election platform where we are committed to making those changes.

The leader of the New Democratic Party on the other hand is saying that if he forms government, he will not scrap the legislation but will make changes. Could member explain the difference?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the difference ties into a comment I made early on in my remarks that the Liberal Party is the only party that is concerned about having both effective security measures to protect Canadians in a changing threat landscape and provisions to ensure privacy and the protection of rights.

Bill C-622 that I had the privilege of leading the debate on in the House last fall, which was supported by all of the Liberal members, is an expression of how our party sees not just protecting rights and freedoms, but actually enhancing them in the face of changing technologies and the changing situation in our society. That is what Bill C-622 would have done had the Conservatives not voted it down. It is the kind of measure that we strongly believe in. It can be taken as an example of our commitment to not just protecting, but actually enhancing and improving transparency and accountability of the agencies that hold our rights and privacy in their hands.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that I will be sharing my time today with the member for York Centre.

There is no liberty without security. This is a principle that is fundamental to accept when we discuss the important bill before us today. I want to bring this debate back to principles. We must ensure that Canadians are protected from terrorism. The security of a country is the first responsibility of any government.

Government Orders

Let us not beat around the bush. The international jihadi movement has declared war on Canada and its allies. We have seen it in Paris, we have seen it in Copenhagen, we have seen it in Sydney, we have seen it in Quebec and we have seen it right here in Ottawa. In fact, just as recently as Sunday night, two jihadi terrorists tried to attack a free speech convention in Dallas.

These jihadi terrorists want to kill every westerner. Every Canadian is on their hit list. They hate us for our freedom, our tolerance and our prosperity. We need not go any further than the source to know that this is true. A spokesman for the so-called Islamic State said:

If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be.

That should send chills down the spine of every member of the House. What is more, spreading this type of jihadist propaganda in Canada is not illegal under the current law. That is why we brought forward changes in this legislation to more effectively target the material that is used to recruit Canadians to go to join terrorist groups like the so-called Islamic State.

The talking point for opposition members in the House today seems to be that there are no examples of things that would be crimes under this bill that are not crimes now. I would note that this type of hateful propaganda is exactly what is meant to be targeted.

Let us listen to the experts. Here is what Salim Mansur, a professor at the University of Western Ontario, had to say:

Bill C-51 in my reading is not designed to turn Canada into some version of Hobbes' Leviathan or Orwell's 1984, despite at times the fevered imagination of its critics.

Let us take a look at the five key measures that this bill would take.

It would allow Passport Canada to share information on potential terrorist travellers with the RCMP. It would stop known radicalized individuals from boarding a plane bound for a terrorist conflict zone. It would criminalize the promotion of terrorism in general. For example, statements like "kill all the infidels, wherever they are" would become illegal, as I have already discussed. It would allow CSIS agents to speak with parents of radicalized youth in order to disrupt terrorist travel plans. It would also give the government an appeal mechanism to stop information from being released in security certificate proceedings if it could harm a source.

If we put aside the heated rhetoric and the misinformation that is out there, and focus purely on the facts, we can see that this is a common sense bill that protects Canadians. I fail to see the reasons why members on the other side of the House would fail to support the bill.

Let us take a minute to examine the ideology.

We have seen before that the NDP has taken every possible step to stop our Conservative government from improving our national security. It voted against making it a crime to travel abroad to engage in terrorism. It voted against stripping citizenship from those convicted of terrorism. It also voted against any new resources for

our front-line law enforcement and national security officers. It seems as though it is fundamentally opposed to any measure that would add to the protection of Canadians. This is the same party that as part of its election platform promised to repeal all national security legislation.

• (1645)

The Liberal Party simply does not take these discussions seriously. Its position on the bill is unintelligible. It will repeal it, it supports it; no one really knows for certain, although we just heard from the last speaker that it planned to support the bill.

Clearly, only our government is able to make the tough decisions that are necessary in this very uncertain world. We will never waiver from our commitment to take strong actions to keep Canadians safe, particularly from jihadi terrorists. We will do so through legislation, such as we are discussing today. We will also do so through financial resources, like the nearly \$300 million that we have invested in the fight against terrorism through economic action plan 2015.

As I said at the beginning of my comments, we must bring this back to the first principle: the desire to keep Canadians safe. The international jihadist movement has declared war on Canada. Canadians are being targeted by jihadi terrorists simply because these terrorists hate our society and the values it represents.

Jihadi terrorism is not a human right; it is an act of war. That is why our government has put forward measures that protect Canadians against jihadi terrorists who seek to destroy the very principles that make Canada the best country in the world in which to live. That is also why Canada is not sitting on the sidelines, as some would have us do. We are instead joining our allies in supporting the international coalition in the fight against ISIS.

I urge all of my colleagues, on both sides of the House, to support the bill. It is an important bill and we need to see this legislation enacted.

• (1650)

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-51, the anti-terrorism act.

The anti-terrorism act, 2015, contains a range of needed anti-terrorism measures, including, for example, provisions that will enable important improvements to the passenger protect program. The proposed legislation complements measures included in the Combating Terrorism Act, which came into force in July 2013. It enhances Canada's ability to address threats to air transportation security, while also establishing strong safeguards to protect civil liberties.

The Combating Terrorism Act created four new offences of leaving or attempting to leave Canada for the purpose of committing certain acts of terrorism. Leaving Canada to participate in terrorist training, for example, is now an offence punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Shockingly, the NDP voted against these measures. Evidently it does not believe that travelling for terrorist purposes ought to be criminal.

Government Orders

The changes we are making to the passenger protect program would complement this by allowing the government to potentially prevent certain people from travelling by air under specific circumstances where arrest and prosecution may not yet be possible.

Let me explain. It was this government that established the passenger protect program in 2007 to screen air passengers more effectively. The program uses measures such as denial of boarding when necessary to respond to threats to aviation security.

While the program currently operates on the basis of authorities in the Aeronautics Act, Bill C-51 would create a stand-alone framework to support the passenger protect program. This new framework would expand the program's mandate in a very important way to address both individuals who posed a threat to aviation and security and those who attempted to travel to engage in terrorist offences.

I wish to emphasize here that it would also establish safeguards with respect to information sharing and find mechanisms for review and appeal of decisions.

To accomplish all this, the bill would define new authorities for two ministers.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness would establish a list of persons under two categories: first, those who may pose a threat to transportation security; and, second, those who may travel by air to engage in terrorist offences. Having the Government of Canada, not international air carriers, screen passengers against the list would better protect the security of the program and the privacy of those on the list.

Under the anti-terrorism act, 2015, the minister would also have the authority to respond to such threats in a reasonable and appropriate manner. Operational directions would be tailored to the specific threat. For example, in some cases, the minister could direct an air carrier to designate an individual for additional screening at the security check point. In other more high-risk cases, the minister could direct the carrier to prevent a listed person from boarding a flight.

In implementing these authorities, the Minister of Transport would serve as the primary contact with air carriers, including responsibility for: first, disclosing the list to air carriers for the purpose of screening passengers; second, collecting information on listed persons from air carriers; third, communicating response directions to air carriers on behalf of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness; and, finally, overseeing industry compliance with the new legislation.

In response to concerns raised in committee, our government moved an amendment that would clarify the minister's authority when giving direction to air carriers. We believe the amendment would respond to those concerns, while ensuring the original intent of the bill would remain intact.

Let me say a few more words about information sharing.

For security and privacy reasons, the names of people who are, or were, on the list would not be disclosed, except when authorized for specific purposes. Specifically, it would authorize certain entities to disclose and collect information to help the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness administer and enforce the act. For example, under the act, the Canada Border Services Agency would

be able to collect information related to air travellers who were coming to or leaving Canada, as well as screen them against the list.

● (1655)

The act would also authorize the minister to enter into written arrangements to share information with foreign states. Such disclosure, however, would always be subject to applicable Canadian law.

There are other safeguards that would respect the privacy of individuals and would give them a fair process to challenge the minister's decisions. For example, any listed person who has been denied the right to board an aircraft could apply within 60 days to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to be removed from the list. The minister would have 90 days, or a longer period agreed upon by the minister and the applicant, to review the case. If after this review the minister decided to keep the individual on the list, that individual could apply to the Federal Court for a review of the minister's decision.

Given the national security objectives behind this legislation, decisions made under the new authorities could involve sensitive information that, if disclosed, would be injurious to national security or endanger the safety of a person. Therefore, the legislation would define special streamlined procedures for judges to review decisions that relied on sensitive information, similar to the procedures that are used to review other national security programs, such as the terrorist entity listings under the Criminal Code.

Finally, let me highlight compliance and enforcement provisions.

For consistency with the existing regulatory framework for civil aviation, the bill would mirror the Minister of Transport's inspection and enforcement authorities under the Aeronautics Act. Contraventions of the new act, whether they relate to the duties of air carriers, the prohibition on disclosure of information, or the obligation for passengers to undergo screening, are all offences punishable on summary conviction. Contravening the clause related to obstruction can be punished either as an indictable offence or by means of summary conviction.

An individual who contravenes the provisions under the act could be fined up to \$5,000 or be liable to up to a one-year imprisonment term, or both. Meanwhile, a corporation that is convicted of an indictable offence is liable to a fine of up to \$500,000.

The proposed legislation would balance the need to address air transportation security and terrorist travel by air with safeguards that give individuals the right to administrative recourse and appeal. These amendments are also in line with the recent UN Security Council resolution on foreign terrorist fighters, aimed at stemming the flow of extremist travellers, as well as the measures being put in place by many of our international partners to address this threat.

Government Orders

The anti-terrorism act 2015 is an important step in expanding our tools to address extremist travellers who participate in terrorist activities, and I call on all members of this House to support it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we get closer to the dying minutes of debate on this particular piece of legislation, I would like to again highlight what I believe the government has really messed up on, which is the issue of parliamentary oversight.

I ask the member quite simply, when we have our Five Eyes partner countries, the United States, England, New Zealand, and Australia, all recognizing the importance of parliamentary oversight, all having in place parliamentary oversight, why it is that only the current Prime Minister and current Conservative government feel that parliamentary oversight is not necessary.

I would remind the member that the current Minister of Justice actually used to support parliamentary oversight. Why does the Conservative government stand alone in believing that parliamentary oversight is not necessary?

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I am really perplexed by the Liberal Party, and I continue to be. Remember, the Liberal Party is rooted in the belief of conscription if necessary but not necessarily conscription.

Here we see the Liberals again getting up in this House with regard to Bill C-51, ranting and raving and complaining against the bill, yet at the same time saying that Canadians should not worry, because they can read public opinion polls too and they are going to support it.

One of the Liberal Party members from a downtown riding—I do not recall which one exactly; Trinity—Spadina, I think—actually appeared at Toronto City Hall in a rally against Bill C-51.

My question to the Liberal Party is this. Which is it? Do you support the bill or do you not support the bill, or is this another typical Liberal ruse where you just kind of gauge public opinion and just go with the wind on this one?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair rather than directly to their colleagues.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I listened to the speech of one of my Conservative colleagues, and I am finding it increasingly difficult to not see it as propaganda. What would really get my attention is seeing a kernel of coherence.

My question is very simple. Given that the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness had its budget cut by a total of \$688 million in the last three years, and that the \$300 million or so that was presented to us in the last budget will be disbursed in 2017, how could this bill be anything but rhetoric if we do not have the means for what is being put forward?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, if that is not rhetoric, I do not know what is.

We on this side of the House know exactly what we are doing. Our foreign policy is based on principle.

The radical jihadists declared war on this country, Canada. If there is one thing we can count on terrorists to do, that is to keep their word. They said they are coming to the west to drink our blood. It was this House that went to debate over whether or not we should be sending our forces to Syria and Iraq to bomb ISIS positions. It is this side of the House that voted to send our brave men and women to Iraq and Syria to bomb ISIS positions.

We on this side of the House are protecting Canadians. That is a solemn oath we took and a guarantee we have given the Canadian people. We put their national security and the security of people here in Canada first and foremost, unlike the NDP members who cannot even utter the word “terrorist”.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, international jihadi terrorists recognize no border. If frustrated in their will to travel overseas to join their so-called caliphate, they will seek to commit acts of terrorism here in Canada.

We do not believe in exporting terrorism. Can the member expand on the tools this legislation would provide our law enforcement agencies to help them get the job done?

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, finally, this is an intelligent question.

I would say that this legislation is absolutely necessary. The world is not the same place it was decades ago. It is not the same world it was in 1970 when the Liberal Party brought about the biggest breach in civil liberties in the history of our country, when it imposed the War Measures Act.

Our government's job is to protect Canadians. We take that job very seriously. Bill C-51 would give the national security and law enforcement officials the tools and resources they need to protect Canadians here in Canada.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in debate on this important move by the government to do a number of things. One of the things it cites is that it is trying to take serious measures to deal with the terrorism threat in this country.

I was, frankly, struck by the testimony at committee of the Commissioner of the RCMP when he was asked repeatedly whether there is anything in this legislation that would have prevented the unfortunate incidents that took place in and around the House of Commons and in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu in October of last year, and he said no. He was also asked whether they had sufficient powers now to be able to properly enforce and properly protect Canadians, and he said yes.

Government Orders

What I heard repeated time and time again from experts at committee who raised a number of different concerns about this legislation—and I will get to those concerns—was the fact that part of the problem we are facing, whether it is the Canada Border Services Agency, whether it is the RCMP at our airports or their ability to surveil, or whether it is CSIS itself and its ability to carry out its responsibilities, a big part of the problem we are facing in this country is this. While the government likes to pat itself on the back for all of the tough-on-crime legislation it has introduced and all the rhetoric the Conservatives spout about making communities safer, what they in fact have done is the opposite, and they have done that through failing to properly fund these important public security agencies in our country.

We heard the Commissioner of the RCMP talk about how he has had to redeploy 600 officers from other duties—and the majority of the files, he testified, had to do with major crime—and assign them to the terrorism initiatives of this government. Let us not forget that this is on top of the 500 personnel that are to be cut from the RCMP this year as a result of the 2014-2015 budget.

Clearly, a big issue at play when it comes to the government fulfilling its responsibilities is that it is a responsibility we appreciate, we understand, and we agree with: to keep Canadians safe. That is our number one responsibility, but the government has been falling short in that respect because of the fact that it has been failing to fund those agencies properly. Whether it is ensuring, for example, that for cross-border travel or travel to other countries or from other countries to North America, the agencies responsible, whether they be CSIS, the RCMP, or the Canada Border Services Agency, just simply do not have the resources to properly do the job.

That is kind of at the heart of this issue, because the government has trotted out this legislation as being a response to the terrorism threat we are facing here in this country.

• (1705)

Yet we recognize at the outset that the government is failing to do enough now with its ability to enforce the laws and powers that already exist, without this legislation being brought into force.

I have heard from a lot of Canadians and from a lot of my constituents from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour about this bill. People are concerned about the intrusion of the government and its various agencies and departments into their personal lives. In essence, they would be mining their personal data as CSIS, with its new mandate, went about sifting through everything to try to find a particular threat.

People are concerned. We have already heard about personal data being released, metadata being released, by communications companies to government agencies. We have already heard about those intrusions into the privacy of Canadians, and this bill would be that level of intrusion on steroids.

Let me quickly go over some of the main issues.

This bill, a 62-page omnibus bill, would expand the mandate of CSIS without strengthening existing oversight mechanisms. We have had debate in this country about the mandate of CSIS. It was determined, after incidents when CSIS tended to overstep the boundaries from time to time, that it was important to limit CSIS to

the role of surveillance. If, through its surveillance activities, it had sufficient evidence that laws were being broken, and the RCMP needed to carry forward with an investigation, CSIS would then hand that information over to the RCMP. However, under this legislation, CSIS would be able to do both. CSIS would be able to continue the surveillance activities, the spying, and it would have the power, under this legislation, to disrupt. There has been some discussion as to what that would mean and who would be targeted.

It would make it easier to put people in preventative detention for longer periods. It would make it a crime to promote terrorism. It would allow police to seize terrorist propaganda. It would make it easier to share information between government departments. It would change the system for establishing a no-fly list. It would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Nothing is said about the current government actually being involved in counter-radicalization programs, which have already been seen to be effective.

There is a lot that can be said about this bill. A lot of my colleagues have been eloquent in their arguments as they presented, as have people in my constituency who have talked about why we should not support this piece of legislation. We should not commit to people by saying, “Do not worry. We will fix it when we are in government”. If one stands on a principle, then one has to stand on it and argue it. That is the way I will be voting as it relates to Bill C-51 on behalf of my constituents.

• (1710)

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

Earlier this afternoon there was a motion passed, by unanimous consent, that rather than moving to the question at 5:15, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands would be given 10 minutes to make a speech to the House. Subsequent to that, there will be five minutes of questions and comments. Subsequent to that, this House will move to the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

• (1715)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin, of course, by thanking all parties in this place and all members. If even one voice had said no, I would not have had this opportunity to speak to Bill C-51 at third reading. I am genuinely grateful for the generosity of spirit in accepting this as a motion by unanimous consent.

Having participated in the debates on Bill C-51 from the very beginning, and having been the first member of Parliament to declare firm opposition to the bill, I am enormously concerned that we have made such little progress in addressing those concerns.

Let me acknowledge at the outset that one of the first concerns I had was the use of the word “lawful” as a modifier for protests and actions in civil society. That word “lawful” has been removed, and that is a small improvement, but it is insufficient to deal with the dangers that are embedded in this act.

Government Orders

Sitting here today through third reading, I heard a great number of propositions from Conservative members of Parliament. I have no doubt that they believe those propositions in their speaking notes to be true, but they are consistently repeating fallacies that I would like to try to explain and deconstruct so that Canadians will understand why these repeated bromides are just not true.

The three fallacies I want to address in the time I have are the following. One notion is that information-sharing, which is part one of the bill, is designed to ensure that our security services, which are the RCMP, CSIS, Canada Border Services Agency, and CSEC, the agencies of policing and intelligence, share information with each other. That was put forward earlier today several times, and that, indeed, is something that must be done, but this bill does not do it.

The second fallacy is that there is judicial oversight in this bill, because judges are involved in one section. I want to deal with that one as well.

The other fallacy is that the terrorism and propaganda sections in the amendments to the Criminal Code in this omnibus bill would actually make it more likely that we could stop youth from being radicalized.

There are some things that are not in this bill, and I want to mention those, because I do not understand why, if the Conservative Party and administration were serious about avoiding radicalization, they would not have followed the example of the United Kingdom. Not everything the U.K. is doing in this area do I endorse. However, in December of last year, the U.K. came up with a very specific anti-terrorism bill, with proactive programs to go into schools and prisons to find those people at risk of radicalization and stop them, prevent them, dissuade them. We know that the horrific attacks recently in Europe were by people who were allegedly radicalized in prison. Why do we have nothing in Canada to deal with that?

On the other hand, and I will get to this by starting with my last point first in terms of fallacies, the fallacy that the provisions in the act to take terrorist propaganda off the Internet will in fact stop radicalization needs to be understood in the context of a legal analysis of the words that are used. In the section of the bill that deals with the Criminal Code and what I now call the thought-chill section in part three of the act, what it says is that this bill would deal with something called promoting terrorism “in general”, which is not a defined term. Terrorism and general propaganda would include any visual image or general language.

Legal experts have looked at this and are concerned about a couple of things. This business of getting things off the Internet is not brand new to Canadians. We have hate speech laws that take things off the Internet, and we have child pornography laws that take things off the Internet. In what way have we constructed these provisions on terrorism in general that are fundamentally different from what we did about hate speech and child pornography, which I think we would all agree we take very seriously? Those kinds of laws have statutory defences, and more significantly, those laws specifically exclude private conversations. This one does not.

A person could be arrested and go to jail for a private conversation, for discussing things that, in general, and it is very vague, could be seen to promote terrorism or might be reckless as to

whether they promoted terrorism or not. Legal experts are concerned that this chill provision would make it harder for a community to continue to converse with people who are at risk of radicalization to stop them, to argue with them, to say that their understanding of Quran is entirely wrong and that they need to talk about this.

• (1720)

By failing to exclude private conversations, we increase the likelihood that no one will reach out to that person, and we have no programs to deal with it.

The second fallacy, going backward, is the notion that we have judicial oversight. We have no judicial oversight in the bill. First, one needs to understand what oversight means. For this, I quote from a paper by the very dedicated law professors who took this bill on and have published hundreds of pages on it, Professor Craig Forcese and Kent Roach, who wrote the following:

“Review” and “oversight” are often confused. Oversight is a real-time (or close to real time) operational command and control strategy. Review is a retrospective performance audit....

We can say that SIRC provides review, although it has part-time employees and part-time members of the SIRC board and a very inadequate structure, but there is no oversight. We used to have an inspector general for CSIS. The inspector general for CSIS was done away with in omnibus Bill C-38 in spring of 2012.

The term “judicial oversight”, as used by members of the Conservative Party in this debate, is truly a perversion of reality. It is one of the most offensive sections of the whole bill. It is the notion in part 4 that CSIS agents with an operational role now, what Roach and Forcese describe as “kinetic” functions, would go from collecting the data in the information to taking up disruptive activities themselves. If they thought they were going to break a domestic law or violate the charter, they would go to a judge in a secret hearing and ask for permission to violate the charter. Do not take it from me. Every legal expert who testified before the committee said that this was outrageous and that no other government, and certainly none of our Five Eyes partners, allows their spy agencies to violate the Constitution through the simple expedient of going to a federal court judge in a secret hearing.

Earlier today, the parliamentary secretary for public safety ridiculed a speech from the official opposition when it pointed out that no one would be there. How could anyone be there, she asked.

Government Orders

That brings me to a brief from a group that was excluded from giving testimony to the committee, the special advocates. Special advocates are security cleared lawyers who operate in secret hearings, usually on security matters, to ensure that the public interest is protected. These experts who were not heard before committee did submit written evidence urging that the bill be changed to ensure that we do not have secret hearings with no one present other than the minister and CSIS.

This kind of secret hearing, by the way, is particularly egregious, because it is very unlikely to ever be subjected to judicial challenge. It would be hard to ever find out what happened in a secret hearing. It would not come before the Supreme Court of Canada and be struck down. Establishing standing, for instance, for a civil liberties organization to challenge this would be nearly impossible. That is why my position is so firm that the bill must be repealed if it should ever pass.

The last fallacy is the really large one. It is part 1, about information-sharing making us safer. First, another witness who was not allowed to testify was the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, Daniel Therrien. He was very clear. He said that he was:

...concerned with the breadth of the new authorities to be conferred by the proposed new Security of Canada Information Sharing Act. This Act would seemingly allow departments and agencies to share the personal information of all individuals, including ordinary Canadians who may not be suspected of terrorist activities....

This is an important point. However, what the information-sharing section does not do, which is critical if we want safety, if we want to ensure that Air India does not happen again, is ensure that the spy agencies and the policing agencies are talking to each other so that they are not letting critical information be hoarded.

By the way, Joe Fogarty, a U.K. expert in security, testified before the Senate about recent examples, on the public record, where CSIS found out that the RCMP was tracking the wrong people and decided not to tell it, or where CSIS found out there was a training camp for terrorists and decided not to tell the RCMP. We need to ensure that these agencies share the information.

Part 1 of the bill would allow agencies of government to share information about individual Canadians, but there is no requirement and no pinnacle control to ensure that an RCMP operation tracking terrorists has information and the benefit of information from CSIS. As a structural matter, experts, from John Major, who was the chair of the Air India inquiry, to former heads of CSIS and former heads of SIRC, have all urged that the bill not be passed as is.

It is not too late. I ask my colleagues to vote no to Bill C-51.

• (1725)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments and the assessment she has made on the bill. Previously I spoke in the House after the member for Vancouver Quadra gave her remarks saying that when I was 21 years old and voted in 1968, I stressed I did not vote for Pierre Trudeau, but later when the Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into place, I really respected the effort that was made to bring that to Canada.

At this juncture, when we have four former prime ministers saying no to the bill, when we have 100 law professors and lawyers from

across the country saying that this bill is a shambles and should not be proceeded with at all, the warnings of court challenges and a number of things, would the member agree with me that this perhaps has gone much further than even the Conservative members understand in the damage it could potentially do to Canadians?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I do indeed agree. I would like to point out to members, as I did not have time in a 10-minute speech, but so often we have heard that those of us on this side of the House who oppose Bill C-51 and oppose it passionately somehow are ideologically opposed to the agenda or come from a place where we have never agreed with the Conservatives ever. However, I remind them of the editorial pages of the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*, articles and columns by people whether it is Rex Murphy or Conrad Black which say that if we do not stop this bill, we will wake up in an unrecognizable despotism. The opposition to the bill is widespread, non-ideological and is based on the fact that the bill is badly drafted and will make Canada a less safe place.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague. I want to commend her for remarks.

The member made reference to the absence of judicial oversight. Is there any oversight capacity in this legislation?

The second question has to do with the provision regarding the seizure of terrorist propaganda. There is an offence just before that in the Criminal Code which criminalizes the promotion and advocacy of terrorist acts. I ask the member whether that also seeks to criminalize private conversations, et cetera.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has about a minute and 15 seconds.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief and I appreciate the questions from my hon. colleague from Mount Royal.

First of all, is there any oversight in the bill? It is a short answer, no. There is no oversight in the bill. We have oversight again being specific operational knowledge of what agencies are doing. By the way, there is no supervisory agency for the Canada Border Services Agency. The RCMP does have a review agency, but no oversight. CSIS has review, but no oversight. CSEC has no oversight. Now we are giving CSIS brand new powers that could interfere with and actually derail RCMP operations with no oversight. As one security expert who testified before the Senate recently said, we will be "sitting on top of a tragedy waiting to happen".

The second question is very different. The section that we find on page 26 of Bill C-51, proposed section 83.221, as amended, changes very definitely what propaganda is, what terrorist propaganda is. We have now enough law and jurisprudence to understand the meaning of the word “terrorism”. It is well defined. There is no definition provided for this new term “terrorism in general”. Neither is there any adequate explanation because none was offered at all as to why private conversations are not excluded. Nor does it make sense to say that terrorist propaganda means any writings, signs, visual representation or audio recording that promotes terrorist offences in general. No one will know how to operationalize this act and as a result, it could actually allow people to be prevented from stopping someone from engaging in terrorist activity.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion for third reading of Bill C-51 are deemed put and the recorded division is deemed to have been demanded and deferred until Wednesday, May 6, 2015, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

• (1730)

[English]

It being 5:32 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEMENTIA ACT

The House resumed from March 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-356, an act respecting a national strategy for dementia, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to participate in the debate on Bill C-356, an act respecting a national strategy for dementia.

I want to begin by commending my hon. colleague, the member for Nickel Belt, for bringing this important issue before the House. The member has spoken about his family's personal connection to Alzheimer's, and we can all acknowledge the good work he has done to bring attention to what is a very pressing health issue for many Canadians.

Dementia is not a normal part of aging. It knows no social, economic, ethnic, or geographical boundaries. The effects of dementia are wide-reaching, affecting those diagnosed with it, their families, friends, and all of our communities.

While evidence about the causes of dementia is limited, we are learning that risks may be reduced through early diagnosis and by promoting healthy living. Research has pointed to possible risk factors, such as physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, environmental, genetic and gender factors, as well as traumatic brain injury. Some of these possible risk factors are things we can change in our lifestyles, such as physical inactivity and unhealthy eating. This is one of the

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reasons that our government has been so focused on encouraging healthy, active lifestyles.

No family should have to lose a parent or another loved one to a terrible disease like Alzheimer's, so it is important we are working to raise awareness of these things as the research continues to evolve. That said, we know that we cannot be focused on prevention alone. We must also consider those who have already received the devastating diagnosis of dementia. We must prepare for the future while also providing support for those currently living with this disease.

Over the past year and a half, we have seen unprecedented international attention focused on dementia. Last fall, the Government of Canada co-hosted the Canada-France Global Dementia Legacy Event. This event was built upon the momentum that began with our Minister of Health's participation in the 2013 G8 dementia summit. The focus of the legacy event was on developing new approaches to research, working with both the public and private sectors to bring all efforts together.

It was at this event that the Minister of Health announced work under way with the Alzheimer Society of Canada to implement a program called dementia friends Canada across our country. I would like to provide some further details on this program as it is an international model that is proving to be very successful and is highly supported by key stakeholders.

This unique program was originally launched in Japan as Dementia Supporters and more recently in the United Kingdom as Dementia Friends.

The idea behind the program is a community-based awareness and training program that would help to build dementia-friendly communities.

For individuals living with dementia, simple routine tasks such as shopping for groceries or paying bills become increasingly challenging over time. These individuals need understanding and patience. People living with dementia want to carry on with their daily lives and feel included in their communities, but they may need a bit of help and sometimes may not know how to ask. They also need support so they can continue to be engaged in their communities comfortably and confidently.

We believe that dementia friends Canada would help individuals, communities, and businesses better understand the needs of those living with dementia in order to take action and make a difference in their quality of life. It would empower communities, large and small, to create a positive change.

Through this program, the government would support those living with dementia today by removing the stigma surrounding this devastating disease and creating a culture of understanding, tolerance, and patience.

I am sure we can all agree that supporting these attributes is essential in helping those living with dementia stay connected to their communities.

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Members may be interested to know that when the United Kingdom launched its Dementia Friends program just one year ago, it set a goal of one million dementia friends. Becoming a dementia friend is not as simple as a Facebook click. These one million residents of the U.K. have taken training to better understand the needs of people living with dementia and have committed to supporting them in the community.

The U.K. program is working to go even beyond one million registered participants and has now set a new goal of three million dementia friends by 2020. I know that Canadians will be just as excited to make a real difference for those here at home when we are able to bring this program to Canada.

• (1735)

Through a partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Canada, our government is adapting the United Kingdom's successful initiative to the Canadian context, and we would implement our dementia friends Canada program nationally. As part of this program, we are developing a national website which would provide information on dementia, suggest simple ways people can help someone living with dementia, and encourage Canadians to sign up to become dementia friends.

Canadians of all ages would be able to turn their new understanding into action. By learning a bit more about what it would be like to live with dementia and what they can do to help, Canadians would be able to better support those living with the disease.

Dementia champions are another important component to this program. These volunteers would be trained and equipped with resources to answer people's questions about dementia, suggest sources for further information, and support and provide training to dementia friends.

We have heard today about the alarming rate at which dementia is affecting Canadians and we know that sadly over time that rate will increase. It can make a huge difference to the people living with this disease if the people around them know what dementia is and how it may be affecting them. While we remain committed to research on prevention and a cure so that fewer Canadians ever have to struggle with this disease in the long run, I am proud we are also taking real action to make a difference for those who need our help here and now. I believe that dementia friends Canada would complement the significant investments our government is making in research.

I hope that my remarks today demonstrate the commitment of our government in taking action to make a difference for Canadians and their families. As I am sure members are already well aware, our government is already committed to developing a national dementia plan. In fact, it was included in this year's economic action plan, and we will continue to work with the provinces and territories to do exactly that.

When it comes to research, we have been taking undeniable leadership through our participation in G8 and World Health Organization efforts. We have been supporting Canadian expertise focused ultimately on finding a cure, and would also be taking real action to better support those who are living with the disease.

Importantly, all of these activities have been done while respecting provincial and territorial jurisdiction over health care. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I know that the member for Nickel Belt is well intentioned with this bill, but unfortunately, it does infringe on provincial jurisdiction in a number of areas. I think it would be unfortunate to have federal legislation interfere in an area where we already have such strong co-operation.

Members have also mentioned a motion which was brought forward by my colleague, the member for Huron—Bruce. I look forward to debate on that motion, as it calls on the government to take strong action while respecting the jurisdiction of the provinces over health care delivery.

It is clear that Canadians living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia need our support. Our government recognizes this and has taken a number of steps already. We are committed to doing even more through the dementia friends program and our co-operative work with the provinces on a national plan. We will get the job done, working within our federal role.

• (1740)

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today in support of Bill C-356, An Act respecting a National Strategy for Dementia.

The Liberals have long called for federal leadership in establishing a pan-Canadian dementia strategy and we believe the federal government must work with the provinces to establish such a strategy.

Families throughout our country are having to deal with loved ones who have dementia and they need our help and our support. They need that national strategy so they can cope, and this private member's bill aims to do that.

According to the Alzheimer Society of Canada, in 2011, 747,000 Canadians were living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. That means, 14.9% of Canadians 65 and older were living with cognitive impairment. Without intervention, the society projects that figure will increase to 1.4 million Canadians by 2031.

The demographic population of Newfoundland and Labrador is aging at a faster rate than the rest of Canada, which means this increase will hit my home province particularly hard. In 2011, 16% of the population was 65 years or older, a number expected to increase to 20% by 2016. Unfortunately, as the age of the population increases, research has shown that the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia does as well.

The Canadian Medical Association raised this issue in its 2013 paper, "Toward a Dementia Strategy for Canada". It said:

Given the terrible toll that dementia currently takes on Canadians and their health care, and given the certainty that this toll will grow more severe in coming decades, the CMA believes that it is vital for Canada to develop a focused strategy to address it.

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Clearly this is a pressing problem requiring urgent action. Yet, despite pledging in 2013 to find a cure or treatment for Alzheimer's by 2025, we remain one of the only G7 countries without a strategy. Australia, Norway, the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom all have national strategies to address this growing problem, but Canada does not. This is unacceptable, especially given our aging population.

Alzheimer's disease puts enormous emotional stress on millions of families in Canada. One in five Canadians 45 and older provide some sort of care to seniors living with long-term health problems. In 2011, that amounted to 444 million unpaid hours spent by family caregivers looking after someone with cognitive impairment such as dementia.

From an economic perspective, this amounts to \$11 billion in lost income and a loss of 227,760 full-time equivalent employees in the Canadian workforce. The impact to the Canadian economy is matched only by the enormous strain on those family members who provide care for their loved ones.

The emotional stress caregivers face was highlighted in a recent report by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, as well as a report from the World Health Organization, which stated that between 15% and 32% of caregivers would experience depression and up to 75% would develop psychological illnesses as a result of caring for others. These family members are doing what they can, but they need our help.

One of the major reasons patients end up in long-term care is because their caregivers are simply overwhelmed. According to Dr. Roger Butler of Memorial University Faculty of Medicine, "If you've got a well-educated, trained caregiver feeling supported in their community they won't burn out as quickly as if they're left to their own devices."

● (1745)

A comprehensive strategy that supports caregivers is essential for the well-being of both the patient and the caregiver. A truly comprehensive pan-Canadian dementia strategy would not only have a positive impact on patients and their families, but delaying onset of Alzheimer's by two years could save our health care system \$219 billion over a 30 year period.

Patients with dementia often occupy acute care hospital beds, while waiting for placement at long-term care facilities. This only serves to exacerbate the problem of waiting lists and increased health care costs. Without action, this problem will continue to grow.

During the 2011 federal election, the Liberal Party of Canada laid out a clear, comprehensive dementia strategy, including support for research, families, patients and communities. The plan called for increased funding for research to target new treatments and therapy, and to accelerate our progress in understanding, treating and preventing brain diseases.

It called for increased awareness, education and prevention programs to support families and combat the social stigma of dementia. It also called for stronger support for home and long-term care, as well as protection of income security for families struggling to cope with the cost of caring for a loved one with dementia.

Another key element of that strategy was the introduction of legislation that would prohibit denial of life, mortgage and disability insurance, and rejected employment based on genetic testing that showed risk of future illnesses.

Canada is the only G7 country without legal restrictions on access to genetic test results. This forces many Canadians to make an impossible choice: obtain genetic testing results for illnesses, including Alzheimer's, and face discrimination, or avoid testing and taking steps that could prevent or mitigate illness in the hope of obtaining things like life insurance.

This regulatory void perversely promotes the avoidance of potentially life-saving tests. Action is needed urgently, yet despite pledging action in the 2013 throne speech, the only action the Conservative government has taken is to block efforts on this front in the Senate.

Despite government inaction, individual Canadians are working together to develop treatment and prevention protocols and to improve the lives of patients and their families.

This year, volunteers across Newfoundland and Labrador will be participating in seven "Walks for Alzheimer's" to raise money for support programs and services for those living with dementia in their communities.

Families are also helping other families by participating in province-wide family support groups, accessible by phone and Skype, reducing isolation and providing much-needed support to caregivers in remote communities like those in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's. This is one way of ensuring that families are able to cope. We need to ensure more of that happens.

The thing is that it needs to be part of a national strategy so it is not left to those who are caregivers to do things to help those who they and others love who are hit with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

I take pleasure in raising awareness of the important work being done on dementia treatment and prevention in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Dr. Anne Sclater, professor of medicine at Memorial University, has done incredible work on the development of provincial strategies on healthy aging and Alzheimer's disease, as well as on the prevention of elder abuse.

Elders with dementia have the highest incident of mistreatment and abuse in long term care, and the prevention of this sort of terrible abuse is a topic on which Dr. Roger Butler, associate professor of family medicine at Memorial University of Newfoundland, has worked extensively. He is also currently engaged in a new project using telegerontology as a novel approach to optimize health and safety among people with dementia in Newfoundland and Labrador. For his work as a teacher, family physician and on behalf of the Alzheimer's Society, he was recognized by the College of Family Physicians of Canada as Newfoundland and Labrador's family physician for the year in 2013.

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Drs. Sclater and Butler, along with some of their colleagues throughout the country, are making incredible progress on this important and increasingly prevalent issue. Imagine what they could do with more resources and support.

•(1750)

What we need is coordinated support from the top. Federal leadership is needed to develop a truly pan-Canadian dementia strategy to support the important work of these individual researchers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to speak to the bill introduced by my colleague from Nickel Belt, which seeks to establish a national strategy for dementia. This is particularly important for me as a nurse. I believe that this bill reflects a reality that we will have to face.

In order to understand how vitally important it is to have a national strategy for dementia, we need to understand that the population is aging. The number of Canadians with dementia is growing in tandem with the growing number of seniors. Although there is such a thing as early onset dementia, this disease mainly affects the elderly.

Right now in Canada, 740,000 people have Alzheimer's or a dementia-related disease. However, by 2031, this figure is expected to double to 1.4 million Canadians. In my region of Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 15.8% of the population was 65 or older in 2013. In 2031, 28.8% of the population will fall into that age category. Obviously, Alzheimer's and other types of dementia will be more widespread in a region like mine. It is therefore vital that we combine our efforts to develop a strategy to address this phenomenon, since it will take up a large share of regional health budgets and will become a growing concern for regional authorities.

Furthermore, it is important to better recognize the importance of prevention in order to identify early symptoms and intervene quickly. A strategy for dementia should be based on maintaining brain health and on preventing the illness among those who are particularly susceptible to it. Many studies have shown that some memory exercises can slow the disease's progression. However, if we wait too long to intervene such measures are not as effective.

The health system currently does not have the resources required to address this phenomenon. The problem could become overwhelming if we do not change our approach and if the federal government continues to neglect provincial transfers.

Direct and indirect medical expenses, such as the loss of income, currently total \$33 billion a year. This could rise to \$293 billion a year. We must create an integrated health system where we implement best practices to ensure that we treat these illnesses and provide community support.

The phenomenon of dementia is unique because those who suffer from this disease are primarily looked after by family caregivers. In 2011, family caregivers spent 444 million unpaid working hours providing care. This translates to \$11 billion in lost income, or the equivalent of 227,760 full-time employees. It is therefore vital, when considering a national dementia strategy, to consider the circum-

stances of family caregivers. In many cases, dementia is an illness that develops slowly. People remain in their surrounding environment for a very long time.

•(1755)

The person's family members end up having to spend more and more time keeping him or her healthy and safe in his or her environment. This is extremely exhausting. Spouses can easily spend 10 to 15 years caring for a sick loved one, and regularly do, before health problems get too serious for them to handle. We need to make sure that family caregivers can keep doing this job and that they get support from their community to help their loved ones.

What people need when they are trying to help their loved ones, and what they often lack, is access to respite services. Caregivers often get worn out. Having someone who can take over every now and then for a day or a weekend enables caregivers to keep doing their amazing work caring for people with dementia.

The strategy must include mechanisms to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge about the disease and the skills to deal with it. This means that people have to share information. The purpose of a national strategy is to share information. People should not be working in isolation. We have to find a way to make sure that everything we learn, everything that might be useful, such as best practices, is communicated to people struggling with the same problems. It is essential for people to have ways to talk to each other. The goal is not to step in for the provinces but to ensure that communication channels remain open and people work together. Real collaboration needs to happen so that people can share best practices. We have to make sure that nursing staff, doctors and other professionals have the right knowledge and skills to work with people with dementia and provide them with quality care that is appropriate for their situation.

They are often forgotten, but the volunteers who work in this field need to be able to understand the reality of a person living with dementia. It is not always an easy thing to do. There are certain situations that are very difficult to go through on a daily basis and it is hard to know how to intervene. The volunteers who work at these centres must have access to the knowledge and skills they need to properly understand the reality of the field they have chosen to work in.

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As far as research is concerned, we have extraordinary Canadian researchers, but we could also form international partnerships to further our knowledge. In my opinion, the quality of daily life for people with dementia is an essential area of research. Lately, a lot of research has been done on daily life. In Quebec at least, there has been a shift from a very medically based approach to one focusing on the daily experience of dementia sufferers. The goal is for the transfer to long-term care centres to go as smoothly as possible. For that to happen, the person with dementia needs to create reference points. A lot of advances have been made because of these various approaches that focus on the quality of life and ways of providing care and intervention. Not only is this helping those living with dementia to live much more happily, but it is also enabling the families to be an integral part of the care process.

There is a lot to do. With the challenges this will present in the coming years, it is essential to share information in order to adopt an effective national strategy for dementia.

● (1800)

[English]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the subject of dementia and the private member's bill from the hon. member for Nickel Belt. We can all acknowledge that the member has been doing good work to raise awareness of the important issues faced by Canadians with Alzheimer's or other dementias.

Dementia poses a significant challenge to the health of Canadians. We probably all have a personal story about the impact and burden dementia can have on the individuals and families who are affected by it. Therefore, I want to start by sharing some of what we know about this disease.

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia can affect many aspects of an individual's life. Most often, symptoms include loss of memory, impaired judgment and reasoning, changes in mood and behaviour, and impaired ability to communicate. Over time, individuals living with these conditions become unable to perform the activities of daily living that so many of us take for granted. Although medications can sometimes slow down or delay dementia, there is no cure. There is also a limited understanding of the causes of dementia. However, early research is pointing to possible risk factors such as physical inactivity; unhealthy diets; environmental, genetic, and gender factors; and traumatic brain injury.

I would also like to update the House on a number of the activities that our government has been taking since we had the first hour of debate. In March, the government participated in the World Health Organization's Ministerial Conference on Global Action Against Dementia in Geneva, Switzerland. This conference followed the 2013 G8 summit on dementia, where Canada also participated and where ministers made a number of commitments to address the challenges of dementia. This included a commitment to working toward identifying a cure for dementia by 2025. At the most recent conference in Geneva, these commitments were reinforced and Canada was among 80 countries that adopted a call to action to advance efforts on dementia and maintain it as a priority issue on national and international agendas. Discussions are currently under way on how to build on and sustain the momentum that has been

generated over the past year and a half to meet the challenges of dementia.

Within Canada, there have been several investments to address dementia at the national level. As members will know, a primary federal role in regard to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias is supporting research. Economic action plan 2015 would do exactly that. Our government would provide up to \$42 million over five years, starting in 2015-2016, to Baycrest Health Sciences to support the establishment of the Canadian centre for aging and brain health innovation. Funding for the centre includes \$32 million in support from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, and it will support new research and the development of products and services to support brain health and aging. This is the latest in a series of government investments in dementia-related research.

Also, the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging was launched in September 2014. This initiative is working on transformative research ideas to improve the lives of Canadians living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. It is supported with government funding of \$22.6 million, with an additional \$9.9 million over five years from a group of external public and private partners. Research is also being conducted at the international level.

As a global leader, our government is working with international partners on global dementia efforts through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The research goals are to prevent or delay the onset and progression of the disease, improve the quality of life for those afflicted and their caregivers, improve access to quality care, and enable the care system to deal effectively with the rising number of affected individuals.

● (1805)

Our government is also supporting projects to make sure our experts have the latest information on how this disease is affecting Canadians. A national population study was just completed last year so that we have up-to-date monitoring of who is affected and what care they require.

There are a lot of activities already under way at the federal level in terms of research, surveillance, and international leadership toward a cure. However, when we get into a discussion about health care, we always need to remain mindful of our partners, as laid out by the Constitution. The provinces and territories are responsible for the delivery of health care, and we need to ensure we are working with them in a co-operative way.

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When it comes to this kind of co-operation, our government has been driving the agenda. At the last meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of health, our federal minister began a discussion with all of her counterparts regarding a national dementia plan. In fact, she was able to secure an agreement to begin working on a pan-Canadian dementia strategy. Since that meeting, the government has worked with its partners to continue making progress. The provinces and territories have expressed their support for federal research to advance policy development on dementia, while they are leading work on assessing best practices through the Council of the Federation. An update on these efforts will be presented to the health ministers for consideration and further direction at their next meetings.

As much as I know that the member for Nickel Belt was well intentioned in bringing forward this bill, to a large extent it has been overtaken by events. The key accomplishment of it is to establish a national strategy for dementia, and our government has already begun to work on doing exactly that. In fact, this commitment is also included in economic action plan 2015. There is no planning document more important than the budget, so Canadians can be confident that we are working to get this done.

I also think it is important to point out the realities of private members' legislation at the stage in this calendar. As I am sure the member knows well, private members' bills have quite a long process to undergo before they make it through royal assent and become law. This bill would still have to be reviewed at committee, be scheduled for third reading in the House, and then be referred to the other place so its members can go through the entire process again from first to third reading. Most members in the House would agree that this is quite a lot of hurdles for a bill, with only a few sitting weeks remaining.

That is why I was happy to see the hon. member for Huron—Bruce bring forward a motion of his own, Motion No. 575, which also calls on the government to take strong actions to tackle the issues of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. I know that the government is carefully reviewing this motion, and I look forward to seeing it debated in this place. As we all know, motions can be passed much more quickly than bills. Motion No. 575 is one way that Parliament could take real action and call on the government to bring about changes that would work to improve the lives of Canadians with dementia. At the end of the day, our constituents want real results and real action to address this important issue.

I am pleased that our government has accomplished so much already, and I know we will continue working hard for all Canadians who have been affected by dementia.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to support Bill C-356, an act respecting a national strategy for dementia, introduced by the member of Parliament for Nickel Belt.

This is proof that the NDP is standing for our future. Right now, the increased cases of dementia among older Canadians is having a huge impact in Canada. Our current system needs support if it is going to grapple with the social, health and economic impacts of dementia, which affect patients, their caregivers and their communities.

We know this is a growing crisis because if we do not develop a comprehensive set of supports to address this issue now, it will then be 10 times worse as the baby boomer generation enters the senior years.

I remember being a delegate at the 2012 NDP convention, and our delegates passed a resolution calling for a national dementia strategy. We found strong support among organized labour, seniors and our NDP members in electoral districts across the country.

Their interest is personal, coming from knowing someone who is living with the disease or a caregiver who is caring for a loved one with the disease. We introduced Bill C-356 in late 2011. Since then, over 75 petitions supporting this idea have been tabled here in Parliament. Over 300 municipalities have passed supporting resolutions.

There is strong support from seniors, health care, labour, faith and many other networks. A national dementia strategy also links well to the NDP seniors strategy. Our seniors need our support, especially when dementia makes them vulnerable and disoriented, and in need of care.

According to the benchmark study, *Rising Tide* by the Alzheimer Society of Canada, the number of Canadians living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia now stands at 747,000 and will double to 1.5 million by 2031.

Canada's health care system is ill equipped to deal with the staggering costs. The combined direct medical and indirect lost earnings costs of dementia total \$33 billion per year. By 2040, this figure will skyrocket to \$293 billion per year. Pressures on family caregivers continue to mount.

In 2011, family caregivers spent 444 million unpaid hours per year looking after someone with dementia, representing \$11 billion in lost income and 227,760 full-time equivalent employees in the work force. By 2040, they will be devoting a staggering 1.2 billion unpaid hours per year. Lost in those numbers, perhaps, is the real human face of the disease, the moms, dads, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbours and work colleagues. While an elderly face typifies most people living and dealing with dementia, 15% of all who are living with Alzheimer's or related dementia diseases are actually under 60 years old. Dementia cuts across every demographic in our communities.

I want to share an example. Matt Dineen, who is 44, is a Catholic high school teacher in Ottawa whose wife, Lisa, 45, is already in secure long-term care with frontal-temporal dementia. Matt is helped by grandparents and siblings in looking after the three children he has with Lisa.

We need increased support for informal caregivers. Caregivers need to be recognized as individuals with rights to their own services and supports. This could take several forms. On financial support, the non-refundable family caregiver tax credit of up to \$300 a year introduced in 2011 is really not enough. This does not adequately reimburse the cost of a caregiver's time, which studies have shown is much higher.

Programs are needed to relieve the stress experienced by caregivers. This can include education and skill-building, and the provision of respite care and other support services for the caregivers.

I want to read an account from Tanya Levesque, who lives here in Ottawa, which reflects the experience of many caregivers in Canada. Ms. Levesque states, "We need a national dementia plan to help caregivers. Following is a list of financial barriers I have experienced during my journey as my mother's caregiver: Unable to access my EI benefits; I've been unable to qualify for social assistance; unable to claim the caregiver amount on my income tax, since my mother's net income is a few thousand more than what is listed; lack of subsidies for expenses which keep increasing (i.e. property tax, parking fees at hospitals for appointments, gas for travelling to appointments, hydro, water and sewage fees ... etc); I've changed my eating habits to save money, due to the increased cost of food, so my mother can eat well; and because of a lack of future job security, my retirement security is in question, I can't save, because I've chosen to care for my mother, who took care of me. Other difficulties I've encountered: No one-stop shop for information; lack of education of front line emergency room workers regarding the difficulty of long waiting times for a person with dementia; lack of funding for organizations that provide Day Program services i.e. not being able to provide various activities to clients due to associated costs (i.e. pet therapy). I not only provide love, a peaceful environment, stability and familiarity to my mother - who has now stabilized with her disease - I also provide the government with health care cost savings.

● (1810)

She is clearly doing a lot for our community by helping her mother.

Supporting a national condition-specific strategy is something I think that we should look into for dementia. It is not a new thing. It is not a new idea for the federal government. It is just an idea that the Conservative government is actually really dragging its feet on.

The Canadian diabetes strategy, for example, supports collaborating and developing community models to raise awareness, invest in tools and share information.

The Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, in 2011, received a renewal of funding totalling \$250 million over five years. CPAC is implementing a coordinated, comprehensive approach to managing cancer care in Canada.

Using the Canadian heart health strategy and action plan as a guide, Canada is addressing cardiovascular disease through investments in health promotion and disease prevention.

Clearly, we know how to do this. It has been established. Dementia should be a disease, a condition for which we can have a specific strategy nationally.

In 2007, the Government of Canada established the Mental Health Commission by providing \$130 million over 10 years, with a mandate to facilitate the development of a national mental health strategy.

Instead of a national strategy, what we are seeing is that the Conservative government has proposed research.

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As important as research is, it is not the same as the comprehensive approach that the bill would promote: help for patients, caregivers, the dementia workforce; early diagnoses and prevention; and a continuum of care for people in their homes, in the community and in formal care.

The national dementia strategy proposed by my colleague from Nickel Belt, in Bill C-356, would provide leadership from Parliament that would work with and respect the lead jurisdiction for health care delivery for the provinces and territories; increase funding for research into all aspects of dementia; promote earlier diagnosis and intervention; strengthen the integration of primary, home and community care; enhance skills and training of the dementia workforce; and recognize the need and improve support for caregivers.

We respect that provinces and territories have jurisdiction over health care delivery; however, municipalities, patients and caregivers are calling upon Ottawa to show some leadership. Ottawa needs to take the lead on a pan-Canadian dementia strategy that could immediately help millions of Canadians affected by Alzheimer's and related dementia diseases: the patients, families, caregivers and the dementia workforce. This would free scarce acute-care beds in hospitals and help caregivers, who often must give up their work in order to care for loved ones.

I shared the example of Ms. Levesque with members earlier.

Also, Mimi Lowi-Young, the CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Canada, stated the following:

In a recent Nanos survey, 83% of Canadians reported they believe Canada needs a national dementia plan. As our population ages, Canadians will be at an increased risk of developing dementia or caring for someone with it. Everyone owns this disease.

The approach we're proposing has worked for the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. It can work for dementia and ensure that we get the best return on investment and available resources.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP, and the Canadian Medical Association both echo the sentiment of Ms. Lowi-Young.

In conclusion, instead of putting forward a non-binding motion, Motion No. 575, the government brought forward that would not lead to a study in committee and support research when our country is actually calling out for a plan, a real plan, a strategy, the government needs to really take action to build a national strategy for dementia and support Bill C-356 proposed by my colleague from Nickel Belt.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

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I must inform the hon. member for Trois-Rivières that he has only six minutes for his speech so that the member for Nickel Belt can have his right of reply.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this discussion, but I find it unfortunate that I have so little time to speak about such an important issue.

Obviously there are many issues where partisanship should be set aside so that a broad consensus can be reached. Clearly, one of those issues is dementia and treatment for those who are living with one form or another of this disease. For that reason, I am proud to be part of this discussion and to support Bill C-356, which was introduced by my colleague from Nickel Belt.

I wanted to provide some background and statistics to show how serious this situation is, but since I already know that I will not have enough time, I would like to instead focus on something extraordinary that was achieved in my riding of Trois-Rivières and that has now spread outside the riding, outside Quebec and even outside Canada. The knowledge and skills developed by Maison Carpe Diem, under the direction of Nicole Poirier, have made this organization an international source of expertise. Clearly, the national strategy that my colleague wants to establish with his bill could help Maison Carpe Diem and this organization could use its expertise to help with this strategy.

This organization, known as Carpe Diem, comprises a home and a foundation. My colleagues probably remember the well-known film *Dead Poets Society*, which popularized this expression. Carpe diem is usually translated as “seize the day”, in other words, seize the present moment and make the best of it. With its home and its foundation, the organization is a perfect example of the efforts that the Trois-Rivières community has already devoted to supporting and helping people living with Alzheimer's.

Maison Carpe Diem's mission is to provide services and resources tailored to the specific needs of people with Alzheimer's disease and their loved ones. Maison Carpe Diem has decided to take a bold, innovative approach. The organization realizes that research results are rarely conclusive. That is not to take anything away from the importance of research and the need for investments in research, but simply to say that from the moment a study begins until conclusive results are reached, it is important to find ways to make life bearable for those living with this disease. With that in mind, members and administrators at Maison Carpe Diem decided to focus their approach on supporting patients and their families during these difficult times.

The approach taken by Maison Carpe Diem is so effective because of its perspective on those living with this disease. More specifically, the staff uses language in such a way as to ensure that residents there do not feel like simple patients. Instead of defining them as patients or clients, the staff creates an environment in which people living with this disease are able to feel comfortable and feel at home. This approach is original in that Maison Carpe Diem views and addresses this disease from a social perspective. Internationally renowned neurologists have validated the methods used by this organization.

On February 12, 2015, a conference focusing on supporting people with Alzheimer's was held at the Trois-Rivières conference centre. More than 400 people attended, including foreign scientists

who are interested in the approach taken by the staff at Maison Carpe Diem. The founder of this organization, Nicole Poirier, drew the interest of participants because of her novel approach to the disease. The organization takes an overall perspective that helps staff identify the different aspects of Alzheimer's and that focuses on both the disease and the person living with it. This organization and its approach are now seen as a model, both within the grassroots movement and in the public health network.

What I want to say is that by being part of a national strategy, this organization could easily share its best practices and more effectively assist those suffering from dementia and their family members. My hope is that a national strategy will lead to an increase in the number of organizations like the one in my riding across the country and around the world. Furthermore, public health networks could further benefit from this expertise and share what they learn with their partners.

● (1820)

I was going to cite some statistics, but it seems to me that 100% is the most convincing one.

In my opinion, at some point, when we cannot remember an expression we want to use, 100% of us will wonder if that is the onset of Alzheimer's. Even though we often joke about it, these words are always on our lips.

I will conclude with a quote from the website of Maison Carpe Diem, the organization I spoke about:

If Alzheimer's is marked by forgetfulness, the discussion around it often forgets about those most concerned, the people suffering from it.

● (1825)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nickel Belt will have five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for my closing remarks I would like to read parts of two letters. The first one was sent to the *Hill Times* by Matthew Dineen, who writes:

As Canadian delegates left for the G8 Summit on Dementia in England in late 2013, I made the following comment concerning our country's lack of a national dementia plan: “We must act. A national dementia strategy is imperative for Lisa, Justin, Rebecca, Peter and so many others.” (The *Hill Times*, Dec. 9, 2013). A little over a year later, as my 46-year old wife's frontotemporal dementia condition continues to advance, my message has become far more urgent for her, our children, and millions of Canadians.

Why?

Three weeks ago, the Conservative government announced it opposes Bill C-356, a bill for a national dementia strategy introduced by NDP MP [for Nickel Belt]. It is concrete legislation that, if passed, will mandate action for a national plan. Largely ignored in the mainstream media, this government decision is bound to harm aging Canadians and their caregivers unless enough Conservative MPs do the right thing and support this private member's bill.

I remain hopeful this can happen.

On March 13, [the MP for Nickel Belt] noted in second reading debate that an agreement was in place to pass the bill with Conservative support, given the NDP had accepted in discussions the government's proposed amendments.

Just to clarify, every amendment that the Minister of Health wanted added to the bill was added, and every article that she wanted removed from the bill was removed, and we are not infringing on provincial matters.

He goes on to say:

Sadly, the Conservatives backed away, introducing instead a motion by MP [from Bruce—Huron], which captures the government's work on dementia and uses language and issues named in C-356....But what the Conservatives call their national dementia strategy is in fact a research strategy alone, a plan that does not immediately help patients, caregivers, and the dementia workforce. As important as research is, it does not help keep our loved ones with Alzheimer's or related dementia diseases in the home.

A "feel good" motion might get unanimous approval in Parliament with no referral to committee, no hearing from stakeholders, [doctors, caregivers and, most important, the person with dementia] and especially no binding law to enforce the plan.

Work by many key stakeholders this past year has ignited a discussion about the impending dementia tsunami in Canada—750,000 people currently diagnosed (a figure that will double in a generation) plus the three to four caregivers (on average) each patient has—meaning the disease directly affects more than three million Canadians....A real plan would help caregivers like Tanya Levesque of Ottawa....

A motion doesn't help our caregivers.

It goes without saying that the issue of dementia should be non-partisan....I believe individual MPs looking at the evidence and hearing from constituents will do the right thing.

The second letter that I want to read from was written by Bill Heibin of the Ontario Dementia Advisory Group of Kakabeka Falls. It states:

Group urges passage of MP's dementia bill

We are a group of people living with dementia in Ontario. Our group was formed in the fall of 2014 with the purpose of influencing policies, practices, and people to ensure that we, people living with dementia, are included in every decision that affects our lives.

Our vision is for people living with dementia in Ontario to be directly involved as experts and at the centre of our own care. Our first of three goals is to be involved in the development and implementation of public policy that will affect people living with dementia across Ontario....When you have dementia, you worry about the time. How much time do you have before you get worse, are moved into a long-term care facility and die.

Yes, research is important. But so is our current living ability. We need an integrated national strategy, which will help drive our provincial strategy

● (1830)

In closing, I urge all MPs to support this bill. It is too late for my mom, but it may not be too late for their parents, their brothers, their

Private Members' Business

sisters, their spouse, their children and for the person sitting beside them today. However, most important, it is not too late for the members themselves. It is also not too late for them to do the right thing for many Canadians living with dementia.

I thank all of the people who supported and helped me to bring dementia to the forefront and on the minds of many Canadians. Matthew Dineen, Fran Linton, Lorraine Leblanc from the Alzheimer Society of Sudbury, Manitoulin, the Alzheimer Society of BC, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, Alzheimer Society of Canada, my assistant Rick Prashaw and many more. I thank them very much.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:31 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired. Accordingly the question is as follows.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 6, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*English*]

Pursuant to order made on Friday, May 1, the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 20 under government business.

[*For continuation of proceedings see Part B*]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 5, 2015
(Part B)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 5, 2015

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1830)

[English]

IRAN ACCOUNTABILITY WEEK

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 20, Mr. Joe Comartin in the chair)

Hon. John Duncan (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That this committee take note of the Iran Accountability Week.

The Chair: Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold.

[Translation]

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments.

Pursuant to order made on Friday, May 1, members may divide their time with another member. The debate will end after four hours or when no member rises to speak.

[English]

We will begin tonight's take note debate accordingly.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Chair, I rise today to express the grave concerns of the Government of Canada about the dire human rights situation in Iran. Abuses and violations happen regularly and are pervasive throughout Iran's judicial system and extensive security apparatus.

Over the past two years, the Iranian regime has had some success in reshaping its public image. Iran's president continues to make public comments that allude to the support for rights and freedoms for the people of Iran. Sadly, this slick diplomacy and charm offensive is contradicted by the reality on the ground. The human rights situation remains as dismal as ever, with no measurable improvement since the 2013 election of President Rouhani.

Canada remains profoundly concerned by the alarming rate of executions in Iran, a rate that spiked considerably after the election of President Rouhani. In the first three and a half months of 2015, Iranian officials have already executed at least 300 people. Last year, Iranian authorities reportedly executed more than 750 people. We cannot know for sure how many, because the regime carries out

hundreds of executions every year without officially acknowledging them. Many of the executions take place in public without fair and public trials, and sometimes without warning to the victim's family. The regime also continues to execute juvenile offenders.

On October 25, 2014, a 26-year-old woman, Reyhaneh Jabbari, was hanged to death, convicted of killing a man who she asserted was trying to sexually assault her. A 30-year-old man is on death row as we speak for a post he made on Facebook. Soheil Arabi, a husband and father, was sentenced to death for insulting the prophet in his Facebook posts. It is inconceivable to Canadians that someone could be executed for something that they posted on social media, but that is exactly what is planned for Mr. Arabi. His case is one example of the extraordinary restrictions on freedom of expression in Iran and the regime's increased targeting of average Iranians for their activities on the popular social media sites. This past fall, six young Iranians were sentenced to prison terms and lashes simply for dancing to a pop song about being happy in a YouTube video.

Iran is among the 10 most censored countries in the world, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, and was the second highest jailer of journalists in 2014. Authorities regularly threaten, harass, and arbitrarily arrest journalists, as the regime exerts its control of information and any expression of dissent that might challenge its authority. *The Washington Post's* Tehran bureau chief, Jason Rezaian, has now been in prison for 283 days, facing trumped-up charges, including espionage, simply for reporting on issues of interest to the Iranian people.

The women of Iran face serious restrictions to their fundamental rights and freedoms. They are denied equality in law and in practice, rendering their full participation in political and economic life impossible. In the 2013 elections, all female presidential hopefuls were barred from running by Iran's Guardian Council. Iran has extraordinary female lawyers, but women are not permitted to preside over a court as a judge.

Government Orders

Women endure state-condoned harassment. This past fall, a number of women were attacked with acid by men on motorbikes believed to be targeting women who they saw as dressing immodestly. A number of draft laws and policies at different levels of government in Iran have emerged through 2013 and 2014 that aim to further limit women's rights, including by limiting equal access to the labour market with their male counterparts, access to birth control, and access to education.

Iran, like Canada, is a culturally and linguistically diverse country. Unfortunately, the Iranian regime views this rich diversity as a threat. Ethnic and religious minority communities in Iran face persistent marginalization, harassment, arbitrary arrests, and detention. Iran's Baha'i community has suffered some of the most overt state-led discrimination in Iran and has been especially targeted for intimidation and persecution. In October 2013, the Iranian security officials raided 14 Baha'i homes in the city of Abadeh. This past October, 79 Baha'i shops were closed by the authorities in the Kerman province after the shop owners closed their businesses to observe the Baha'i holiday.

Christian converts have also seen brutal treatment by authorities in Iran, including reports of violent raids on private gatherings, arbitrary arrests, and detentions.

We remain troubled by the deliberate failure of the Iranian regime to abide by its human rights obligations and commitments.

• (1835)

We cannot forget the case of the photographer, Zahra Kazemi, who was tortured and killed by Iranian officials while in detention.

It is because of these persistent human rights violations that Canada, in partnership with the strong cross-regional group of similarly concerned countries, leads the resolution in the United Nations General Assembly on the situation of human rights in Iran, which highlights and brings international scrutiny to bear on Iran's human rights record, calling on the government of Iran to fulfill its human rights obligations in law and in practice, and provide a public signal to human rights defenders that they are supported by the international community.

The 2014 resolution, drawing on credible and well-informed sources, including reports of the UN Secretary General and the UN Special Rapporteur, was successfully adopted with broad international support.

I am proud to convey Canada's support for those inside and outside Iran who have worked tirelessly for positive change in the country. Iranians deserve to live in freedom and have their rights respected.

• (1840)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Chair, at the subcommittee on international human rights of the foreign affairs committee, I am the vice-chair.

One of the things that I would note is that in this House we often see disagreement, but on the issue of international human rights there is a certain place that we get to where we work by consensus.

One of the things that has happened over the last three to four years is our annual review of the situation of human rights in Iran.

With the negotiations that just went on with the parties in regard to the nuclear program in Iran, there are now fears being expressed that the distraction caused by those negotiations has opened the door for international neglect of the protection of human rights in Iran.

I presume the motion that the member talked about at the United Nations will be continued, but will there ever be targeted sanctions against the individuals who perpetrated these crimes?

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, I do agree with the hon. member, that with the P5+1 negotiations going on during the campaign for the UN resolution, there were some countries that expressed the same sentiment that the member just addressed.

We in the government, including the opposition, including the member's committee, will make sure that we keep these things up front and keep the pressure on.

As far as targeted sanctions are concerned, as we proceed further we will see how things move forward, to see if there is any improvement on the human rights situation in Iran.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the human rights situation in Iran. It is extremely important that all members of the House send a very clear message that in Canada we support the aspirations of the Iranian people when they seek freedom, peace, and democracy. Parliament spoke strongly at the time of the election when people were being murdered in the streets of Iran and Tehran.

On this side of the House—and I would presume members of the government and other parties would agree with this—we think that Canada, in the view of New Democrats, has a very significant role to play, as we have continuously done, to point out those times when Iran has said yes to acceptance of the periodic review by the United Nations but never implemented any of the changes that were requested. The previous speaker talked about the annual execution rate in Iran and it being around 750. It is still a country that executes juveniles. I am not sure of the number, but I think it was 18 last year. Juveniles are executed. How can a regime do that?

I was involved for 28 years in the Canadian labour movement, so I am kind of sensitive to the next quote that I am going to read. It comes from an Amnesty International update on Iran. A gentleman by the name of Mansour Osanloo is an activist with the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, which is probably a very interesting title over there. An amalgamated transit union is what it would be here. He stated:

The labor movement has a deep impact on the struggle for human rights and democracy in Iran, and as the labor movement grows, it benefits the struggle for democracy and freedom. This is based on the fact that the labor movement involves the largest and most important segment of the masses into this struggle. The movement of workers as the builders of society, will inevitably push that society towards democracy. Labor movements which occur in the most widespread form will force the government and society to respond and take action. The involvement of the working class appearance in the social and political realm has been shown to increase the level of democracy in every society. It is clear that the labor movement can promote the distribution equality of within a...society.

Government Orders

That, of course, is a very aspirational statement. We are blessed in Canada. I felt blessed in 1996 when I led the largest civil demonstration in the history of our country, in the Hamilton's Days of Action, when 105,000 people protested, without one injury or arrest. That says a lot for the democracy of this country. They were protesting the Conservative government of Mike Harris, by the way, but were still treated with the dignity and respect that the people so yearn for in Iran.

I will read another quote from the same report. It stated:

It was said that the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy nor Roman. Today, it can be said that the Islamic republic is neither Islamic nor a republic. The Iran of today has become the Islamic republic of gangster capitalism, where an unholy alliance of the clerical establishment and the Revolutionary Guard Corps rule through economic patronage for the inner circle, together with torture at home and terrorism abroad.

This gentleman, Payam Akhavan, is a professor of international law at McGill University. He has spoken at the subcommittee on international human rights several times. He helps us with the update that we do to keep ourselves current on what is happening in Iran.

Along with the professor was Shirin Ebadi, a lawyer from Iran who for years spoke out publicly and risked her life. She received the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts. Today, she has to live outside of Iran for her own safety. These two witnesses were before our committee about two to three years ago and both made the same comment, which I think is worthy of our consideration. It was that the remedy for Iran has to come from within Iran, that we cannot remedy its problems from outside.

● (1845)

Going back to the aspirational quote from that labour leader, in that country, that kind of statement can put one in jail and cause one to be tortured. Evin Prison is notorious for the political activists kept behind its walls and the torture and treatment that happens to them.

In Iran, women face persistent, systemic discrimination in terms of family law. The following is a statement from Amnesty International.

New legislation being considered by Iran's parliament is intended to roll back many of the gains women have made in the past decades and consign them to being barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen.

And on top of that, if they dare to protest about the inequities they suffer, they are sentenced to long prison terms, to be served in prisons where unsanitary conditions and medical neglect can quickly undermine their health.

This is the fate of Bahareh Hedayat, an activist with The Campaign for Equality, a grassroots initiative, and a member of the Central Committee of the Office for the Consolidation of Unity, a national student body which has been active in calling for political reform and opposing human rights violations in recent years. She is currently serving a ten-year prison sentence in Evin Prison.

Evin Prison, as members here will know, is one of the worst prisons on the face of the earth.

She was charged with a number offences, and they sound beyond belief. One of her offences was "interviews with a foreign media"—imagine, it was just an interview—"insulting the leader", "insulting the president," and "disrupting public order through participating in illegal gatherings". We have to pause when we live in a country like Canada.

I just spoke a moment ago about the fact that we had a massive demonstration here, and there were no objections, but in Iran, for that she wound up with a 10-year sentence in Evin Prison.

She has already served half of her sentence and she should therefore be eligible for parole under Iranian law, but concerned human rights activists need to urge the Iranian government to release her now so that she can receive medical attention for her health, which she is not receiving in Evin Prison.

The Amnesty report goes on to talk about the treatment of minorities. The previous speaker spoke about the Baha'i and how they are denied religious freedom. They are the largest non-Muslim religious minority the government consistently discriminates against. At least 136 Baha'i have been held in Iranian prisons as of May 2014. State authorities have desecrated Baha'i cemeteries, including one in Shiraz, where the authorities began excavating in April.

Security and intelligent forces have also continued to target Christian converts from Islam. Persian-speaking Protestants, evangelical congregations, and members of home church movements are all persecuted by this government. Many face charges, such as acting against national security and propaganda against the state.

Imagine that following a religious practice is somehow propaganda, and even worse, propaganda against the state. However, it is not just Christians and Baha'i. Sunni Muslims, which are 10% of the population in Iran, are not allowed to build their own mosques, simply because they have a different view than the Shia view of Islam.

As we review from time to time the status and the situation in Iran, sadly, at this juncture, we have to say that things have not gotten better. Iran had a new leader, and there was great hope that there would be change. That has been a false front. Again, I think the patronage and the corruption is offending any chance of heading to a real democracy in Iran.

● (1850)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his comments tonight. I know that he has spent some time on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

For many years there was a camp situated in Iraq called Camp Ashraf. I have a very large group of people in my constituency who are of the Baha'i faith, and they have been in to see me on numerous occasions about the treatment of the Baha'i people in Iran. I know that the camp has now disbanded and that the Baha'i people have been moved to other places, but I wonder if my colleague has any comment on what the Baha'i people were looking for in Iran.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Chair, specific to Camp Ashraf, the people who were detained there were reviewed by the United Nations and were granted numbers, which should have opened the door for them to leave Iraq. They were transferred from a fairly secure compound that had existed for probably 30 years to a place called Camp Liberty, which is fundamentally, from how it is described, just a trailer park, which means that someone from the outside could shoot them. People could shoot through the walls of these small structures, so there is a lack of protection.

Government Orders

There is a controversy, because some of the people who left Iran were MEK, and as a result of being a designated terrorist group, it impeded these people. However, a majority of them were born in this camp. Their placement has been delayed. We are not sure why except that there seems to be a growing influence of the Iranian government on the Iraqi government, which is very serious.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to begin by applauding my colleague on the issue of human rights and so on, which he continues to play a very active role in. We all very much appreciate that.

With respect particularly to Camp Liberty, it is an issue I have been monitoring and to some degree have been involved with for several years. I would like to hear from my colleague about the current status there. Why is it that many of those folks have not been allowed to relocate? I understand that some have been relocated, but there continue to be a large number of people held at Camp Liberty. They are having more difficult conditions every day, whether it has to do with sewage treatment or medical services. Several people who needed medical attention have died this year.

The United States committed to protecting them, as did the United Nations. Does my hon. colleague have any comments as to why they are not receiving more protection?

• (1855)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Chair, the harsh reality is that when the Americans withdrew from Iran, they abandoned these people. There is no other way of putting it. They turned the responsibility for their protection over to the Iraqis. As I said to the previous questioner, it appears that the influence of the Iranian government in this particular situation has put their safety very much in question.

As to why they are not being moved to other countries, I personally believe that it has to do with the MEK designation. There is controversy. There are moves in the United States to lift the designation as a terrorist group from the MEK. Until that happens, there are questions about who funds the MEK today and how much influence it has on parliamentarians.

I myself was invited to go to a conference in Paris, France, and the organization offered to pay my way. I said no because of the fact that we do not need to be influenced by any organization, and when it comes to that, we have to say no.

In the background someplace there are very powerful people who seem to be impeding this.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for highlighting the abuses, as he has very eloquently done, in the situation in Iraq.

Let me say what the Government of Canada has done. We view Iran as part of a problem, not part of a solution. Furthermore, we believe that Iran is a threat to global peace and security. For that reason, the Government of Canada formally listed Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism under the State Immunity Act.

It is very important as we raise these questions that we bring this to the forefront in the international community. Amnesty International has given its report. We have highlighted it at the United Nations, and we would like to work with the NDP to continue this

process of highlighting the atrocious abuses of human rights that are taking place. I invite the hon. member to work together, through the human rights committee and through other channels, to highlight these issues he has very eloquently addressed.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Chair, I began my remarks by talking about how we worked on consensus within the subcommittee. The reason is that it is necessary, in this instance, for unanimity in this place in dealing with the situation in Iran.

I am very troubled by the negotiations of the P5+1, whose negotiations are ongoing, led by President Obama, the initiative to try to stop nuclear development. There are a lot of questions about it. It is not stopping development. This will just delay it. That is one serious problem that has distracted the international community from human rights. That requires us, the EU, the U.S., and other places to continually raise them.

Over the years, we have found that in instances when an MP writes a letter to the Iranian government about a particular prisoner, it can make that prisoner's life better, with that single intervention. Imagine if the international community came together to do such things to keep that pressure on. I still think there should be targeted sanctions for the people who have committed these crimes. We know who is in that guard. We know who the people are who have been doing this to their own people. Irrespective of the nation-to-nation sanctions, they should be targeted.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I am glad to take part in tonight's take note debate in the context of a focus on Iran and human rights through this whole week.

I am wondering where we have our best influence. This is a question for which I am not prejudging the answer. We know that, as the hon. member says, the U.S. administration has put great stock in the negotiations to avoid a nuclear weapons program in the hope that the new government in Iran is sufficiently different. We see the evidence on the ground that in terms of human rights, it decidedly is not.

Does the hon. member have a view as to whether Canada has greater influence in defence of human rights if we are positive about the efforts being made by the U.S. in Iran on the nuclear program or if we continue with the current position we have taken, which is to denounce it?

• (1900)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Chair, any time there is a sincere effort to reach an agreement to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, I tend to favour it. I have to call into question this particular set of negotiations, because it appears, and I want to stress the word "appears", that Iran is outmanoeuvring the United States, and I am very concerned about that, as many other people are.

Government Orders

We had testimony before our committee about two years ago that Iran was at the development stage of yellow cake in its nuclear program, which is very close to getting it to the level where it could start to build nuclear weapons. There is evidence that it has built, under a mountain, a site where it can have a centrifuge and proceed. Even if it follows this agreement, it just pauses the situation. It does not eliminate it. We are troubled by that.

Yes, we think negotiation is good, but I am not so sure what we would gain by denouncing or supporting it in this instance, because there are two major nations that are going ahead with it either way.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am delighted to join in this take note debate on the situation in Iran.

I want to commend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights on his remarks this evening, as well as my colleague, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, with whom I have the pleasure of serving on the foreign affairs subcommittee.

Indeed, this take note debate is a central feature of the fourth annual Iran Accountability Week where Canadian parliamentarians from across the political spectrum have come together to sound the alarm on the toxic convergence of threats posed by the Iranian regime, the nuclear threat, state-sanctioned terrorism, incitement to hatred, and particularly the widespread and systematic violations of human rights in Iran, which will form the basis of my remarks this evening.

Iran Accountability Week this year includes witness testimony before the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights, a public forum on Parliament Hill with former political prisoners Marina Nemat and Shakib Nasrullah, press briefings, political prisoner advocacy, and will conclude with a call to action.

Among the participants are Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran; Iranian Canadian journalist, filmmaker and former political prisoner Maziar Bahari; and experts, some of whom testified today before our foreign affairs subcommittee, such as Mark P. Lagon, president of Freedom House, and the leaders of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Mark Dubowitz and Ali Alfoneh.

This year's Iran Accountability Week and our take note debate this evening may be said to occur at a most propitious if not precarious moment, as there are the P5+1 nuclear negotiations with Iran, which we hope might yet conclude in an effective agreement to prevent a nuclear Iran. These nuclear negotiations thus far have overshadowed, if not sanitized, the Iranian regime's massive domestic repression, a repression which has not only gone unabated under the leadership of President Rouhani, held out to be the newly elected moderate president of Iran some two years ago but where in fact the massive violations of human rights have in fact intensified.

Indeed, this massive repression, I suggest, should also inform and engage the nuclear negotiations for two reasons: first, the prospect of a rights-violating regime becoming a nuclear break-out state should itself be cause for concern; and second, the ongoing reality of Iran's repression and its breaches of its international commitments should cause us to question not only the validity but the veracity of any

commitments made by the Iranian regime within the framework of the nuclear negotiations.

At this point I will briefly summarize some of those major human rights violations to which I have referred, the corresponding defiance of Iran's international legal obligations, and the ongoing culture of impunity which underpins these violations.

I will begin at this point with what might be called a dramatic increase, and reference has been made to this by the parliamentary secretary, in the wanton executions in Iran. In fact, we have been witnessing an unprecedented execution binge. Iran not only executes more people per capita than any other country in the world and also leads the world in juvenile executions, but the execution rate, and this has gone unnoticed, has actually escalated under President Rouhani.

In 2014, executions reached their highest level in the last 12 years with some 753 people put to death in 2014 alone, while in 2015 there has been a 20% increase in this wanton rate of execution, where already more than 300 have been executed in the first four months of 2015 alone.

● (1905)

This brings me to the second category of human rights violations. That is the culture of impunity. Time only permits me to give one example, but this example itself is expressive of this culture of impunity. That is the appointment as justice minister of one Mostafa Pourmohammadi, who played a leading role in the 1988 prison massacre which resulted in the execution at the time of thousands of dissidents. Mostafa Pourmohammadi was then presiding over the Evin prison death committee. The appointment of him as justice minister by Rouhani is a scandalous example of the prevailing culture of impunity.

This leads me to the third concern. This is documented by Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, who will be the guest before our foreign affairs subcommittee this Thursday. It is the widespread and systematic use of both physical and psychological torture, which continues for coercing confessions to justify trumped-up charges and with horrific methods of torture, including whipping, assault, sexual torture including rape, and psychological torture such as prolonged solitary confinement and the like.

This leads me to my fourth category, and time will not permit me to do any more than this one. It is the plight and the pain of political prisoners in Iraq. Indeed, a centrepiece of Iran Accountability Week is the Iranian political prisoners global advocacy project, where members of Parliament adopt, as it were, an Iranian political prisoner and advocate on the prisoner's behalf.

This year I am continuing my advocacy on behalf of the seven Baha'i leaders. They are now in their seventh year of imprisonment of a 20-year sentence, which with their advanced age is a virtual death sentence. These seven religious leaders have been punished for practising their faith, a right guaranteed under international and Iranian law. Imprisoning the Baha'i leadership is tantamount to putting the Baha'i community as a whole on trial.

Government Orders

The second person on whose behalf I am advocating is the senior Iranian cleric, Dr. Boroujerdi. He is now in his ninth year of imprisonment. At the moment he is at risk of passive execution through the withdrawal of necessary and emergency medical care. He was imprisoned on trumped up charges for doing nothing other than advocating religious freedom in Iran, for advocating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and for advocating on behalf of other political prisoners in Iran. For that, he has not only been prosecuted, convicted and sentenced, but he continues to be persecuted in prison for doing nothing other than exercising fundamental freedoms protected under the Iranian constitution and protected under international law.

In conclusion, our Iranian political prisoners global advocacy project seeks to put us in a situation where we not only take up the case and cause of these political prisoners, but by telling their stories, we seek to make it clear internationally to the people of Iran that we stand in solidarity with them, that they are not alone, that we will continue to advocate on their behalf, and that we will not relent in our advocacy until their freedom is secured and Iran itself becomes free.

● (1910)

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member, who is one of the most respected parliamentarians, for fighting for human rights around the world. His work is indeed very valuable. Today he very eloquently gave a very good insight into the situation of human rights abuses in Iran. He spoke about one of the areas which is of major concern to us which is the political prisoners in Iran.

As he knows, only last year, in 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran came to Canada after he released his report. We had an opportunity to meet with him and listen to him about the situation in Iran. I want to inform the member that the UN Special Rapporteur will be coming later this month to Canada and I will be hosting a lunch for him. We will carry on with our conversation in reference to human rights in Iran.

As in his report, the UN Special Rapporteur mentioned that at least 895 prisoners of conscience and political prisoners were reportedly imprisoned in Iran. This includes political activists, religious practitioners, human rights defenders, civic activists, journalists, bloggers and student activists.

I agree with the member that we need to stand up and speak about political prisoners to ensure that they are freed, as he said in his remarks.

About a year ago, at the beginning of 2014, I was in Mongolia at a conference where I met with dissidents from Iran. We talked about how we can use social media to highlight many of the abuses that are taking place inside Iran. As mentioned, the Iranians are imprisoning journalists and have tight control over any kind of dissidence in Iran. However, we feel that through social media and so on, it is possible to get messages to the people in Iran on the situation of human rights and what the international community is doing.

I was wondering whether my good friend knows anything about this area and whether we can co-operate and work together to ensure

that this is one of the areas where we can get information to the people inside Iran on what the regime is doing.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his remarks. Indeed, the whole purpose of our Iranian political prisoners global advocacy project is to get the message out not only in terms of our international global advocacy on their behalf, but also within Iran.

I might add parenthetically that two prisoners who were part of our political prisoners advocacy project taken up by members of Parliament in the House have in fact been freed. One of them is Nasrin Sotoudeh, and the other is Hamid Ghassemi-Shall, who is an Iranian Canadian political prisoner.

Perhaps as a result of this Iran Accountability Week and our advocacy, this may result in the freeing of more political prisoners, but mainly the importance is to put a face, put an identity on this, make their cause our cause, as I said, ensure that they are not alone. Working together as we do across party lines with the government's initiative and commitment in this regard, we trust we will be able to bring about the freeing of political prisoners, the lessening of their conditions of imprisonment which include at this point torture and the risk of execution, and improve the human condition for political prisoners and others in Iran.

● (1915)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I also want to thank my friend from Mount Royal for his leadership on this issue.

As part of Iran Accountability Week, I am very proud to be trying to raise awareness about the case of Atena Farghadani. She is a 28-year-old woman, an activist and an artist. She was initially jailed for political cartoons, for relatively mild satire. She has been on a hunger strike. She has been relocated from prison and hospitalized. We are not sure of her status right now. We need to raise awareness of the risks to her health. We do not know if she is alive now. We are championing her cause and calling on all Iranian leadership to ensure that she is safe and to release her.

My question for my hon. friend is, what more should we do? We are having an Iran Accountability Week. We are trying to raise awareness. What concrete steps would he advocate Canada should be taking?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Chair, one of the things that we have been advocating, and that we should be trying to implement, is supporting targeted sanctions against the major Iranian human rights violators who are responsible for, for example, the ordering of complicity in the wanton executions of which I spoke and the massive assaults on human rights, and those responsible for the imprisoning of political prisoners. Put them on notice that they will be held accountable before the law, including sanctions under section 4(1) of the Special Economic Measures Act, for their role in violating the human rights of the Iranian people.

Government Orders

I have a private member's bill, called the global Sergei Magnitsky justice legislation, which would seek to further bring about the capacity to bring these major Iranian human rights violators to justice. I am working with the government on this, and I hope that it will become government legislation so that we can sanction those in Iran who are responsible for these major criminal human rights violations.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Chair, again, I want to congratulate my colleague for the tremendous leadership that he has shown on so many files and different cases around the world, but particularly for coming together with other members of the House to start Iranian Accountability Week and to really put the flashlight and be able to showcase some of the violations that continue to happen there.

Many of us on this side of the House are advocating for a variety of individuals. Some of them were involved in the issue of the freedom of press, which does not exist in many of these countries, particularly in Iran. People are jailed quickly for nothing more than trying to send out a message on social media if it is in existence.

One of the other concerns that I would like my colleague to comment on is what happens with these nuclear discussions that are ongoing. The people of Iran are suffering tremendously as a result of the current sanctions that are there. If they are unable to reach a comprehensive agreement, is there anything else that we can do to try to ensure that the agreement is solid one? More importantly, what would we be able to do to help the people of Iran, should these agreement talks fail?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Chair, we need to establish and should have established a linkage between the ongoing nuclear negotiations and the ongoing massive repression. We should not be conducting the nuclear negotiations in terms of business as usual while ignoring, if not thereby sanitizing, the massive domestic repression.

We should make it a priority of Canadian foreign policy and a matter of principle and priority for us, as parliamentarians, to ensure that the human rights situation in Iran remains at the forefront of our national and international human rights agenda. Whether this agreement succeeds, and even more so if does not, whenever we speak of nuclear negotiations, we need to ensure that the human rights situation in Iran remains at the forefront of our concerns as a government, as parliamentarians and as citizens of this country.

• (1920)

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to stand today as we are all here to speak about Iran in this Iranian Accountability Week. I want to begin by saying that my riding of Richmond Hill, indeed the region that I live in, York Region, is home to the largest population of Canadians of Iranian descent in our country.

It is a community of people who are indeed very hard working, progressive and dynamic. It is a community of people who have distinguished themselves with success in small business, medium business, large business; in academia; in medicine; in education; in the trades. It is a community of people of deep values with a love for their language, culture and the country that they came from, and with

love, respect and very much appreciation for Canada, their home country now.

A day does not go by when I or a member of my staff does not communicate with someone in my constituency who has come from Iran. That community is that large in the area. They speak of Iran with their eyes welling up and with much pain and often fear in their hearts. They speak of Iran's system of government, which is corrupt to its core.

The supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, preaches the virtues of a modest life but has an estimated net worth of \$95 billion. This fortune has been built at the expense of the Iranian people in his over 25 years as unopposed leader of the nation.

Likewise, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, or the IRGC, a branch of Iran's military charged with defending the Islamic system, spends much of its time running the biggest businesses in Iran, from energy to the infrastructure sector. Some estimates link the IRGC to over 100 companies and over \$12 billion in annual revenue, which is revenue that the IRGC then uses to line its pockets and to support terrorist groups throughout the region. The IRGC is ever widening its controls over strategic industries, commercial services and black market enterprise.

The situation is so dire that even Iran's President Rouhani admitted that an institution with that much power is bound to be corrupt. Nevertheless, after recognizing the corruption replete throughout the IRGC, Rouhani still increased the IRGC's budget by 45%, another stark reminder of why we must continue to judge Iran by its actions and not by its words.

It is not just government expenditures and grants that enrich the elite in Iran. Corrupt government contracts and practices support a system that ensures that the IRGC members, parliamentarians and those loyal to the regime remain in positions of power and restricts rights and opportunities for ordinary Iranians. Many of my constituents cry when they speak of their loved ones they have left back home, and long for them to live in a country that respects human rights, freedom, democracy and the rule of law like we do here in Canada. This corruption filters down into the government bureaucracy over there.

While far from perfect, an ongoing Iranian parliamentary investigation into corruption in Iran estimates that 70% of all government hiring during the previous administration in Iran was conducted using corrupt practices. In an oft-cited case, the daughter of a governor who did not speak Arabic was hired as an Arabic teacher. Iran's attorney general has taken the unusual step of recognizing the rampant corruption in government, acknowledging that all three branches are corrupt after investigating a case of rampant embezzlement by public officials in May 2014. He said more than 500 individuals were involved, including most senior executives and managers in banks, the president's office, ministers and senior members of the intelligence and judiciary ministries.

Freedom House, in its worldwide study of corruption, bluntly summarized the situation in Iran:

Corruption is pervasive at all levels of the bureaucracy, and oversight mechanisms to ensure transparency are weak. The hard-line clerical establishment and the IRGC, to which it has many ties, have grown immensely wealthy through their control of tax-exempt foundations that dominate many sectors of the economy.

Government Orders

●(1925)

Bribes, graft, unfair elections and systematic corruption are ubiquitous at the centres of Iranian power. All of this corruption is enabled by a leadership structure that leaves little doubt that the system is functioning precisely as was intended.

All candidates for president as well as for parliament must be vetted by Iran's Guardian Council. The Guardian Council in turn consists of six Islamic theologians appointed by the supreme leader, in addition to six jurists nominated by the head of the judiciary, who is appointed by the supreme leader and confirmed by parliament.

Free and fair elections exist in Iran only insofar as one ignores the fact that the election processes are rigged from the get-go. The supreme leader may allow a popular vote to determine the president, as he did with Rouhani, but the result of the convoluted, circuitous vetting processes ensure that the only options on the table are candidates approved by the supreme leader.

As is its wont, corruption likewise plays out in the government's control of the press. To control the press is to hide corruption from the public eye, and Ayatollah Sadegh Amoli Larijani, the head of the judiciary, has announced that journalists could face public punishment for reporting corruption stories. He has banned members of parliament from publicly discussing or disclosing details of corruption cases under investigation. Ayatollah Larijani has followed through for perhaps the only thing that one can trust the Iranian regime with, which is its assurances about cracking down on free speech.

Take the case of Ali Ghazali, for example. He was the managing editor of two moderate news sites and was thrown in jail for reporting on how state-owned companies were to be sold with the assistance of fake documents, one of the largest fraud cases in Iranian history.

It is clear that the concept of accountability has been perverted in Iran. Feed the system and flame the fires of corruption, and one shall be rewarded, but those who fail to uphold the kleptocracy and challenge its legitimacy will indeed be held accountable, thrown in jail without due process by corrupt and compromised judges.

It is important to recall that we are here not just to talk about corruption in Iran's government and the complete lack of accountability mechanisms to counter it, but also of the impact this has on the people of Iran, on their human rights, living conditions and future prospects. The impact of corruption on the people in Iran is enormous.

Corruption contributes to restrictions on freedom of expression, including on the media, and freedom of association. It limits economic opportunities, career prospects and even access to education. It smothers political dissent and limits minority representation in positions of power. Iranians of all stripes and from all walks of life are negatively affected by the corruption endemic in their political system.

Today, we look around the world and see that we are faced with a multi-dimensional threat emanating from the kleptocrats at the head of the Iranian regime. They are using their powers to suppress free speech, to proliferate weapons, to support terrorist entities such as

Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Syria. They do all this in order to expand their empire, repress their population, cling to power and line their own pockets. Corruption is the spine that runs through the Iranian system.

The people of Richmond Hill and York Region in Canada have many examples they can give from many of our residents who have been affected by the practices of this regime. We call once again for the release of Saeed Malekpour, a web designer and resident of Richmond Hill who was arrested and thrown in prison simply for voicing his opinion.

It is for these reasons that Canada and Canadians will continue to act with determination on this file. We will continue to hold Iran to account for its human rights violations, for the support for terrorism and for the corrupt practices that enable the Iranian regime to survive and thrive while it robs a deserving Iranian people of the economic opportunities and resources that they want and need. Iranians deserve better than that government. At the very least, they deserve accountability.

●(1930)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be speaking soon and referring to Saeed because he is the one I adopted, so to speak, for accountability week in Iran. One of the concerns we have had with the regime is the seemingly arbitrary way in which people are arrested. As I said, I will talk about the case of Saeed, who the member just referenced, in my speech.

We have discussed some of the actions we could take, such as what we are doing this week, bringing the issues up here in Parliament, but I am curious as to what he thinks we can do beyond what we are doing today in raising the issues, particularly if we can do more with the UN, and finally, where he stands on targeted sanctions.

We know there are assets of members of the regime invested here in Canada. Is he supportive of the notion of targeting sanctions on those who are tied to the regime and making sure the sanctions will affect them so we can make sure we are doing everything we can?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Chair, of course I am supportive of the sanctions we have put in place. I am in support of them because I believe that the best way to assist, at least, in the resolution of the big problem in Iran is for the regime to feel pressure from within its own population. I can say that, from speaking with my constituents, they are very adamant about the fact that irrespective of the rhetoric that comes out of Mr. Rouhani's mouth and from the regime's attestations, their actions speak much louder than words.

Canada needs to continue to have a very strong voice, as we do. We need to continue to support these sanctions and stand with the Iranian people. Our quarrel is not with the Iranian people. It is, indeed, with the Iranian regime and the way it governs its own people there. We also need to stand with Canadians of Iranian descent who are longing to go back to their country, in a free and democratic society, so they can see their loved ones, visit their ancestral homes and participate in the growth of that beautiful nation.

Government Orders

I should say this. Iranians bring to Canada a wealth of beautiful culture and tremendous contribution not only in the region I live in but, indeed, across our great nation.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chair, in a desperate attempt to leave some semblance of a positive legacy, the President of the United States has put forth a framework for a nuclear deal with Iran. Iran contends that it needs highly enriched uranium for medical isotopes, but it has put into use hundreds of centrifuges, way too much for medical isotopes. Already Iran has enough HEU for 25 years worth of medical isotope production. It says maybe it will develop nuclear-powered submarines. The current proposal is that Iran will have a limited number of centrifuges to ensure enrichment does not go beyond 20% to 90%, but the knowledge to make that jump is not that great. Iran says something one day and then does another thing another day.

The additional protocol signed by some countries, including Canada, allows the IAEA inspectors to look wherever they want, provided there is cause. Should the additional protocol be one of the key requirements that Iran signs before Canada ratifies a deal on Iran?

• (1935)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague makes a very valid point. We cannot take the words coming from the Iranian president at face value. We need to evaluate actions and not words. Our government believes that every diplomatic measure should be made to ensure that the Iranian regime never obtains nuclear weapons. It is frightening to think of what would happen not only in the region but, indeed, through the world should Iran obtain nuclear weapons. Until Canada is satisfied that this is the case, our sanctions will remain in full force.

We will judge Iran by its actions and not words. Canada will continue to defend the rights of those suffering at the hands of the Iranian regime and will be a voice for all those who have been silenced by Iran's repressive actions. While we commend efforts to get Iran to come to the table, everyone can appreciate that we are very skeptical, given that the actions of the Iranian regime do not match its words.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, in one of our very first throne speeches, we announced that we were going to establish the Office of Religious Freedom. We did that, and have appointed Dr. Andrew Bennett as our ambassador for religious freedom.

I know that the ambassador has travelled the world. He has met with diplomats, presidents, and prime ministers around the world. I wonder if my colleague has any idea of some of the comments that Ambassador Bennett has made regarding the Iranian regime.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Chair, I want to thank my hon. friend and colleague for that question and for bringing up a very important initiative of the Government of Canada, the Office of Religious Freedom and indeed Ambassador Bennett who has travelled the world and has met with many leaders, not only around the world but indeed here within Canada, to get as much information as he possibly can so that he can execute his plan of ensuring that human rights are respected everywhere around the world.

While Iran continues to demonstrate its unwillingness to live up to its international human rights obligations, Canada continues to advocate through Ambassador Bennett, through the good work of our ministry of foreign affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the parliamentary secretary, and the entire department for the basic human rights of the Iranian people.

Ambassador Bennett has made it very clear that we as Canadians have zero tolerance for the violation of human rights. We stand up with the people of Iran. It is the people within the borders of Iran who are suffering the most. Those who were fortunate enough to leave and who are fortunate enough to get out understand and see the value of living in a country such as Canada where they can live in peace, tolerance, and acceptance, and in love with their neighbours, irrespective of where they came from around the world, irrespective of the language they speak, irrespective of the culture they have, irrespective of who they are and who they believe in religiously.

Ambassador Bennett is doing a fabulous job for Canada. We need to continue to support that effort, as we all do here in this Parliament, because it is a shining example of what other countries around the world can be doing.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Chair, I rise today to join the debate that we have had in past years during Iran Accountability Week. I want to talk about a couple of aspects in my speech.

Before I begin, I want to say that we have a responsibility here in Parliament to shine the light on human rights. Whether it be in Iran or elsewhere, it is imperative. I have raised this in the formal committee on foreign affairs, of which I am the co-chair, but I want to just underline that I would like to see Parliament actually have a separate committee for human rights that is independent, and the importance of having that. As members know, the human rights committee is a subcommittee of the foreign affairs committee. Frankly, I think we should have a separate committee. It deserves to be an independent committee. I have nothing against the committee right now. It does terrific work. As has already been mentioned, it does work by consensus and it has raised important issues. However, the fact that it is a subcommittee is unfortunate, and I just wanted to make sure that the point is made.

I also want to bring to the attention of the House some recent information that has come to light. One of the leading human rights defenders has just been arrested in Iran. Narges Mohammadi is the deputy head of the Defenders of Human Rights Center, and she has just been arrested. She has been an extremely important human rights defender in Iran. She has been arrested before, but she has just been arrested again as of today. This news is just coming out.

She is the mother of two, and she has been steadfast in standing up against the whole issue of the death sentence, which we have talked about already tonight. She wants to have that abolished. I think it is pretty obvious why we should abolish the death sentence in Iran. She has been speaking out on behalf of those who are not able to speak, and she has just been arrested. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House, to call for her release, and to support her cause to end the death penalty in Iran. In fact, it is something that we should be promoting around the world as part of our foreign policy.

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As I mentioned to the last person who spoke, I was asked to support Iran Accountability Week by taking on a political prisoner, and I have done for the last couple of years. His name has already been mentioned, but I am going to focus my comments on Saeed Malekpour. Last June, people around the world got involved in his case through social media. We have talked about the importance of social media and how it can help in these cases. It was a very basic thing, to wish him a happy birthday last June to bring attention to his plight. There was a hashtag, #HBDSaeed, which went viral. It was very creative, and it brought attention to his plight.

To give some background on Saeed, who he is and how he ended up in prison, he is a software engineer, or a techie, if we will. If he had been able to see the online wave of well-wishers, I am sure he would be pleased with this whole hashtag campaign. Unfortunately, though, he does not have access to basic rights such as computers right now, much less Twitter. For nearly seven years, Saeed has spent every birthday and every other day in a cell in Iran's notorious Evin prison.

In 2008, Saeed was a permanent resident in Canada, with a home in Richmond Hill, as has already been mentioned, and he wrote a blog. He was preparing to begin his graduate studies at the University of Victoria. However, during a trip to Iran to visit his terminally ill father in 2008, Saeed was arrested. He was charged with blasphemy and accused of developing software that was subsequently used by a pornographic network. According to a letter that he was able to smuggle out of prison, he was tortured physically and psychologically, whipped with cables, paralyzed with electrical shocks, and thrown for nearly a year in solitary confinement without medical attention.

● (1940)

When Saeed's abusers finally extracted a forced confession, he was sentenced to death. After four years of heavy pressure from governments and civil society worldwide, Saeed's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2012. This progress is proof of the real power of international opinion and pressure, even within an authoritarian regime like Iran's display of trumped up charges and treatment. We know we can have an effect when we speak out.

It is testimony to the importance of naming and shaming individuals and states that violate human rights, democratic freedoms, due process and the rule of law. It shows it can work, in fact. That is why we are doing what we are doing this week.

Yet this commutation is small consolation to Saeed's sister Maryam, who now lives in Edmonton, and other members of his family, because he has a life sentence. It does nothing to remedy the greater problem of a continued pattern of horrific and unacceptable human rights abuses in Iran, particularly in the Iranian prison and justice systems.

Tragically, Saeed's arrest, sham trial and illegitimate conviction on charges of blasphemy are far from unique. We have heard some of the stories tonight. Freedom of religion and expression are not just essential elements of democracy, they are non-negotiable and non-partisan principles that Canadians support and expect their elected representatives to defend.

The criminalization and punishment of expression, contrary to certain religious interpretations, is totally arbitrary and reprehensible. The imposition of the death penalty or even life imprisonment in such cases is especially egregious and abhorrent.

In Saeed's case, this already illegitimate law was stretched to preposterous limits. If pornography is a crime, Saeed did not commit it. He designed and developed software that was then sold on for further use. He did not determine and was not responsible for how that software was used.

His conviction would be farcical, perhaps even laughable, were it not so appalling. Yet if we are to hold Saeed responsible, it should be to thank him. Saeed's work made it easier for everyday people in Iran and around the world to express and share their thoughts and beliefs quickly, creatively and effectively. His software was all about that. He made the world a bit more free. In doing so, he ran up against those who seek to curtail that freedom, and to couple repressive practices with regressive policies.

President Rouhani has spoken of the need for "constructive engagement," and the Iranian people have given him a clear mandate for reform. Yet his administration persists in violating and ignoring its own international legal and human rights obligations. So long as Iran prevents and prohibits the free exercise of free speech, its government cannot and will not be accepted or welcomed in the international community.

Two years ago, I was proud to receive unanimous support from all parties for my parliamentary motion marking the 25th anniversary of the 1988 massacre of thousands of political prisoners in Iran, which has already been referenced by the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie. I thank him for his work and his support.

This motion made Canada the first country in the world to officially recognize this mass atrocity in 1988 for what it was, a crime against humanity. Just as we must remember the crimes of the past, we must speak out and stand up against the crimes of the present.

Saeed Malekpour moved to Canada because he loved our country and what it represented. All Canadians can be proud of what Saeed represents. We must not rest until he is home. That is my cause. That is the cause of what we are discussing tonight. That is the importance of human rights protection and those who are human rights defenders.

● (1945)

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Chair, we all know the hon. member is a passionate defender of human rights. I am very happy to see him participating and working on bringing accountability to the government of Iran.

Government Orders

This is Iran Accountability Week. We are highlighting the abuses that have taken place under that regime and continue to take place. As he has rightly mentioned, there was a sense of hope when President Obama talked with President Rouhani. We figured things would move forward. In P5+1 there seems to be some positive signals. However, I would like to have his opinion on the P5+1. Concern was raised that the Iranians would use this to bypass the other issues, most important, the issue of human rights. We do not want the P5+1 talks to overshadow what the government is doing with respect to human rights of its citizens. That is very crucial. I outlined the executions that were taking place.

I would like to hear his view on the P5+1. While we agree we do not want Iran to have any nuclear weapons because it would pose a regional threat, nevertheless, we do not want to forget the main issue, which is its government's lack of human rights.

•(1950)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, the whole idea of sanctions was to get Iran to come to the table to discuss the issue of nuclear proliferation. That is what the P5+1 process is about, to stop Iran from having access to a nuclear weapon.

We should be cautious but supportive. Everyone wants to achieve the aspirational goal on which we all agree, and that is to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons in general.

As an aside, I hope the government is fully engaged with the NPT review process that is going on.

It also goes without saying that we have to be vigilant on human rights. Some people suggest that we cannot do both. We must trust, verify and ensure that we are holding Iran to account on the nuclear question. It is absolutely critical. Supporting the P5+1 is important, because what is the alternative? At the same time, we need to be focusing on the human rights conditions and supporting the human rights defenders. One of the most important human rights defenders was arrested today, again.

We need to be focused on this. We need to support the process in which our allies are involved. However, we must not take our eye off the human rights situation in Iran.

We also have to step back for a moment and understand how the Iranian regime works. There are many different layers. Therefore, when we see Rouhani doing the public diplomacy, smiling and engaging, that is one part. Then there is the other part, which is the people who are being jailed in Evin prison and the people who are being executed. We must not forget them. We must stand by them. We must support them.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chair, does the member opposite believe that the additional protocol should be signed before Canada considers ratifying any framework being put into place?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, we need to understand that any protocols that curtail abuse are important. We should strengthen the sanctions on members of the Iranian regime who are involved with human rights abuses. We should also look at the nuclear question and what we can do in a positive way to achieve the goal that we all want to see, and that is to stop the proliferation.

This is not just about of Iran of course. This is also about Canada's export of technology to other countries, as well as fuel. There is also the issue of the nuclear safety agreement. I know the Prime Minister was involved a couple of years ago in the international conference, which is so important. Frankly, we could strengthen our resolve there a bit by being engaged in the IAEA for instance.

We should do everything we can to hold the regime to account. We should be vigilant, ensure parliamentarians are engaged, as we are, and do everything possible for Canada to be engaged in stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The last thing the Middle East needs is another player with a weapon of mass destruction.

•(1955)

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure to be speaking tonight. Some time ago, I co-founded the Canadian Parliamentarians for Democracy and Human Rights in Iran along with the member for Mount Royal. This is Iran Accountability Week, a week to address the fourfold Iranian threat: nuclear; terrorism; incitement; and, as members have heard tonight, Iran's violations of human rights.

I am proud to be part of the Iranian political prisoner advocacy program. Two years ago, I advocated for Mr. Hamid Ghassemi-Shall of Toronto who was released later in 2013. This year, I am advocating for his cellmate.

Let me introduce Dr. Omid Kokabee, a 33-year-old Iranian experimental laser physicist. He attended university in Iran, Spain and Texas. Dr. Kokabee started his second Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin in 2010.

In January 2011, Dr. Kokabee went home to Iran to visit his family. It was during this family visit that he was arrested, and he has been in detention in Tehran's notorious Evin prison since. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison for being convicted of the unsubstantiated charges of communicating with a hostile government, that being the United States, and receiving illegitimate funds. These so called illegitimate funds are actually the normal stipend given to doctoral students at the University of Texas.

While in detention, Dr. Kokabee has been subjected to solitary confinement, prolonged interrogations and pressured to make a confession. His sentence was handed down in May 2012, after an unfair trial in a revolutionary court at which reportedly no evidence was presented against him. Dr. Kokabee has publicly stated that he is being persecuted for repeatedly refusing to work on Iranian military projects and helping to fulfill Iran's nuclear ambitions.

The Iranian regime is keeping Dr. Kokabee in prison because he is refusing to help it with its military program. The Iranian regime's objective to build a nuclear program will likely be the cornerstone of a policy to bully other Middle Eastern states. Iran is a destabilizing force in the region, and it has given the West no reason whatsoever to expect that it will use nuclear power peacefully or responsibly.

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Dr. Kokabee has been imprisoned for the last three and a half years. He has been denied proper medical treatment. He is suffering from heart palpitations, shortness of breath and chest pains. These symptoms require immediate examination by a cardiologist. He also has a history of kidney problems and is in severe pain. In addition, Dr. Kokabee has been suffering from stomach problems in prison and he has a history of stomach cancer in his family. Dr. Omid Kokabee's precarious medical condition lends urgency to the call for his immediate release.

Dr. Kokabee has also been awarded a number of awards from U.S. science organizations because he has been taking a courageous stand and shows willingness to endure imprisonment rather than violate his moral stance that his scientific expertise not be used for destructive purposes, and for his efforts to provide hope and education to fellow prisoners.

Dr. Kokabee is yet another example of the travesty of injustice in Iran. I call on President Rouhani to exercise clemency, suspend his sentence and immediately release Dr. Kokabee.

There is no greater threat to international peace and security than the Iranian regime. We must not forget the daily atrocities going on inside Iran, and we must continue to draw attention to them on the world stage. The Iranian people deserve the dignity, respect and freedom that they have been denied for far too long.

Although Iran denies the existence of political prisoners in Iran, as we have already talked about tonight, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran reported, in March 2014, that as of January 14, 2014, at least 895 prisoners of conscience and political prisoners were reportedly imprisoned in Iran. This includes political activists, religious practitioners, human rights defenders, civic activists, journalists, bloggers and student activists. The rate of executions in Iran has been increasing over the past decade and saw a dramatic spike after the 2013 presidential elections. Amnesty International has reported that in 2014 Iran had the second-highest rate of executions in the world, second only behind China.

● (2000)

The special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran reported that there have been at least 753 executions in 2014, and credible civil society groups have reported that there have already been at least 329 executions in Iran in the first three and a half months of 2015.

In the shadow of the nuclear negotiations that are taking place right now, Iran has been engaged in a horrific execution binge. For example, 43 people were executed in a three-day period in April alone. Executions are frequently carried out without respect for due process and the rule of law. As members have already heard, Iran continues to act as a destabilizing force in the region by providing economic and material support to the Assad regime, to Shiite militias in Iraq, to Houthis in Yemen, and supporting terrorist entities, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Iran's human rights record continues to get worse.

What would happen if Tehran were to obtain nuclear weapons? Would a nuclear-armed Iran somehow change to become a positive force in the world? Would it not be more likely that a nuclear-armed Iran would be emboldened, leading to further instability in the region

and greater repression domestically? Might a nuclear Iran not crackdown even further on human rights defenders, minority populations and political activists? Proliferation concerns would increase if Iran possessed nuclear weapons, with a risk of possible nuclear proliferation to other countries or even non-state actors. In the Middle East, this is no small concern. Iran not only refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist but has also repeatedly called for the destruction of the State of Israel. A nuclear Iran, one that felt even less accountable to the international community and generally recognized international norms, would provoke an arms race in the Middle East and would be enormously destabilizing.

Iran cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Iran claims that its uranium enrichment program is for peaceful purposes, but does this claim hold up to scrutiny? Russia is supplying all of the nuclear fuel needed for Iran's nuclear power plant at Bushehr and Russia will do so for any new nuclear power plants that Russia builds for Iran. Therefore, Iran does not need to enrich uranium for these power plants. Nuclear fuel for research reactors and nuclear power plants can be reliably purchased on the international market for pennies on the dollar compared to what it costs Iran to produce enriched uranium domestically. I have to stress that this is an extremely expensive way to produce electricity for a country with some of the largest reserves of natural gas in the world.

The United Nations Security Council deemed Iran's nuclear activities to be a threat to international peace and security under chapter 7 of the UN charter and has imposed sanctions on Iran as a result. Canada has added additional sanctions of its own against Iran and our sanctions regime is one of the most stringent in the world. Iran remains subject to 10 United Nations Security Council resolutions and 12 resolutions of the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, for its undeclared nuclear activities. The IAEA board of governors has repeatedly found Iran to be in non-compliance with its safeguards agreement under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Iran continues to be in violation of many aspects of these resolutions which demand, *inter alia*, that Iran cease all uranium enrichment and ratify and implement the IAEA additional protocol.

In the past, after signing the IAEA safeguards verification additional protocol in 2003, Iran voluntarily agreed to implement it. However, in 2006 Iran ceased to implement the additional protocol. The safeguards verification system depends on all states parties to the non-proliferation treaty to follow the rules. We cannot allow Iran to unilaterally change the rules or it will undermine the global non-proliferation regime.

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I have to stress that we cannot be fooled by the charm offensive of President Rouhani. He may be nicer to look at and hear than Ahmadinejad but, as I have already said, executions have gone up. President Rouhani is the same man who was the minister responsible for Iran's nuclear program during this time, and who bragged about fooling the west about its nuclear aspirations. In a speech to a closed meeting of leading Islamic clerics and academics, in 2006, Rouhani revealed how Tehran played for time and tried to dupe the west after its secret nuclear program was uncovered by the Iranian opposition in 2002. He boasted that while talks were taking place in Tehran, Iran was able to complete the installation of equipment for conversion of yellowcake, a key stage in the nuclear fuel process, at its Isfahan plant, but at the same time convinced European diplomats that nothing was afoot.

● (2005)

He stated:

From the outset, the Americans kept telling the Europeans, "The Iranians are lying and deceiving you and they have not told you everything". The Europeans used to respond, "We trust them".... When we were negotiating with the Europeans in Tehran, we were still installing some of the equipment at the Isfahan site. There was plenty of work to be done to complete the site and finish the work there. In reality, by creating a tame situation, we could finish Isfahan.

Iran refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of the UN Security Council resolutions and openly admits to trying to circumvent the sanctions regime, including through ongoing efforts to procure nuclear and dual-use goods for its nuclear program.

I just have to say that this is a regime that cannot be trusted and we have to ensure that everyone here continues to promote human rights in Iran and we also have to ensure that it never gets the ability to have nuclear weapons.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the things that my colleague has brought to the floor today. He spoke briefly in his comments about the situation in Syria and the regime of Bashar al Assad. We know that Iran is a state sponsor of the al Assad regime. I wonder if my colleague has any thoughts on how this has extended and protracted the war in Syria.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, there is no question that what we are seeing taking place in the Middle East today, and Syria, in particular, is that we have a regime in Iran that has been contributing to this destabilizing factor.

They have funded both dollars and weapons to the al Assad regime in Syria, to Hezbollah in Lebanon, and to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. They are also providing weapons and support to the Houthis who have started the civil war in Yemen.

There is no question that theocracy, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, wants to expand that theocracy throughout the region and promote its warped sense of religion and statehood as a Shia caliphate.

We do have a situation that we need to address. That is why it is so important that we deal with this issue of possible military dimensions that are occurring in Iran and what they are trying to do with nuclear weapons.

If I may, I will continue on with some of the things that we are seeing.

On top of the Security Council resolutions from the United Nations that it has been violation of, the National Council Resistance of Iran, back in 2002, revealed that Iran had undeclared nuclear sites, including a uranium enrichment site at Natanz.

Similarly, in 2009, the world learned that Iran had built a hardened underground enrichment facility in Fordow.

In both cases, Iran only admitted to what it had done once it was caught red-handed. In both cases, Iran was legally obligated to notify the IAEA of these activities in advance.

The rules that Canada and all the rest of the nuclear powers in the world have to follow do not seem to apply to Iran. For more than two decades, Iran has conducted secret prolific and sensitive activities with military applications, with ballistic missile devices, and we can only see that they want to develop nuclear weapons to destabilize the region and, indeed, the world.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Chair, I think we all agree that the human rights situation in Iran is truly appalling.

There are many problems. There are repeated violations of freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of expression and freedom of association. There are also violations of democratic norms and principles. The justice system is not working as it should in a democratic society and there have been many reports of torture.

Many of my colleagues spoke this evening about the death penalty. We should all oppose capital punishment at a very fundamental level, particularly in Iran, because unfortunately, that country has one of the highest execution rates.

These are difficulties that all Iranians face. However, in addition to being denied their fundamental rights, some targeted groups face other more specific difficulties simply because of who they are. I would like to give three examples. The first involves homosexuals because we know that sexual relations between consenting adults can carry the death penalty in Iran. That is completely unacceptable. Second, we often hear about the Baha'i minority, which has suffered widespread discrimination, as have all of the minorities, but there is also the Ahwazi Arab minority. According to Amnesty International, last week, over 75 members of the Ahwazi Arab minority, some of whom were children, were arrested by groups of masked men affiliated with Iran's security and intelligence services simply because of their perceived political views. They were arrested even though they were peacefully expressing their political opinions. Now, no one knows the whereabouts or legal status of some of these individuals or whether charges will be brought against them.

The third group I want to talk about is the women because they too are victims of systemic discrimination. I will read a lengthy quote from a recent report by Amnesty International, which is doing extraordinary work on the ground. We should all applaud their work. In my opinion, this excerpt sums up the entire situation best:

A woman's testimony in court is valued at half that of a man in legal proceedings and reparations paid for killing or causing injury to a woman are half those payable for same harms to a man.

In short, a woman is worth half what a man is worth. I will continue.

Government Orders

The age of criminal responsibility for girls is just under nine years old but just under 15 years for a boy. Rape within marriage and domestic violence are not recognized as criminal offences. Engaging in lesbian sex is punishable by 100 lashes with a fourth time conviction resulting in the death penalty. Early and forced marriages are common with 41,226 girls between the ages of 10 and 14 getting married, according to the 2013-2014 annual report by the National Organization for Civil Registration, and at least 201 girls under the age of 10. At some universities women are barred from studying certain subjects, ranging from engineering to English literature, as a result of quotas that seek to reverse advances made in the number and proportion of female university students. They also face restrictions on watching sports in public stadiums.

● (2010)

There are currently bills under consideration in Iran that would limit women's access to a range of reproductive services, including family planning, of course. Naturally, we are still very concerned about the human rights situation in Iran. I have to emphasize that the situation is not improving. It actually seems to be getting worse.

Another major concern is Iran's nuclear program. At least in that area there seems to be some hope since the agreement between Iran and the P5+1.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I am hearing some very strange comments from the other side of the House, comments that are beneath the dignity of this House.

Getting back to this agreement, of course we have to be extremely prudent. Nobody is denying that. We cannot rely on words; we need to rely on actions. As Barack Obama said, this deal is not based on trust; it is based on unprecedented verification. As William Hague, Great Britain's former secretary of state and foreign secretary, said, it is possible to work with Iran and through diplomacy address what appear to be intractable problems. That is the key. When it comes to diplomacy, negotiations are never simple and never easy, but more often than not, they are the only true and long-lasting solution.

I would like to give an example that may not appear to be directly related. I want to talk about the Central African Republic. We learned yesterday that armed groups in the Central African Republic have agreed to release all the children in their ranks and end child recruitment. It is estimated that between 6,000 and 10,000 children have been used as either child soldiers or sex slaves, and all of them have been or will be released. This is huge, and it is thanks to the efforts of UNICEF. That organization did not simply say that those are the bad guys and refuse to enter into dialogue with them. Clearly, it does not agree with what those armed groups are doing, but its representatives sat down and negotiated with them anyway.

Today I spoke with someone from UNICEF who was very proud of what they have achieved. He said that nothing can be done if we do not negotiate. Despite their utter condemnation of the activities of those armed groups, the UNICEF representatives took the time to sit down with them. The final outcome is that between 6,000 and 10,000 children will be released.

A parallel can be drawn with P5+1. Those people did not just say that the Iranians were the bad guys. They sat down, imposed conditions, introduced verification and made sure that they created a regime to move away from any potential nuclear threat from Iran, thereby making the region safer and more peaceful for everyone.

The same is true for human rights. We can achieve things through diplomacy, pressure and sanctions. Those methods are useful.

Through sanctions, dialogue and pressure, we will really be able to help the people of Iran in their aspirations for freedom, peace and democracy.

● (2015)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):

Mr. Chair, does the member who just spoke agree that, at the very least, Iran should sign the additional protocol before Canada ratifies or comes to an agreement with the framework that is presently being discussed with the United States, P5+1?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I imagine that the hon. member across the way, who is so skeptical about diplomacy, is probably alluding to the protocol that ensures that the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors have unrestricted access to the site.

This protocol is part of the P5+1 agreement with Iran. By concluding this agreement with the P5+1, Iran accepted the procedures and principles involved.

● (2020)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the comments by my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie. She is known for her work in the international community, and we appreciate everything she does.

She mentioned Amnesty International, which also does good work. I wonder whether implementing the framework agreement on nuclear non-proliferation and a possible far-reaching agreement will require a quick verification to ensure that the terms of the agreement are complied with and that the safety of Canada's allies in that region of the world is improved.

Can my colleague elaborate on the need for a verification process? How important is it for the government to be involved in this process to put in place a model to start this possible verification?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her question and also take this opportunity to point out all of the extraordinary work that she does too. She is always present and she is interested in the issues. How many times have we had discussions on various subjects? I would like to thank her.

Verification is absolutely essential. With regard to the P5+1, if anyone knows about nuclear issues, they do. They are working on very important verification systems, even though some of the details have yet to be finalized.

Rather doing very little other than shouting from the sidelines, I would like to see Canada get involved and contribute to this verification process. That is essential, and it would provide us with some hope of making a region more peaceful and safe for everyone and all of our allies.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Chair, I know that Canadians want to be sure that human rights are always respected. Whether it is here in Canada or elsewhere, that is very important to Canadians.

Government Orders

Can my colleague elaborate on the measures that the government should take to advance human rights in Iran? Canadians care about this issue, whether it is in Iran or elsewhere. For example, the government negotiated free trade agreements with countries that did not respect human rights, such as Colombia. If we can advance human rights in free trade negotiations, then we can certainly do so under other circumstances.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I would like to once again thank my colleague for her question.

In theory, Canada could play a role and work more actively to advance human rights in Iran. Unfortunately, in a way, Canada pulled the rug out from under its own feet by putting an end to its diplomatic relations with Iran, since this prevents us from establishing a dialogue. As I always say, establishing a dialogue does not mean that we agree on everything. It means that we are talking and that we are talking specifically about the issues on which we do not agree.

The British embassy was attacked. The British government closed its embassy but it did not sever diplomatic relations so that it would have another avenue for putting pressure on Iran, in addition to sanctions and other measures.

In the absence of that, civil society does end up picking up the slack. I mentioned Amnesty International in my speech. Yesterday I had the opportunity to contribute to the campaign of a young man in Laurier—Sainte-Marie. He is 11 years old and is collecting donations. He is going to bungee jump to promote international human rights. Canadians as young as 11 are getting involved. We know that Canadians think it is important for human rights to be respected around the world and in Canada.

I cannot help but mention that today we concluded the debate on Bill C-51 and that a number of my constituents think this bill could potentially violate Canadians' human rights.

• (2025)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Chair, I wonder if my colleague could talk about how important it is for journalists to be able to share the necessary information with the general public. I would also like her to talk about the importance of freedom of the press in democracies. We know that the government has often tried to prevent journalists from getting the necessary information, even with respect to policies on the Hill.

Could she talk about the fact that journalists and bloggers play a very important role and they should not face the threat of arrest when they try to inform the public?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague again.

Freedom of the press is absolutely fundamental in our democracy and our system of accountability. The Conservative government has developed a strange relationship with the press in Canada. However, things here are nowhere near as bad as they are in countries like Iran and Egypt and in far too many other countries in which the media are controlled or gagged.

This freedom is essential to democracy and the trust people have in their institutions and their own democracy. When that trust is lacking, we inevitably end up with very serious problems, not to

mention the ethical problems that arise when freedom of expression, and particularly freedom of the press, is violated.

[*English*]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Chair, we are blessed to live in a country with freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Debates in this very chamber often swirl around the sacredness of those values and what we must do to protect them.

People who serve in uniform commit their lives to defend those values. I know this well as a son of a father who ended up as a prisoner of war, committed to those freedoms.

History suggests that the people of Iran share Canadians' high regard for democracy. Cyrus the Great was one of the first law givers of ancient times, a king who liberated the Jewish people from captivity under the Babylonians. In the early 1950s, then prime minister Mossadegh led a democratically elected government at a time and in a region where the right to elect one's leaders was fragile at best.

As the first ever government liaison to the Canadian Iranian people, I have come to appreciate contributions of people of Iranian background to the cultural fabric of our Canada, people like Davood Ghavami, president of the Iranian Canadian Congress, who has worked so hard to introduce Persian culture here in Canada.

People of Iranian background appreciate hard work, good education, art, music, and close families. Women of Iranian background in Canada have demonstrated great leadership. I think of Nassreen Filsoof, head of the Canadian Iranian Foundation, and the human rights advocate Nazanin Afshin-Jam Mackay, for instance.

There is tension today between the governments of Canada and Iran, tension that is at odds when judged against the natural affinity between the people of the two countries. Canada rightly holds the Iranian regime to account for breaching international nuclear proliferation guidelines, for supporting terrorist organizations, for destabilizing the region, and for human rights abuses against its own people. Tonight it is Iran's human rights record that is the main subject of our deliberations in this great chamber.

Despite President Rouhani's diplomatic engagement and the ongoing nuclear negotiations, there has been no indication of any transformative shift in Iran's policies and activities. The president and members of his administration continue to make public statements inside Iran and to international audiences in support of rights and freedoms. However, there has been no evidence of improvements, and the state continues to undertake serious and systemic human rights abuses.

As Canadians, we believe Iran should be judged by its actions, not by its words. The Iranian regime continues to flout due process and the rule of law, and seriously restrict freedom of expression, assembly, and association, consistently attacking human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, and bloggers.

I thank the many colleagues of all parties in this chamber tonight with whom we stand together against those abuses against the oppressed people of Iran.

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I would like to make special mention of my colleague, the member for Mount Royal, who has been a driving force in recognizing Iran Accountability Week. He and others have pointed out that the death penalty is used frequently in Iran. In a three-day period last month, 43 people were executed. Persecution of the Baha'i people in Iran, a religious minority, has gotten worse. We know of more than 900 political prisoners in Iranian jails, which means there are probably many more.

To be perfectly blunt, the situation of human rights in Iran has not improved since the election of President Rouhani in June 2013 and has shown clear signs of deterioration on several fronts.

The discussion of liberties can be very theoretical, and so it is important to bring it down to ground level. To speak of 900 prisoners makes our minds reel and stretches our imaginations. Therefore, the genius of Iran Accountability Week is that each of us participating parliamentarians pairs up with one Iranian political prisoner to highlight that person's plight and to personalize the situation better, for the world to see.

● (2030)

[*Translation*]

It is always difficult to put theory into practice when it comes to human rights. It is too easy for us here in Canada, where we enjoy freedom and equality, to forget the suffering of people who are oppressed by a dictatorship. To avoid an overly theoretical discussion, I suggest that we put ourselves in the position of someone jailed for their political convictions.

[*English*]

Based on information provided to me by Ms. Afshin-Jam MacKay, I am going to share the story of Behnam Ebrahimzadeh who was in prison for five years for being a workers' rights activist, as well as defending children and human rights in Iran.

As Behnam's family recounts, this Nowruz, or Persian New Year, was the fifth for the family without Behnam by their side. He is in ward 2 of Rajai Shahr prison, known as Dar Al Quran. Originally he was sentenced to 20 years in prison, but after a huge public outcry, his sentence was reduced.

However, as his sentence was coming to a close, Judge Salavati, at branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, resented him to nine years and four months on brand new charges of colluding with the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, a banned opposition group, and spreading propaganda against the regime by contacting Mr. Ahmad Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Iran.

Behnam categorically denies any and all connection with the Mojahedin. It is impossible to prove the negative absolutely. Although he is not a murderer or a thief, he is housed alongside dangerous common criminals in this ward, and as a result his safety is threatened regularly. He suffers from arthritis in his neck, and further due to the continuous pressure put on him inside prison and long periods of solitary confinement, he suffers from intestinal and kidney bleeding, for which he is denied medical help by prison authorities. He is denied even a painkiller.

Sadly, Behnam's only child, Nima, is suffering from leukemia. Behnam is denied any visitation with his family and child. His family thanks all the peace-loving human rights advocates in Canada, Iran, and around the world for our support. Together, we believe that continued pressure on the Iranian authorities increases the likelihood of the release of Behnam and many like him.

It is our duty to inform the public and human rights bodies about his imprisonment and torture for simply defending workers, children, and human rights.

● (2035)

[*Translation*]

In Canada, our heroes are mainly hockey players, musicians and leaders of civil society. Iranians count many poets—such as Hafez, Saadi, Rumi and Omar Khayyam—among their national heroes.

I greatly admire Saadi, who lived in the 13th century and whose words are inscribed on the wall of the United Nations building in New York. The poem is called *Bani Adam* or *Children of Adam*. It tells us that men and women around the world are one, and says that if one person suffers, all of humanity suffers with them.

[*English*]

Saadi's poem, famous among Persian people, relates so poignantly to why we are here today. As he put it:

The children of Adam are limbs to each other,
Having been created of one essence and soul,
If one member is afflicted with pain,
The other members uneasy remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The title 'human' you cannot claim.

These are strong words, and they communicate a universal truth of our moral responsibility to champion the cause of those who suffer, as we now champion those in prison in Iran.

Given that we know of hundreds of political prisoners there, we can assume there are many more about whom we do not know, and others living daily in fear for their freedom and their very lives.

Saadi points out the significance of even one political prisoner. In my case, I have chosen Behnam, suggesting that he represents all those who suffer in oppression, in Iran and elsewhere. My colleagues in this House tonight and my friends who fight for freedom in Iran and elsewhere can all agree with this sentiment. We ask President Rouhani and other members of the Iranian government to let Behnam and other prisoners of conscience free. Saadi would cheer us on.

In my role as government liaison to the Canadian Iranian community, I have come to love Persian poets. I have written a poem each Nowruz, and one especially for this evening. It is called *A Poem for a Prisoner*.

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Eight hundred years ago, the poet Saadi said it best;
He said that feeling others' pain can oddly make us blessed.
He sensed that in our souls a link unites us all as one,
That we are all one family beneath a common sun.

Saadi's words in Bani Adam reach us all today—
People here in Canada; people far away.
It's a foreign government whose abuses we despise.
Those who suffer its abuse are brothers, in our eyes.

Canada seeks justice, and we'll shout it from the heights;
Our Government opposes those who menace human rights.
But while we challenge tyranny wherever it may reign
We sing with Saadi soulfully his powerful refrain.

It's the bully government that we summon to account.
It's not a quarrel with Irani citizens we mount.
Our quarrel with the foe relates to government, it's clear;
Our bond with Persian people is healthy and sincere.

Mossadegh and Cyrus stood for freedom at the base;
Iran will learn to smile again, extend azaadi's face.
Oppose the government we will—but Saadi said it best;
We share with Persians eshgh, uniting East and West.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Chair, the Conservative government talks about human rights in Iran and says many things in that regard.

However, I would like to know whether the government is making actual efforts to ensure that progress is truly being made on human rights in Iran. Are there concrete measures to back their words?

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague very much for her question.

I think that we are all working together this evening to move beyond words and identify concrete measures. For example, the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto supports a radio program for Iranian citizens. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs has brought forward a number of initiatives to the United Nations and other international organizations.

We continue to be the friends of the oppressed in Iran, and the people of Iran know that they can count on the Canadian government.

● (2040)

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Chair, I really appreciate the member taking the time to share a poem with us. It is not something we see in the House often, so I thank him very much.

The member will agree that Canadians always stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Iran in their aspirations for freedom, peace, democracy, and the rule of just law, and it is something we stand for, whether it is in Iran or anywhere else. That is the type of people we are. We will continue to stand with them and speak out when their voices are unfairly silenced.

New Democrats believe that Canada has an important diplomatic role to play in bringing Iran back into the mainstream international community. That being said, I am in agreement that in the House

there was all-party recognition of Iran's human rights abuses and other issues that require long-term diplomatic solutions by the international community. However, what bothers us is that, rather than strengthening our diplomatic presence, we have seen the government actually cutting resources.

I am wondering how the member thinks we can address long-term challenges such as this one without necessary resources. Maybe he can explain to us what the government is prepared to do to try to help in situations such as this. We know that we have great organizations on the ground, which are trying to address the human rights issue and trying to guide us while this is happening, but maybe he can talk about that. He can also talk about the verification process that needs to happen and what the government is going to do about the verification process when it comes to the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Chair, the questions raised by my colleague are very intelligent ones, and I thank her for them.

I believe that the answer lies partly in the role of Canadians of Iranian background here in Canada who can educate us concerning the best things we can do. There are people like Davood Ghavami, the head of the Iranian Canadian Congress, and Nassreen Filsoof, of the Canadian Iranian Foundation, who do their best to bring about a level of understanding here.

When the government appointed me the first-ever government liaison to the Canadian Iranian community, I anticipated that I would play three roles. First, I would be a voice for people of Iranian background here in Ottawa. Second, I would help communicate to that community what our government is trying to achieve. Third, and perhaps most ironic, given that I am not of Iranian background, I would promote the Persian culture here, or at least help people of Iranian background do that here in Canada. It has been an honour to do that for the past six years.

I believe that part of the answer also lies in the diplomatic relations between the countries. This is obviously a matter of great sensitivity, as there are no embassies between our two governments. However, I call this day upon the government of Iran to appoint a protector in Canada, not a protector in the United States, because the people of Iranian background who need diplomatic services could benefit from that. That would be something the Iranian government could do.

Finally, I would like to say, and I believe I share this with every member in the chamber, that we know there will be a day when there will be a Persian spring, when Nowruz will come, the freeze will melt away, and Iran will become the bulwark of democracy in the Middle East. We must do everything we can to bring that day about and bring it about soon.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question about the journalists who have been imprisoned in Iran and the ongoing human rights violations. I am wondering if he is aware of the efforts being made by the Canadian government to advance human rights, as he is a representative of the government. What is Canada doing to bring out the more than 200 journalists who continue to be imprisoned in Iran, especially on the heels of World Press Freedom Day? It is important to talk about the freedom of journalists.

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● (2045)

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Chair, it is both serendipitous and ironic that it was just World Press Freedom Day and so many journalists are imprisoned in Iran, such as bloggers and people who merely desire to express their views in a free way.

The Government of Canada has been consistent, and in fact has led in the General Assembly of the United Nations year after year, in calling for Iran to change direction and pull away from its oppression. We are known around the world for our leadership on this. We all wish there was more we could do.

We are supporting the program run out of the Munk School whereby we send messages to the people in Iran to encourage them and give them some sense of what is really going on in the world and to make sure that people who desire freedom know that they have friends in other parts of the world.

We are also doing our best to support people of Iranian background here in Canada who desire freedom everywhere in the world. They are ultimately leaders here in Canada who can raise us up to a level of freedom not only in Iran but everywhere else. They know what oppression is like. They appreciate their freedom, and I am so honoured to call many of them my friends.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague from West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for his continued advocacy on behalf of Iranians in Iran, those who have been politically imprisoned. I know that he has a great love for the Persian culture. He often brings greetings during Nowruz, the Persian new year. I also know that he is quite concerned about the human rights conditions and the destabilizing role Iran plays in the Middle East and around the world.

I would like to hear his point of view on how he sees the hopeful discussions of the P5+1 in making sure that Iran does not achieve its nuclear ambitions. More importantly, could he talk about some of the commentary coming out of Tehran in the media that both President Rouhani and the negotiators from Iran who are in the P5+1 essentially told the press there and the entire community that they have not signed anything, nor do they plan on bringing down more than 5% of the centrifuges they have online today.

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Chair, it has been said that there are many paths up a mountain. There are many leaders and advocates in this House who promote freedom for the people of Iran, and I thank my colleague for that question, because he is certainly one of them.

I would first like to mention that it was a historic day when our Prime Minister attended a Nowruz event this past year, the first time ever that a Canadian Prime Minister has formally attended the great celebration of the Iranian spring, a strong statement by our government, on behalf of all Canadians, that we stand with Canadians of Iranian background and that we certainly stand against the oppression in Iran.

Concerning the discussions that are going on that deal with stopping Iran from expanding its nuclear capacity, I can only hope that the P5+1 governments have the guts to sign a good agreement, but even more that they have the guts to not sign a bad agreement. We have an international community to hope for restraint, to know

that there will be inspections, and to know that the government that has flouted United Nations conventions on inspections concerning their nuclear program will adhere to those before any long-lasting agreement is signed.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

As the representative of a large diasporic Iranian community in my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam and also Port Moody, I have had the opportunity to discuss Iranian human rights abuses with residents, such as Ali Pahlavanlu and Fred Soofi, as well as the Tri-City Iranian Cultural Society. I am therefore quite pleased to rise in the House to participate in tonight's take note debate regarding Iran Accountability Week.

As we know, the Iranian regime record on human rights has been utterly deplorable. The international community and international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have condemned widespread violations of political, economic and social rights in Iran. Violations include deprivation of the freedoms of religion, expression, assembly and democratic participation. As well, there is political imprisonment and torture. Women face substantial and systemic discrimination. Homosexuality is punishable by flogging and execution. Journalists and bloggers are often targeted for arbitrary arrests. Baha'i leaders and observers have been persecuted and imprisoned.

For instance, in January 2013, 11 journalists were arrested on the accusation of co-operating with foreign media organizations in a targeted clampdown against the BBC and Voice of America. This followed the January 2010 execution of two men, arrested solely for exercising their right to peacefully protest during the period of unrest that followed the disputed presidential election in June 2009.

These two stories are not unique. Tragically, the arrest and execution of political dissidents is all too common in today's Iran. Ahmed Shaheed, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, issued two reports last year that found "an apparent increase in the degree of seriousness of human rights violations", and expressed alarm at the "rate of executions in the country, especially for crimes that do not meet serious crimes standards". He found "no sign of improvement" on rights issues previously raised by UN monitoring mechanisms.

Canadians expect their government to do the hard diplomatic work and international engagement needed to advance accountability and human rights in Iran and around the world. Canada's New Democrats believe that our great country has an important diplomatic role to play in bringing Iran back into the mainstream international community, and to continue advancing the notion of a role that a Canadian diplomatic presence would have on that regime.

This sentiment was shared by former Canadian ambassador to Iran, Ken Taylor, when he stated:

Diplomacy for me is, one way or another, a method to influence an adversary. And to do that you need an exchange, you need to even though you're not partial to that regime.

We all recognize the need for continued caution in our diplomatic approach, but the Conservatives must do more than just condemn Iran. Denouncing the Iranian regime cannot replace strong diplomacy. Instead, the government should be looking at how Canada can engage responsibly with Iran to encourage more reforms.

As former British foreign secretary William Hague stated:

This agreement shows it is possible to work with Iran, and through diplomacy address intractable problems.

This statement calls into question the Conservatives' decision to sever diplomatic relations with Iran in 2012, given the important diplomatic role that Canada could be playing to strengthen human rights protections and foster democratic change. Despite our strong opposition to the Iranian regime, New Democrats nonetheless believe that Canada must have a seat at the diplomatic table. Without one, our criticism of the Iranian regime is largely rhetoric, lacking the leverage which a strong diplomatic presence would create.

• (2050)

In conclusion, Canada's New Democrats will continue to stand with the people of Iran and speak out when their voices are unfairly silenced in their pursuit of freedom, peace, democracy and fair application of the rule of law. We will also continue pushing the Canadian government to engage diplomatically with the Iranian regime. As such, an engagement could have a tangible impact on altering the most deplorable actions of the regime.

Finally, I would also like to commend the members for Ottawa Centre and Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for their active participation in Iran Accountability Week and their continued efforts on behalf of Canada's New Democrats to raise the issue of these serious human rights violations.

• (2055)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chair, the member opposite made reference to Canada pulling its diplomatic corps out of Iran. That was done for the safety and security of our diplomats in Iran. Unlike the New Democrats, we are concerned truly about their safety and security, not just about the union dues that would in turn go toward funding their party.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Chair, I do not know how I can dignify that comment with a response.

The NDP has a strong concern with many nations around the world, including Iran. I just finished laying out the concerns that we have for the rights infractions. I am sorry, but it is very sincere after consultation with those people in my riding who have explained to me the torture that some of those they know have experienced under that regime.

To say that we are not concerned about how we as a nation are to engage with our partners in a diplomatic way is completely off-track. Also, I cannot believe that the member would make comments about union dues that make no sense and which have no reference to what we are talking about tonight.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Chair, as you know, the NDP strongly supports the people of Iran in their efforts to build a greater democracy.

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I would like the member to talk about a subject that is of interest to me. Could he tell us more about the balance between democracy, assistance to the public, and obviously, the quest for nuclear disarmament?

[*English*]

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Chair, absolutely, countries that have democracy get the support of their government in terms of an investment in that democracy in the resources that are needed. We are seeing clearly that this is not happening in Iran. In fact, we are seeing the opposite.

Canada has a role to play in ensuring that kind of democracy is happening around the world. We need a seat at the table to stress to countries such as Iran that have clear human rights infringements, political imprisonments, torture, that this sort of thing is unacceptable on the world stage and must be addressed.

We need to be engaged with regimes that are doing this. Clearly, we must play a role. That is also how we are going to play a role in terms of nuclear disarmament. We need to be engaged with the regimes that are out of step or out of line.

In saying that, it is clearly important that we provide the resources and the funds needed for countries not only like Iran but of course Canada, to engage in that kind of real diplomacy around the world. We need to resource our staff and our embassies in order to obtain the kinds of results that we need around the world. If they are not resourced, we are not going to see the kinds of results that are needed in terms of a diplomatic solution, and then we would get an escalation of violence, which is not the kind of result that is helpful.

• (2100)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak on the topic of Iran Accountability Week.

Canadians I have spoken with across my entire community of Scarborough—Rouge River and all across Toronto stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Iran in their aspirations for freedom, peace, democracy and the rule of law, and not just rule of law, but the rule of a just law. I know we will continue to stand with them. New Democrats definitely continue to stand with them and speak out when their voices are unfairly silenced.

As for my personal journey, I started off as an 11-year-old child activist against human rights violations that occurred in many parts of the world, starting from the country I was born in, which is Sri Lanka. I was shot at as a child because I was born an ethnic Tamil, so I understand the importance of standing up for a people whose voices are silenced. I made a promise to myself that I would be one of the many voices for the voiceless people in the world.

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Today, the people of Iran who want to speak out continue to be oppressed and continue to face censorship with respect to the Internet and the media. I was doing some research and I learned that Iran is actually the seventh most censored country when we talk about Internet access. This is from the website of the CPJ, the Committee to Protect Journalists. We also know that over 200 journalists are currently imprisoned in Iran, which goes to show how much our activists are working. I call journalists activists because they are putting their lives on the line when they are trying to report what is happening in their country. They are trying to get the message out to the world and their lives are at risk for doing this.

It is not just the journalists themselves, but it is also the journalists' relatives who are being put in a position of fear, continued intimidation and threats. To quote from CPJ's website:

In Iran, journalists' relatives have been summoned by authorities and told that they could lose their jobs and pensions because of the journalists' work.

It is not just the people putting themselves in the line of duty by being journalists who are being imprisoned or persecuted and prosecuted, but it is also their family members who just by association are now being threatened with the loss of their employment, their pensions and their livelihoods, just for the work these journalists are doing.

In a country as great as Canada, we need to make sure we are standing up and being that voice for the voiceless around the world.

I want to go through a bit of a timeline of some of the recent events in Iran, focusing specifically on the human rights angle.

In June 2009, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared to have won a resounding victory in the presidential elections. We know that all rival candidates who challenged the results alleged there was vote rigging. At least 30 people were killed and more than 1,000 were arrested in those protests.

In January 2010, Iran executed two men who were arrested during the period of unrest that followed the presidential election.

In July 2010, an Iranian woman was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery, prompting, as we all have heard, an international outcry for support for the woman.

In January 2013, protests happened because 11 journalists were arrested and accused of co-operating with foreign media organizations in a targeted clampdown against the BBC and Voice of America.

Mr. Chair, time is short, but I have so much more to talk about. The violations continue. They include deprivation of the freedoms of religion, expression, assembly and democratic participation. As well there is the political imprisonment of not just journalists, but activists. We know there are also members of parliament who have seen their positions forcibly taken away from them.

• (2105)

I just want to also mention that in July 2014, Parliament dismissed Mr. Reza Faraji-Dana, a pro forma science minister, for supporting students and lecturers who were involved in the 2009-10 protests. It just goes to show that it is not just the average citizen of Iran but all levels who are being persecuted, prosecuted and

imprisoned. As a country as great as Canada, we need to do everything we can to stand up and be the voice for the voiceless and continue to fight for human rights in that country.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, my colleague got a little off topic or off of her notes when she was talking and I wonder if she would like to use the next minute to give a bit more of her dissertation.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Chair, I am thankful to the parliamentary secretary for her mention of a dissertation. I am hopeful that some day I will have the opportunity to do my PhD and do a real dissertation. However, today I am just standing up as a citizen of Canada who is privileged to speak in this House and provide my voice as one of the voices in this country to stand up for defending human rights in Iran.

Perhaps I will continue with what the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights mentioned on the situation in Iran. He issued two reports last year that:

...found an "apparent increase in the degree of seriousness of human rights violations" and expressed alarm at the "rate of executions in the country, especially for crimes that do not meet serious crimes standards"... "no sign of improvement" on rights issues previously raised by UN monitoring mechanisms.

It just goes to show what the world knows at this point, and we need to ensure that we have the mechanisms in place and that we are doing everything we can to ensure that it is not just words in us saying that Canada stands shoulder to shoulder with the people of Iran in fighting for freedom and democracy, but that we are actually making sure our actions show that as well.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Chair, my colleague spoke quite a bit about journalists being sent to prison.

My husband was a journalist for a long time and he could not always say what he wanted to say. There is even some repression here in Canada by newspaper owners, but neither he nor his family were ever in danger of being arrested. However, that is what is happening in Iran.

What does my colleague think about the role of freedom of the press in establishing or re-establishing a democracy or keeping democracy alive in a country?

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague from Hochelaga for that question, as well as her husband for his years of service as a journalist. When there are bombs and guns, and shells being dropped, we know the imminent danger. Journalists who are writing and telling stories are storytellers who put themselves in situations of danger. We have to tip our hat to them and understand that they are putting themselves in that situation voluntarily in order to be the voice and to share the stories of what is happening on the ground. In that sense, the work that journalists do needs to be valued and elevated to another level. When journalists, scientists and government are silenced, like what is happening in this country, we start to slowly deteriorate the quality of the democracy in that country, and we are seeing it at a much elevated level in Iran.

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As my colleague hinted, we are seeing in Canada as well where our journalists, or our scientists in the government, are being muzzled and our journalists are not being allowed to report certain aspects of stories that they do uncover. That should not be the case. It should be a case where our charter rights are recognized and valued. Freedom of expression should be available to all members and all citizens of this country, which includes opposition members of Parliament and every Canadian citizen who wishes to express and stand tonight.

● (2110)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: We're not talking about climate.

Ms. Lois Brown: Oh, brutal.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Chair, I hear Conservative members laughing and making comments, but from looking at the bills that they have put forward, for example, Bill C-51, which openly and overtly attacks my fundamental rights of expression as a Canadian citizen, we can talk about everybody.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Terrorists.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Basic human rights.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Chair, they are yelling "terrorists", but it is not just terrorists, it is all Canadian citizens whose charter-protected rights are now being violated by the bill the current government is bringing forward, and that is an affront to our democracy.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and draw attention to the poor state of freedom of religion or belief in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and notably the persecution of its religious minority communities by the Iranian government.

It is with regret that I note the abject failure of the government of Iran to create an environment that is inclusive and respectful of an individual's right to manifest his or her faith freely. It is in fact the state that drives the violations and abuses of Iranians' right to freedom and religion and belief.

Freedom of religion or belief is a universal right. As reflected in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to change religion or belief. It is also a right enshrined in article 23 of Iran's own constitution, which forbids investigation of one's beliefs and harassment based on one's beliefs.

In practice, however, Iran is failing to respect its own domestic and international human rights obligations, including by preventing thousands of its own citizens from freely and openly manifesting their faith. This not only deprives them of their religious freedoms, but is also a central component of their human dignity.

This is especially true for the Baha'is, Christians, as well as Sufi and Sunni Muslims living in Iran. Their persecution remains widespread and acute, often ranging from exclusion from the job market and education to arbitrary imprisonment and the infliction of physical violence. Any social hostility against them is perpetuated and sometimes instigated by a government rhetoric that demeans and wrongly associates minority faith groups with foreign plots.

This only fosters attitudes of mistrust and, in some cases, promotes violence and intimidation against members of religious minority communities. This is perhaps most evident in the case of the Baha'is, who have been actively targeted by the Iranian government for many years and are subject to a litany of discriminatory policies, harassment, arbitrary detention and violence.

Since August, 2014, it is estimated that at least 126 Baha'is had been held in Iranian detention centres. Reports consistently have noted insufficient trial safeguards and inadequate access to legal counsel. Making matters worse, lawyers who had accepted sensitive Baha'i cases were targeted themselves, several ending up in prison or being forced to flee the country.

Members of the Baha'i community are systematically denied access to higher education in Iran, have had raids on their homes and have even had their places of burial desecrated.

Officials have reportedly frequently offered Baha'is an opportunity to avoid these punishments by recanting their faith. However, a central tenet of Baha'i faith is to be true to their faith and not to deny their religion. For this act of defiance, Baha'i youths are denied places at universities, and men and women have continued to languish behind bars for years.

This remains the case for seven imprisoned Baha'i community leaders, arrested under the charge of espionage and threatening national security, when in reality their supposed crime was practising their faith.

The situation in Iran remains likewise challenging for Christians. According to UN figures, roughly 300,000 Christians live in Iran. They, like individuals belonging to a few selected religious minority communities, are afforded a slim degree of official recognition and room to practise their faith, so long as they do not proselytize.

● (2115)

Conversion from Islam, known as apostasy, is illegal in Iran. It is an offence punishable by death. Reports have noted a marked increase in the monitoring and intimidation of Christian communities by Iranian authorities. Officials have raided private worship sessions, frequently confiscate bibles, and physically intimidate converts and lay people. Among them, at least 49 Protestant Christians are currently detained and Iranian security services have stepped up their closures of officially licensed churches and arrests of Christian pastors linked to recent conversions of Islam to Christianity. This has included Iranian-born American pastor, Saeed Abedini, who is serving an eight-year sentence after being convicted as a supposed threat to national security in 2013.

Like their Christian and Bahá'i counterparts, Sufi, Dervish and Sunni Muslims have also seen their space to openly and freely practice their faith continue to shrink. They too find themselves intimidated, monitored and imprisoned by Iranian authorities, again under so-called national security offenses. At least 150 Sunni Muslims are currently detained for convening religious meetings, as well as an estimated 10 Sufi or Dervish Muslims.

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Leaders from the Iranian regime's clergy have further incited hostility toward these groups, allegedly claiming they spread Wahhabism or Salafism, linking them to plots of foreign states. They have even produced and aired state-run programs that demonize Sufism.

Altogether, these combined actions create a socially hostile environment for the Sunni, Sufi and Dervish communities.

The challenges faced by individuals belonging to religious minority communities remain daunting. They are up against a government that uses every possible tool at its disposal to control and deliberately rob them of the freedom of religion or belief, using legal and extralegal means.

This systematic discrimination and persecution is unacceptable and I can assure hon. members present that the Government of Canada has not remained silent on this issue. As a country based on pluralism and comprised of a multitude of cultures and faiths, Canada is uniquely positioned to protect and promote freedom of religion or belief. As such, we have made this a key foreign policy priority and established the Office of Religious Freedom, located in the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, or DFATD, to speak out and advocate on behalf of persecuted religious communities worldwide, including those in Iran.

Working closely alongside his colleagues at DFATD, Canada's ambassador for Religious Freedom, Dr. Andrew Bennett, has consistently condemned the unjust actions of the Iranian government against its religious minority communities. He continues to engage with Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the UN's special rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and key leaders from Iran's various faith communities to further develop Canada's strategy on addressing the religious freedom and broader human rights situation faced by the Iranian people.

Canada continues to stand beside Iran's oppressed religious minority communities. We will remain a leader in promoting their freedom of religion or belief and for the improvement of Iran's human rights situation writ large.

• (2120)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Chair, again, we all want democracies for every country in this world. Unfortunately, there are challenges and we need to work with these countries to try to overcome them.

When we look at the nuclear non-proliferation agreement that was done in April 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 negotiations group, which are U.S., France, Britain, China, Russia and Germany, we realize this is a tentative agreement. It has been put in place to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

It is important for us to go into a bit of the statement. It says, under this statement of intent, that Iran has committed to the following: to reduce installed centrifuges from 19,600, with only 5,000 spinning and no advance models or further research and development; to shut down a secondary enrichment facility for at least 15 years; to reduce low enriched uranium stockpile from 10,000 kilograms to 300 kilograms for 15 years; and to remove and destroy the core of the heavy water reactor at Iraq, commit to not building another heavy

water reactor for 15 years and allow inspectors from IAEA to inspect any facility any time.

When we look at that, even President of the United States, Barack Obama, has said that this deal is not based on trust, that it is based on unprecedented verification. They are taking this a step at a time.

Do the Conservatives not think we can do something as well to move a step forward in trying to assist with that democracy?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, there is nothing in writing on that agreement that was talked about in April.

While we appreciate the efforts of P5+1 negotiations, our government believes that every diplomatic measure should be taken to ensure the Iranian regime never obtains nuclear weapons. Until Canada is satisfied that this is the case, our sanctions will remain in full force. We will judge Iran by its actions, not words. Canada will continue to defend the rights of those suffering at the hands of the Iranian regime and will be a voice for all those who have been silenced by Iran's repressive actions.

Already the Iranians have enough highly-enriched uranium to produce medical isotopes for the next 25 years. There is no reason for them to enrich uranium any further, other than for military reasons.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Chair, the hon. member eloquently stated the sad situation taking place in Iran. Including the opposition critics, we all agree that the situation in Iran is absolutely disastrous and we do not want to minimize the human rights abuses taking place. Every one of them stated this and that is why it is Iran Accountability Week.

However, I was totally stunned to hear the member for Scarborough—Rouge River talk about the erosion of freedom of speech in our country. She talked about Bill C-51. She said that we were on a similar level to Iran. That is an affront to every Canadian. To say that this is comparable to Canada is nothing more than shameful. I would like a comment again from my colleague on that issue.

• (2125)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, to build on my hon. colleague's comments, in addition to talking about freedom of speech and reporting, there was mention of the Tehran embassy closure. I want to assure members present, as well as everyone listening to these proceedings, that the safety and security of our personnel abroad is this government's top priority.

At the time of the closure, the Iranian regime had shown blatant disregard for the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and its guarantee of protection for diplomatic personnel. Diplomatic relations between Canada and Iran were suspended due to the regime's sponsorship of terrorism, its nuclear ambitions, and its abysmal record on human rights.

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Furthermore, the Government of Canada formally listed Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism under the State Immunity Act. It was under these circumstances that Canada could no longer maintain a safe or diplomatic presence in Iran, and the decision to close the embassy was made. This was all made clear in our announcement on September 7, 2012.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to thank my friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for her excellent speech and for outlining how ethnic and religious minorities have been traumatized under the leadership of President Rouhani, and before that President Ahmadinejad. Of course, it is the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the leadership of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, that is orchestrating this repressive and regressive government.

Last year during Iran Accountability Week and the Iranian prisoner advocacy project, I advocated for a lady by the name of Reyhaneh Jabbari. She had been attacked in an attempted rape, and she killed her attacker. She was given a life sentence and ultimately was executed at the end of last year for defending herself against this assault.

We can look at jurisprudence in Canada and the rights we enjoy, including the freedom of speech. I want to add my voice to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs about the reprehensible comments made by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, because we have great rights in Canada, which I would say is one of the freest nations in the world, and those types of comments were completely unacceptable.

I would ask my colleague if she could talk about not only how ethnic minorities are continuing to be oppressed and discriminated against under the Iranian regime but about how women's rights have been violated and about all the political prisoners and student activists. Reyhaneh Jabbari was a student activist. That is really why she was arrested. The sexual assault, attempted rape, and the ultimate right to defend herself were trumped up charges to do away with someone who was standing up for her rights as a woman.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, as my colleague mentioned, a woman was murdered, executed, for being sexually assaulted and for having a rape attempted on her. She was the one who was executed, not the perpetrator.

Canada's position on Iran is clear. This is exactly why it is high time for President Rouhani to uphold Iran's commitments and to reverse the worsening human rights record, its continued material support for terrorism, and its ongoing nuclear ambitions. This is Iran's track record: its support for the Assad regime in Syria; the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program; the anti-Semitic and racist rhetoric of the Iranian regime against Israel; its appalling human rights record, which is among the world's worst; and its shelter of and material support for terrorist groups. Most of all, it has no respect for women or children.

• (2130)

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Chair, in my earlier remarks this evening, I was summarizing the categories or areas of major human rights violations in Iran, reflective and representative of the state-sanctioned massive domestic repression.

I was discussing three categories: the wanton execution binge, the widespread and systematic torture, and the culture of impunity that underpins it. I will continue where I left off, which was with my discussion of a fourth category of human rights violations, namely the plight and pain of political prisoners. Iran continues to imprison human rights defenders, leaders of religious and ethnic minorities, journalists, bloggers, lawyers, artists, trade unionists, students, and leaders of civil society generally, let alone leaders of the political opposition, where the house arrest of 2009 presidential candidates Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi have entered their fifth year.

Indeed, as Mark P. Lagon, president of Freedom House, testified today before our foreign affairs subcommittee on international human rights:

Iran holds at least 1,150 political prisoners, with likely far more, given many Iranian families' fear of government reprisal if they come forward.

Indeed, as he reported, a prominent human rights defender, Narges Mohammadi, was charged just last Friday with crimes against the state, the punishment for peaceful advocacy in favour of the abolition of the death penalty, a courageous challenge to the wanton executions in Iran.

Accordingly, as I mentioned earlier, as part of the Iranian political prisoner global advocacy project, I am continuing my advocacy on behalf of the seven imprisoned leaders of the Baha'i community, known as the Yaran, and have also taken up the case of Ayatollah Boroujerdi, an imprisoned senior Shiite cleric and long-time advocate for religious freedom in Iran.

These prisoners are representative of the criminalization of religious freedom in Iran and are also case studies of Iranian injustice, generally speaking.

It is important to name the Baha'i leaders. Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saïd Rezaïe, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm were all sentenced, as I mentioned earlier, to 20 years' imprisonment in 2008, a virtual death sentence given the advanced age of many.

Their convictions and sentences were based on such trumped-up charges as "propaganda against the system", reminiscent of the old Soviet tactic of "give us the people and we will find the crime".

Indeed, the Iranian regime has made the very membership in and practice of the Baha'i religion a crime in itself. In effect, the persecution and prosecution of the Yaran is in standing violation of both Iranian law and international treaties to which Iran is a state party. These violations include arbitrary, illegal, and prolonged detention; torture and ill treatment; false charges, such as spreading corruption on earth, a capital crime; denial of the right to an effective trial; and hearings devoid of any semblance of due process before a politicized judiciary.

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Like the Yaran, Ayatollah Boroujerdi is languishing in prison for crimes of conscience, including advocating for religious freedom where he has led benediction ceremonies in the presence of Shiites and Sunnis, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Baha'i. He has advocated for adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, calling for the abolition of capital punishment and for an end to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment such as torture, stoning, and whipping.

He has advocated for the separation of religion and state, and for the cause of universal justice, condemning thereby the abuse of radical and theocratic rule and terror, while establishing social welfare centres for helping the poor and disadvantaged.

Yet the price of his advocacy, as for so many of the other political prisoners, has been his own cruel and inhumane treatment during his imprisonment in solitary confinement, and more recently threats of execution.

• (2135)

As we have heard this evening, the Government of Iran seeks nuclear weapons, sponsors terrorism, spews hateful rhetoric, and tramples the human rights of its own people. For the remarkable and courageous individuals who dare to challenge the regime, telling their stories and taking up their case and cause is the very least we can do.

I will move now to a fifth category, which is the criminalization of freedom of expression, a mocking and criminal rejoinder to the just celebrated World Press Freedom Day.

While the Iranian regime continues to espouse principles of free speech and free press, and while the Iranian foreign minister, in the course of the P5+1 negotiations with Iran, said just last month that nobody is imprisoned in Iran for expressing their opinion, any rhetorical commitment is mocked by the reality of the criminalization of speech. Indeed, Amnesty International reported a sharp rise in arrests, prosecutions, and imprisonment of independent journalists in Iran that signals the authority's utter determination to crush hopes for increased freedom.

Indeed, as described in the recent report "Internet in Chains: The Front Line of State Repression in Iran", released by the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, the Iranian national police force includes a designated cybercrime unit which is tasked with monitoring the online activities of civil and political activists and were responsible for the investigation and ultimately the arrest of Sattar Beheshti, who was tortured and died in custody. According to the report, cyberpolice continue to pressure Internet providers to provide them with evidence of online political activism.

In a word, and indeed as Mark Lagon testified today, Iran's media and online environment are among the most repressive in the world. Among the 65 countries studied for the Freedom on the Net report, Iran is ranked at the very bottom. Simply put, authorities restrict online access to information through control of Internet infrastructure, extensive website filtering, rampant surveillance, and systematic arrests. Millions of websites, including Facebook and Twitter, remain blocked for Iranian citizens while the president, cabinet officials, and the supreme leader use social media to connect to the world.

Last fall, Iran's supreme court upheld the death sentence of 30-year-old blogger Soheil Arabi for a Facebook post deemed insulting to religious sanctity. Other online offenders were sentenced to between 7 and 20 years for blogging for a technology website contributing to a Sufi website and Facebook post deemed blasphemous to the regime.

That brings me, very quickly, to a sixth category, and that is the continued repression of workers and trade unionists.

Simply put, independent labour unions continue to be banned and those who participate in protests are fired or summoned to court and subject to arrest. At least 230 people were arrested in peaceful labour protests over the past year, and nearly 1,000 were fired in February 2015 for participating in peaceful labour protests. As well, five labour leaders were arrested on the eve of International Workers Day.

Finally, reference has been made to this in the discussion this evening and so I will not elaborate, but I am referring here to an important and compelling category of human rights violations, and that is the ongoing repression of women.

Despite article 20 of the Iranian constitution purporting to protect gender equality and despite affirmations for human rights for women by Iranian leaders, Iranian women face widespread and systematic discrimination in many areas of life.

For example, under the Iranian civil code, women are unable to leave the country without their husband's consent. They can be forced into non-consensual sexual relations in marriage. As well, we are witnessing an increasing incidence of child, early and forced marriage. Vicious acid attacks against women continue to go unpunished. Pending legislation restricts the hours during which women are allowed to work, creating a hierarchy for public sector hiring that further marginalizes women.

Pending legislation would empower employers and members of religious militia to enforce the government's conservative dress code for women, curb the use of modern contraceptives, outlaw voluntary sterilization, and dismantle state-funded family planning programs.

• (2140)

Since 2013, authorities have banned women from 77 fields of study, effectively reversing hard-line educational achievement. Regrettably, rather than sanctioning Iran, UN members elected Iran to the UN women agency board, effectively promoting a culture of impunity and gender discrimination.

I will close by saying that I would hope that the take note debate this evening will not only further the case and cause of those imprisoned and heroic persons in Iran, but at the same time, will advance the case and cause of human rights in Iran, of democracy and liberty, and thereby, we in Canada will have made a modest contribution to the struggle for human rights as a whole.

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[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Chair, I really appreciated some aspects of my colleague's speech. I would like to hear what he has to say about the labour movement, which is an indicator of change, regulation and influence among populations.

In his opinion, could the labour movement in Iraq help advance human rights and democracy?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Chair, yes, but the massive repression in Iran also includes repression of workers.

As I said, over the past year in particular, workers have suffered serious repression. That is another form of state repression that is taking place as we speak.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Chair, how does my wise colleague perceive the diplomatic role Canada should play in encouraging more reforms in Iran?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Chair, that should be one of our priorities and part of our foreign policy regarding human rights and international justice.

For us, as parliamentarians, the issue of human rights in Iran should be more than just a principle; it should also be a priority in our foreign policy.

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Mr. Chair, I want to elaborate a little more on the comments of my colleague who asked a question about the labour movement. It is important to reiterate a comment that was made by Mansour Osanloo. He is a well-known Iranian labour activist. He stated:

The labor movement has a deep impact on the struggle for human rights and democracy in Iran, and as the labor movement grows, it benefits the struggle for democracy and freedom.... The movement of workers as the builders of society, will inevitably push that society towards democracy.

I really appreciate the fact that the member has indicated that the Government of Canada also needs to engage somehow and work toward having the Government of Iran ensure that it has democracy. The people of Iran have not given up, nor should they, and we should not give up on them either. That is really important.

I am wondering if the member could indicate the important role that a government, especially the Government of Canada, has in working to ensure that there is some work being done to encourage more reforms in Iran.

• (2145)

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Chair, as I indicated, the Government of Canada needs to make the question of combatting human rights violations in Iran a major human rights priority. We have across both Liberal and Conservative governments taken the lead in passing an annual resolution at the United Nations General Assembly condemning human rights violations in Iran and in proposing actionable approaches in that regard.

As I said earlier, I think we need to go further to expressly sanction the major human rights violators in Iran and to do so through our SEMA legislation. We need to pass global emergency Magnitsky legislation, such as that now before the American

Congress and European parliaments, and put Iranian human rights violators on notice that they will be held to account, that there will be travel bans and asset seizures, that there will be punitive sanctions taken, and that this will be mainstreamed as part of our foreign policy, which we will affirm and assert internationally as we do here domestically this evening.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Chair, as colleagues on both sides of the House have described in great detail tonight, Iran has a deplorable human rights record within its own domestic society. However, and at the same time, Iran's abhorrent conduct is not confined to its own borders. Indeed, through a range of regional proxies, illicit financing and support of terrorism, Iran continues to extend its nefarious influence throughout the Middle East and far beyond. Its regional meddling ranges from Lebanon to Gaza to the front lines of the Syrian conflict. Its support of terrorism has been felt as far away as two terrorist bombings in Argentina and of course on the streets of Israel. What is more, Iran's insidious influence is now being felt in Iraq, where its support and guidance of Shia militias has heightened sectarian tensions and threatens to undermine the long-term stability of the Iraqi state.

In 2011, the world watched as a peaceful civil uprising in Syria was met with brutal repression from the Assad regime. As Syria descended into chaos and the murderous brutality of the Assad regime became evident, Iran steadily increased its assistance to the Syrian regime, serving as a principal supplier and enabler in a war that would see over 200,000 Syrians slaughtered. Iran, along with Russia today, remains one of the strongest supporters of the Syrian regime, providing financial and political support and military supplies and training. In propping up the al Assad, regime Iran has played a significant role in perpetuating the egregious human rights record of both the civilian and military wings of its ally.

In Lebanon, Iran continues to project its agenda through its proxy Hezbollah, a terrorist group that it has trained, armed and funded. Iran has used Hezbollah to carry out attacks across the globe, including in Europe and South America, and relies on Hezbollah as a part of its front-line military capabilities, both in Syria and aimed directly at Israel. Indeed, Hezbollah is flagrantly open in its desire and intention to see Israel destroyed. It continues to threaten Israel's security along its northern border through repeated incursions and rocket attacks. It continues to call on terrorist groups to join its maniacal campaign against the west. Through all of this, Hezbollah continues to rely on Iran for funding, arms, ideology and direction.

From behind the curtain, Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commanders serve as the guarantor for Hezbollah's ambitions, with no regard for what impact that could have on the security of Lebanon or the safety of the Lebanese people. For Iran, Lebanon is merely a tool to be manipulated for its regional influence and for the extension of its terrorist agenda, little more.

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Iran's drive to inflict terror on Israel can also be seen through its sponsoring of Palestinian terror groups, including Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad. Like Hezbollah, these groups' overarching goal is the destruction of the State of Israel. By continuing to fund, arm and train these groups, Iran is directly fuelling the terror tactics these groups use to impose an environment of fear and insecurity on Israeli citizens.

Since the last time the House held a take note debate on Iran, the regime has provided more than ample evidence of its continued support for these listed terrorist entities. In 2012, Palestinian terror groups took aim at Israeli citizens with newer high-technology rockets, enabling those groups to fire further into Israeli territory than ever before. The origin of this technology is no mystery. Indeed, Iranian commanders boasted that Iran transferred the technology to these groups so that the missiles could be manufactured in Gaza, instead of being shipped from Iran itself. Following the 2012 war, Iran continued to provide arms and rocket material to Hamas and PIJ to rebuild their stock of weapons in Gaza. This contributed, as we know, to renewed fighting in 2014, which claimed the lives of over 2,000 Palestinians and 70 Israelis.

● (2150)

The devastation of Gaza from the 2014 conflict has not stopped Iran from using Palestinian and Israeli lives as tools toward achieving its hegemonic goals. Public reports from April of this year indicate that Iran has resumed transfers of tens of millions of dollars to the PIJ to rebuild tunnels and purchase weapons for use in a future conflict with Israel.

At a time when Gazans are in desperate need of reconstruction and humanitarian assistance, Iran has demonstrated again that its own goal of terrorizing Israel takes precedence.

A further concern is Iran's continued meddling in neighbouring Iraq. For decades Iraq has been vulnerable to internal sectarian conflict, and in June 2014, this again took shape in the advance of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant, ISIL, also known as ISIS, also known as Daesh. This group seized about a third of the country in a veritable blitzkrieg of unspeakable violence and terror.

In this time of instability, more than anything, Iraq needed unity. More than weapons or ammunition alone, Iraq needed reconciliation between Sunni and Shia citizens. More than bombs and artillery, Iraq needed an environment in which revenge and suspicion could be overcome. More than military tactics, Iraq needed citizens of all stripes to band together and restore stability to their embattled country. This is not a future that Iran would tolerate.

Iran's campaign of violence and terror has been felt throughout the region. It has also attempted to project its agenda in other parts of the world. Iran's proxies have been active in targeting Jewish communities, Israeli assets and other opponents of Iran through a variety of terrorist attacks. Iranian agents plotted to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador to the United States. They have tried to assassinate Israeli diplomats in India, Thailand and Georgia, and have been caught providing weapons to the Houthi rebels in Yemen and the Shia opposition in Bahrain.

For these and for other reasons, Canada chose to designate Iran as a state supporter of terrorism under the State Immunity Act in

September 2012. This designation helps facilitate redress to victims with a Canadian nexus under Canada's Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, for loss or damage resulting from a terrorist act committed by Iran.

We also chose to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Qods Force, the external branch of Iran's military as a terrorist entity under Canada's Criminal Code. It is the regime's primary mechanism for cultivating and supporting terrorists abroad, and has been the conduit for the support of terrorist acts.

Whether looking at Iran's clandestine operations abroad, its involvement in supporting Syria's brutal dictator, Bashar al-Assad, its proxies in Lebanon and Gaza or its meddling in Iran, let alone its brutal domestic human rights violations, it is clear that the Islamic Republic remains one of the foremost threats to international peace and security.

This is far from the narrative that Iran's clerical leaders would have us believe, however, a simple change in tone should not be mistaken for genuine reform. Indeed, in the arena of international security, actions speak louder than words. In the case of Iran, its record of brazen regional intervention, continued sponsorship of terror, funding of militant proxies, makes its intention clear.

It is incumbent upon Canada and like-minded partners to continue to hold Iran to account for its destabilizing role across the international community.

● (2155)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Chair, we have heard many things tonight about Iran's actions and the violation of Iranians' human rights. There is overwhelming evidence, that is true.

I heard many facts and I heard about many things that are happening in that country. I would now like to hear what the Conservative government is doing to help advance human rights in Iran. To quote the member who just spoke, actions speak louder than words. I would like to hear him tell us about some Canadian initiatives, rather than just listen to his rhetoric.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her question, which has a fairly broad spectrum of answers.

As my colleague knows, Canada's direct diplomatic relations with Iran have been strained since shortly after the Islamic revolution in 1980, when Canada enabled the escape of American diplomats who had been protected in our embassy.

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For many years, from the 1990s to the early 2000s, Canada had a situation of controlled contact with Iran whereby we dealt only with consular issues, human rights interventions, and our participation intervening to act against Iran's nuclear adventurism.

Canada continues to speak out in international fora. We have imposed sanctions, which we have heard endorsed by members across the House tonight, with regard to Iran's belligerent international behaviour, its support of terrorist organizations abroad, and its severe human rights violations domestically. Canada will and should continue to maintain all of these positions, activities, and pressures to encourage the government of Iran to one day recognize freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

• (2200)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, I think I am closing this debate tonight here in Ottawa in the House. I am pleased to participate in this important debate on Iran's human rights record.

During the 2013 Iranian presidential election, the world was hopeful of President Rouhani being elected. He promised equal rights for all Iranians regardless of ethnicity and religion. He promised to tackle entrenched corruption and grant Iranians basic freedoms, as well as unleash the constrained talents and aspirations of the Iranian people.

Unfortunately, as we approach the two-year anniversary of Rouhani being elected, his promises have not been realized. The people of Iran continue to suffer at the hand of the regressive and oppressive Iranian regime. Rouhani has failed to live up to his commitments. He has attempted to cover up the failings and crimes of his regime through a sophisticated public relations campaign.

This is the reality of Rouhani's time in office.

Since his taking office, the number of executions has actually increased in comparison to his predecessors. In 2014, the Iranian regime executed 753 individuals. This was an increase from the already record high of 687 in 2013. Moreover, for this year, the Iranian regime has already executed 329 individuals, well on its way to break last year's totals. This startling reality was echoed by the United Nations Secretary General who noted, "...the application of the death penalty, including in relation to political prisoners and juvenile offenders", has increased.

Despite pledges by Iran's current administration on human rights issues, the situation in Iran has not improved. This is a regime that has not changed its ways. It continues to systematically infringe and violate the most basic human rights. The Iranian regime continues to flout due process and the rule of law, and severely restrict freedom of expression and assembly. Our government has actively taken action with our global partners to advocate for human rights of Iranians. We have imposed some of the strictest sanctions in the world against the regime.

We also led and co-sponsored last year's United Nations resolution on the situation of human rights in Iran, alongside 46 other countries. This ensures that Iran's human rights record remains on the global agenda.

In addition, we have also partnered with civil society groups to create and open an online digital square for Iranians to discuss openly and freely the issues facing the Iranian people. The people of Iran can count on Canada to remain vocal on the human rights situation in Iran.

On the nuclear front, the regime has remained non-compliant. In defiance of the United Nations Security Council resolutions, Iran continues to have a ballistic missile program and has been accused of seeking to develop missiles capable of being armed with a nuclear warhead.

In November 2011, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, released a report detailing 12 areas of nuclear research and development. The IAEA described these activities as being "...relevant to the development of a nuclear...device" and stated that prior to 2003 these activities were part of a structured program with links to the military. The report went on to say that some of the activities have continued past 2003 and could be ongoing. Many of these activities have no known civilian purpose. If Iran were not pursuing the development of nuclear weapons through this research into nuclear explosive development indicators, as the IAEA terms them, then why will Iran not co-operate with the IAEA, and verifiably demonstrate that its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes?

• (2205)

In 2013, the IAEA agreed with Iran on a framework for co-operation to look into the issues of the possible military dimensions, or PMDs, of Iran's nuclear program. Iran failed to meet the August 25, 2014, deadline for implementing measures related to two of the PMDs, to which it had agreed. Since August 2014, when IAEA director general Amano travelled to Tehran to get promises of co-operation from Iranian President Rouhani, the framework for co-operation has remained effectively stalled due to stonewalling by Iran. Iran has repeatedly made high level, public promises of co-operation, but does not deliver on these promises.

Iran has repeatedly refused to allow IAEA inspectors to visit Parchin, a military base close to Tehran, where Iran is suspected of having conducted high explosives testing relevant to the development of a nuclear weapon. Iran will also not allow the IAEA to speak with key Iranian scientists, including those who have led PMD-related work. Why would any country that was only aspiring to peaceful uses of nuclear power not simply allow the IAEA's inspectors the access they are seeking?

Diplomacy is the only way out of the situation. Iran needs to give the IAEA "anytime, anywhere" access, as Canada and other responsible countries do.

The time has come for Iranian exceptionalism to be over. Iran must follow the same nuclear rules as we do and be held accountable for its actions.

The Chair: There being no further members rising, pursuant to Standing Order 53(1), the committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

Government Orders

(Government Business No. 20 reported)

(The House adjourned at 10:08 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 10:08 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

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