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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 26, 2014

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 26, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

[*Translation*]

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

GRANDE PRAIRIE CENTENNIAL

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the City of Grande Prairie is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Over the past century, Grande Prairie has grown to become the hub of northern Alberta and an economic engine for both the province and our country.

Families have flocked to the Peace Country over the past century in the hopes of building a more prosperous future for their families and the generations that followed. The foundations of our community were laid by innovative, entrepreneurial, and committed community builders who faced and overcame incredible challenges in building our community. The challenges were great, and only those that were the most committed and adventurous visionaries ever made the trek north.

Survival and success in the newly settled Peace Country was only possible with the co-operation of neighbours. Neighbours cared for one another out of necessity, and a great tradition of community spirit was born, a reality that I am proud to say is alive and well to this day.

I am a proud representative of the dynamic Peace Country and the Grande Prairie region, a community that is home to innovative, entrepreneurial, committed and community-minded residents who are building on a well-laid foundation.

PURPLE DAY

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to tell the House about Purple Day, which was created in 2008 by Cassidy Megan, from Nova Scotia, to combat the stigma faced by many people with epilepsy. Right now, 300,000 Canadians are living with epilepsy. While there is no cure, 70% of epilepsy cases are treatable. Unfortunately, drug shortages often mean that treatment is not available. Shortages of Clobazam, Zarontin and other drugs have had disastrous consequences for patients recently.

That is why I am supporting Bill C-523, introduced by my colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, which would require manufacturers and distributors of pharmaceutical products to report any interruption in the drug supply chain. They would be subject to fines if they do not. This bill would also require the federal government to work with the provinces and territories to find solutions to the challenges posed by drug shortages. In recognition of Purple Day, I sincerely hope that my colleagues will come together and find solutions that will help those with epilepsy and their loved ones.

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[*English*]

ESSEX

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past year Essex has witnessed the passing of an important generation of farm, family and community leaders: men like Hon. Eugene Whelan, Tony Unholzer, Charlie Diemer, and Louis Byrne all left us for the presence of the God of the seasons.

Each shared so many common characteristics: humble farmers, decisive actors in their communities, and initiating fathers whose strength and character are evident in their children and their grandchildren. In biblical times, these men would have been called “patriarchs”.

Their loss to us is palpable, but their legacy is felt in the barn and the soil, and is bred into the DNA of successive generations still farming today. In that way, they too are still with us.

I am reminded of the photos adorning the Essex County Agriculture Hall of Fame in Harrow, and in a fresh way, I recall so many other local legends.

For their contributions, we offer our thanks, and may each rest in peace.

*Statements by Members***PURPLE DAY**

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled once again to stand in the House to recognize Purple Day for epilepsy awareness.

Purple Day was founded by Cassidy Megan to raise international awareness about epilepsy, a condition affecting 300,000 Canadians and 50 million people worldwide. Thousands of people across Canada will wear purple today as they celebrate our nation's leadership in epilepsy awareness. I thank my colleagues, many of whom are only too familiar with epilepsy, for their generous support and for wearing with pride their purple ribbons and shirts and blouses, and even socks today.

I ask my colleagues to join me in extending sincere thanks to Cassidy for her courage and her commitment to improving the quality of life of people with epilepsy.

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CAMPBILL COMMUNITY ACTION AWARD

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize the exceptional contribution of Dr. Rick Irvin, a family physician in my riding of Barrie, Ontario. Rick was one of Canada's first recipients of the Prime Minister's Volunteer Awards in 2011 and just last week was also awarded the annual Camphill Community Action Award for his contribution to palliative care.

This award celebrates the accomplishments of individual citizens whose visionary and practical contribution to community development significantly enhances Barrie's cultural environment and enriches its social fabric. I got to know Dr. Irvin when he was working to build a Habitat for Humanity home in Barrie, and when we worked together on the physician recruitment initiatives for RVH.

Rick's innovative thinking and effective engagement with the medical community were instrumental in creating palliative care education in the North Simcoe Muskoka region, where he helped secure funding to provide essential end-of-life care, and created and established Hospice Simcoe next to RVH in Barrie.

I thank Rick for his tireless efforts in helping to make Barrie a better place to live.

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●(1410)

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 11, 2013, I took part in a seminar on climate change education organized by the Fondation Monique-Fitz-Back. The 120 participants came to the conclusion that getting our elected officials involved is absolutely crucial. At the conclusion of the event, I therefore committed to making a statement in the House in order to make my federal colleagues aware of the urgent need to take action against climate change.

The latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, is crystal clear: "humans are the main cause of the current global warming".

In 150 years, we have used up 40% of our oil and gas reserves, which took millions of years to form. As a result, greenhouse gas emissions caused by this overconsumption of fossil fuels have increased at an alarming rate.

Extreme weather events will increase in frequency and intensity. The temperature has already risen by 0.8°C since the pre-industrial era, and it is expected to rise by another 0.3°C to 4.8°C by 2100.

As elected representatives, it is our duty to take a stand and to take meaningful action, both personally and professionally, against climate change.

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[English]

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share that one of my constituents recently received a prestigious honour, the Volunteer Service Award, bestowed upon him by the Province of Ontario.

Dan Kelly has been a lead volunteer for Junior Achievement, an international organization that has been working with students in the London-St. Thomas area since 1967. This fantastic program helps high school students run their own businesses and actually sell products to consumers. This includes product development, assembly packaging, and marketing. Consultants oversee the program as volunteers each year from November to April, and over the past several years the St. Thomas operation has been led by my friend Dan Kelly of Dowler-Karn Fuels.

Volunteers like Dan Kelly and the teaching of young people the skills of business is what makes communities like Elgin—Middlesex—London a richer place. Congratulations to Dan. We are proud of him.

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THE SKY'S NO LIMIT—GIRLS FLY TOO

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was an incredible event that took place in beautiful British Columbia on International Women's Day. It was called The Sky's No Limit—Girls Fly Too.

For two days, over 1,200 girls had the amazing opportunity to learn about jobs in the aviation industry. They also took their very first flight. With over 5,000 people in attendance, The Sky's No Limit—Girls Fly Too was the biggest female aviation event in North America.

This event was for girls to dream, and dream big, about the unlimited opportunities the girls have available to them in Canada. Some of those girls will become pilots, aviation mechanics, flight controllers, engineers and, like Jessica, a flight instructor. Maybe, like Chris Hadfield, one of those girls will be the captain at the International Space Station.

Statements by Members

Please join me in thanking event coordinator, Kirsten Brazier, Langley airport managers George and Guy Miller, the incredible pilots, and the generous volunteers who worked so hard for days to make this dream come true for those Canadian girls.

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[Translation]

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, on March 25, we celebrated the independence of the Hellenic Republic, Greece.

As the member for Laval—Les Îles, I have the good fortune and honour of representing one of the largest Greek communities in Quebec and Canada.

This week, I am proud to fly the Greek flag next to the Canadian flag at my Laval offices.

[English]

It is with great honour that I represent them and I want to thank each and every one of them for the outstanding contributions they are making to our community, not only in Laval but all across Quebec and the whole country.

I take this opportunity to wish all Greeks a great Greek Independence Day.

[Translation]

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

Long live Greece. Long live Greeks in Canada.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to speak yesterday during the debate on Bill C-22, the energy safety and security act. This important piece of legislation will modernize and increase accountability in Canada's offshore and nuclear industries. Our government understands that there are enormous economic benefits stemming from the offshore and nuclear industries. Bill C-22 will allow these industries to continue to grow while ensuring they are done in a responsible manner.

Bill C-22 will raise absolute liability in the offshore and nuclear regimes to \$1 billion. Our current liability limits have not been updated for over two decades. This is clearly unacceptable. While the NDP's plan would put Canadian taxpayers on the hook for the costs of incidents and increase the costs to Canadian ratepayers, Bill C-22 strikes a balance between ensuring protecting Canadians and ratepayers.

Our government is committed to our nuclear and offshore industries, and I urge all of my hon. colleagues to support Bill C-22.

● (1415)

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I want to commend the representatives of unions, NGOs and women's rights groups who represent Canada at the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The commission's declaration reaffirms the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls and recognizes that gender equality is a target that must be incorporated into all other objectives.

[English]

When it comes to making a difference for girls and women abroad, the government can build on the positive contributions made at the 2014 UN Commission on the Status of Women. For example, it could reverse its decision to direct funding away from reproductive services for girls and young women who are forced into marriage.

We hope that Canada will uphold this international declaration and make effective commitments to women's equality around the world. That is the Canadian way.

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PURPLE DAY

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today wearing the colour of the Caesars, not simply in tribute to history but to raise awareness of epilepsy.

Indeed, like the famed Julius Caesar himself, there are approximately 160,000 Canadians living with epilepsy. Epilepsy is a chronic neurological disorder that causes brief recurring seizures which can be quite severe.

While many epileptics enjoy productive lives, the stigma associated with these seizures can have negative effects on both patients and their families.

That is why I am proud to join my honourable colleagues in celebrating Purple Day, an international grassroots effort dedicated to increasing awareness about this disorder.

I am also very proud to see that our government has invested more than \$46 million in this research since 2006, and it continues to support further research efforts.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating Epilepsy Canada for their ongoing dedication to raising awareness and commend them for their efforts in eliminating this stigma.

* * *

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the report of the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women was a complete betrayal of our responsibility to missing or murdered indigenous women and girls, their loved ones, and those who continue to be victimized by violence.

Oral Questions

Despite the recommendations of witness after witness and the unanimous urging of all provincial and territorial premiers, the Conservative majority on the committee stubbornly rejected calls for a national public inquiry or a national action plan regarding the urgent issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Further, the chair's complete lack of flexibility and inadequate communication with the Native Women's Association of Canada undermined the special partnership that was to exist, and prompted NWAC to withdraw from the process.

Today, NWAC issued its formal response to the committee's report, expressing their frustration with the committee's lack of engagement and profound disappointment with the inadequacy of the recommendations.

During routine proceedings, I will be asking for the unanimous consent of the House to table NWAC's bilingual response.

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THE ECONOMY

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, KPMG, one of the largest and most respected accounting firms in the world, has ranked Canada as the best place to do business in mature markets.

Thanks to our government's low-tax plan for jobs and growth, Canada has weathered the global economic turbulence better than most other countries.

Our plan is putting more money in the hands of entrepreneurs and businesses, so they can hire more Canadians and expand their operations. It is working, with over one million net new jobs being created since July 2009, with 80% in the private sector.

The opposition has a very different plan, a plan to tax and spend that would hurt our private sector and destroy good jobs for Canadians. They want to impose a \$22-billion carbon tax, raise the GST, and raise business taxes, which would sap Canada of our economic strength.

Our government will not allow this to happen. We will continue to lower taxes; we will continue to reduce red tape; and we will promote the Canadian economy around the world.

* * *

• (1420)

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night, disturbing new reports surfaced about troubling activities involving senior Conservative operatives and a new federal riding.

The member for Mississauga—Brampton South went to the riding association meeting for Oakville North Burlington on March 19, uninvited.

Members of the executive asked her to leave. When she refused, they called the police. Out in the hallway, though, to back her up, was none other than Conservative Party boss Dimitri Soudas. Quickly followed were allegations that the member threatened to use

information in the Conservative Party database against members of the riding association.

When a Conservative organizer complained about this incident, Mr. Soudas had him fired.

All members from all parties should treat party volunteers and staff with respect, and allow democratic, contested nominations to play out fairly.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many farmers across the Prairies, and in my riding particularly, have been directly impacted by recent difficulties in getting their grain to market.

Six months ago, farmers brought in a bumper harvest, almost 50% larger than the past years. This should have been good news for the Canadian economy, as this meant that money was being reinvested throughout the supply chain. However, reality stepped in during the winter when grain piled up and was not making it to port.

Our government responded and brought in an emergency order for the railways to provide extra capacity for moving grain. Kent Erickson, chair of the Alberta Wheat Commission said that this “announcement demonstrates that the government is committed to ensuring Canada remains a primary and reliable supplier of agriculture products”.

Now, we take our next step. We will be introducing legislation in the House that will bring all players in the supply chain together. This is good news for farmers and good news for Canadians and our economy.

I call on all members of Parliament to roll up their sleeves and get to work ensuring this legislation passes quickly so the grain can get rolling.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the former chief electoral officer testified about serious problems with the government's unfair elections act. He said that the removal of vouching destroys a fundamental fail-safe in our voting system, and he said that limiting the ability of a chief electoral officer to communicate publicly is an unprecedented gag order.

After hearing this startling testimony, is the minister now open to more amendments to fix this deeply flawed bill?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government takes the very reasonable position that when someone shows up to vote they should merely have some ID, among which they can choose from 39 different options, to identify who they are and where they live. We know there were enormous irregularities in the last election with the use of vouching. There were 50,000 cases where the safeguards designed to protect against voter fraud were violated. When that was revealed publicly in the Neufeld report, the leader of the NDP said that if it continues “all is being lost”.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the word has moved from “fraud” to “irregularities”, so we are getting a little closer to the truth.

Mr. Kingsley also testified that the one-year requirement for preserving robocall records is far too short. As a former owner of an automated calling firm himself, the minister knows that these records could and should be preserved for much longer. Why is he making it more difficult to catch the fraudsters?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact right now the requirement is zero. There is no requirement to retain any of the information.

The fair elections act creates a mandatory public registry, which, by the way, Mr. Kingsley lauded yesterday, and it requires that the records be kept for one year. The reality is that the requirement applies also to the campaign volunteer who procures the call. A lot of these volunteers move on to different things. They are not permanently committed to a campaign. It is not reasonable to expect that for ten years they are going to keep a record of a telephone script, so the one year requirement is reasonable.

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ETHICS

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Kingsley, like Mr. Mayrand, left that bill in shreds by the time that their testimony was done.

Moving on to another Conservative scandal, that being the use of government jets, every Christmas it seems that the Prime Minister flies his good friend Mark Kihn from Calgary to Ottawa. This happens to be the same person who has helped the Conservatives raise millions of dollars.

The Prime Minister promised to finally end the Liberal culture of entitlement, so how can he justify a government jet for his own BFF?

• (1425)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is in charge of security for the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, since 2006, has put in place a new policy wherein when the Prime Minister flies for Conservative Party events or on personal business, the Prime Minister himself or the Conservative Party of Canada reimburses taxpayers for the cost of those flights.

The member opposite is quite correct. Before 2006, before this Prime Minister came to office, there was no such policy. That is something we campaigned on when we were in opposition, and it is another promise that we kept after we were elected.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are once again doing favours for party friends at taxpayers' expense. Mark Kihn raised millions of dollars for the Conservative Party. In return, Mr. Kihn has had the privilege of using the Prime Minister's airplane to travel from Calgary to Ottawa between Christmas and New Year's Day. That explains why the Conservatives do not feel the need for an air passengers' bill of rights.

Why do Canadians have to pay for the whims of the Prime Minister's friends?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will give the same answer that I gave yesterday. The RCMP is in charge of the Prime Minister's security and recommends that he not take commercial flights.

Since 2006, the Prime Minister has introduced a new policy to repay taxpayers when he travels for personal reasons or to attend Conservative Party events.

[English]

At the same time, we have an opposition party that is using parliamentary resources across this country to support members of Parliament in provinces where they have no members of Parliament. They have a lot to answer for over there.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Jean-Pierre Kingsley clearly indicated that the Conservatives' election “deform” bill is unacceptable in its current form.

It is unthinkable that the government would get rid of the vouching system, which allowed tens of thousands of people to vote in 2011.

It is also unacceptable that the Conservatives are trying to muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer by preventing him from informing and educating the public.

Will the minister listen to the recommendations of experts such as Kingsley and Mayrand, who know a lot more about the subject than he does?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are rules in place to safeguard the vouching system.

However, unfortunately, according to Elections Canada's report, these rules were broken in 50,000 different instances during elections.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

When it was revealed that there were 50,000 irregularities related to vouching, this is what the leader of the NDP said. “If we can’t even guarantee that the people who are voting are entitled to vote, and that can throw off the results of the elections, all is being lost”.

We agree, and that is why we are asking people to simply bring their choice of among 39 different forms of ID to prove who they are and where they live.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is cutting half of the staff and three-quarters of the funding from its climate change program. The new Minister of Finance is now responsible for those cuts.

Given his past comments, will the minister answer a simple question. Does he accept that climate change is real and is caused by human activity?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking action on climate change. We have introduced new emission regulations for vehicles. We were the first major coal user to ban the construction of traditional coal-fired power plants.

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

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is also for the Minister of Finance, and perhaps he will answer this one.

Next Tuesday, the annual budget for the building Canada infrastructure fund will be cut by 87%. Investments in world-class transit projects create good middle class jobs and improve economic productivity and quality of life.

Will the new Minister of Finance reverse his predecessor's infrastructure cuts?

● (1430)

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party can ask that question thousands of billions of times, but the answer will continue to be the same.

This government has tripled investments in infrastructure since we formed government in 2006. Over the next decade, we will provide stable and predictable funding, over \$53 billion.

We look forward to working with our partners and to renewing infrastructure in this country and, in the process, creating jobs.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next week, the infrastructure funding allocated to the building Canada fund will be cut by 87%.

Major projects such as the Champlain Bridge and the widening of the Henri IV highway in Quebec City create middle-class jobs and increase economic productivity. They improve Canadians' quality of life.

Will the Minister of Finance reverse the decision to make massive cuts to infrastructure funding?

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned previously, this government is making record investments in infrastructure. Over the next decade we will provide over \$50 billion in investments for provincial, territorial, and municipal infrastructure.

When that third party was government, I would describe its investments in infrastructure, in parliamentary terms, as peanuts.

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FINANCE

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of using evidence, the Conservatives are making up data to justify their misguided policies. On budget day, the government claimed Canada's job vacancy rate was on the rise, and since Statistics Canada says the opposite, the Conservatives just went out and brought numbers from Kijiji.

Will the government now admit the information in its February report is incorrect?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, employers across Canada say the biggest challenge they are facing is a lack of skilled workers. This is particularly problematic in certain sectors, including the natural resource sector and certain regions where thousands of jobs are going unfilled because there are not enough skilled workers to fill them.

That is why we are taking action, including the Canada job grant plan, to ensure skills training actually leads to permanent jobs and that employers are investing more in equipping Canadians with the skills they need.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, between the Parliamentary Budget Officer's figures and the information available on Kijiji, I think the choice is simple. The information on the skills shortage is simply incorrect. We certainly cannot expect to get accurate figures from a site used primarily for renting apartments and selling used furniture.

Oral Questions

Will the minister start developing policy based on information from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer or will he continue to use Kijiji?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is rather rich for the New Democrats to criticize the government's job creation record. They have voted against all the job creation measures our government has introduced, such as freezing employment insurance rates—which gives workers and employers some certainty and flexibility—tax cuts for manufacturers that buy new equipment and expand their operations, and so on. The NDP would introduce crippling new taxes.

• (1435)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance should know that Kijiji is for buying and selling things, not developing public policy.

Yesterday, I asked the new Minister of Finance about unused funds from budget 2013. His answer was unclear, to say the least. Now that he has had 24 hours to do his homework, can he tell us what he found out? What money from last year's budget was not used? What programs did not get all of the funding they were supposed to get? What programs were dropped?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we are not going to discuss plans for next year today. I have no intention of doing detailed analyses today.

[*English*]

The question really is: Why did the NDP vote against skills training? Why did it vote against Canadians with disabilities and aboriginal peoples to get the skills they want, to make landmark investments in research and innovation and to encourage investment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is twice now I have asked him questions about budget 2013. Someday I would like to get an answer about budget 2013.

The minister keeps making up stories about the job creation data. On Tuesday, he told us that 85% of the new jobs were full-time positions. That is completely false. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce says that 95% of the jobs created in 2013 were part-time positions. Contrary to what the minister says, the job market is stagnant. Why is the minister so determined to make up statistics?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if they want to talk about the past, we can keep talking about the past. Over a million net new jobs have been created since July 2009. Over 85% of those are full-time jobs, and over 80% of them are in the private sector. Our government is focused on what is important to Canadians: jobs and economic growth.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Let us try this again, Mr. Speaker.

We asked the minister to identify the parts of budget 2013 that had lapsed. Yet, the minister still has no answers. That is \$10 billion simply not accounted for; \$10 billion in Conservative broken

promises; \$10 billion that was not invested in the fragile Canadian economy.

Let us try again. What programs were cut, and what services were slashed by the Conservative government?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is distressed if less money is spent by the government. This, of course, goes to the heart of the problem. New Democrats have a scary fiscal policy, which is to spend money and raise taxes. They think that is the way to create growth and wealth in this country.

We do not think so. Ours is a low tax plan for jobs and growth. It is working. Canadian debt to GDP is one half of that of the G7—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us go to the heart of the problem. It is a Conservative budget we are talking about. The minister has only got two choices, either stunning incompetence or deliberately misleading the Canadian public on \$10 billion.

Let us move on to another serious problem facing the Minister of Finance. Because of serious errors in the last census, Manitoba is set to lose half a billion dollars in equalization payments over the next five years. There was massive flooding in Manitoba, and many people were not counted. Entire first nations communities were not recorded at all.

What action is the Minister of Finance willing to take in the coming weeks to rectify this serious problem?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the first point, apparently good news is bad news for the members opposite.

As to Manitoba, federal support to Manitoba is at an all-time high. Manitoba will receive nearly \$3.4 billion in federal transfers this year, a 24% increase from under the old Liberal government, including over \$1.7 billion through equalization; over \$1 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of 47% from under the Liberals; and \$453 million through the Canada social transfer, an increase of \$121 million.

Clearly, nothing has been cut.

Oral Questions

●(1440)

*[Translation]***DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in committee the former chief electoral officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, said that vouching is fundamental to our democracy and our electoral system.

Can the Minister of State for Democratic Reform tell us whether he agrees with the expert who oversaw our electoral system for 17 years?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we simply believe that people should bring with them a piece of identification that shows who they are and where they live to prove that they are eligible to vote. That is normal and I believe that Canadians think it is reasonable. There are 39 approved means of identification. That gives Canadians a great deal of choice.

We are going to require that Elections Canada inform Canadians of the approved pieces of identification they can use.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the government's Bill C-23 will do is increase the annual political contribution limit by 25%, bringing it to \$1,500 per person. The other major impact of Bill C-23 will be to exempt from campaign expenses the amounts spent to solicit donations from people who have made contributions in the past.

Can the minister explain where he got those ideas? Can he quote even one independent expert who believes that these measures will strengthen our democracy and reduce the influence of money in politics?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the expert who has already shown that fundraising expenses should be excluded from campaign expenses is the same expert who wrote the NDP policy. According to the NDP's own rules, all expenses related to fundraising are excluded from the campaign expenses.

The principle is that fundraising is not a means of campaigning. The NDP and the Liberals make that distinction in their rules. We are doing so in law.

[English]

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some time ago, the Chief Electoral Officer formed an advisory board of notable Canadians like Michael Wilson, Preston Manning, and Sheila Fraser.

Given the government's attacks on the CEO, will the Minister of State for Democratic Reform assure Canadians that the Treasury Board would never deny requests under Bill C-23's proposed subsection 20(1) to cover costs associated with engaging these advisors on a temporary basis?

Will the government agree to amend this deeply flawed bill to make that change?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only does the government support the Advisory Committee of Political Parties that currently exists, but we

are in fact also going to make it a statutory body so that the CEO of Elections Canada can consult with all political parties, not just those recognized in the House of Commons, before he issues new interpretations. This will allow for interpretations of law and advanced rulings to be consistent so that all parties play by the same rules.

* * *

PENSIONS

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hugely successful Canadian pension plan was built through constructive negotiations between the federal and provincial governments. The previous finance minister refused to continue that tradition and work with the provinces on a CPP expansion.

Now many Canadians are hoping that the new minister will reach out and finally get this job done. We can make a CPP expansion work with money the government already collects from Conservative hikes to EI premiums.

Will the new finance minister finally correct his predecessor's mistake?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians simply do not want to pay higher payroll taxes. That is why we have brought forward other measures to help them save taxes, such as pension income splitting and pool registered pension plans.

Let me quote what Shaun Fantauzzo from the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies says in regard to CPP expansion:

CPP expansion will prevent...businesses from hiring new workers, as well as force them to economize by either reducing hours or laying off existing employees.

We want to do what is right for Canada. Canadians do not want to pay higher payroll taxes.

* * *

●(1445)

*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada has confirmed that household debt is increasing and household wealth is linked to rising home values.

Values are rising because of demographics and the Bank of Canada, not because of the government. Experts believe that real estate prices could stagnate. That, combined with flat-lining incomes, will create additional financial difficulties for the middle class.

How will the budget, which is postponing important infrastructure spending, help the middle class?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are keeping a close eye on the housing market and we are prepared to take reasonable measures to maintain stability.

Oral Questions

That is why we recently took prudent action to strengthen Canada's housing market by introducing certain measures. For example, we reduced the amortization period to 25 years on government-insured mortgages, and we lowered to 80% the maximum amount lenders can provide when refinancing mortgages.

* * *

[English]

PENSIONS

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the junior finance minister just told the House that the Conservatives are actually opposed to artificially high payroll premiums, but that is exactly what they are doing with EI premiums. They are keeping them artificially high in order to pad the books before the next election to try to have a surplus.

Why is it unacceptable to have higher payroll premiums to ensure the retirement security of Canadian families, but it is acceptable for the Conservatives to use higher payroll premiums to pad their books for some surplus on the eve of an election?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand that small business is a cornerstone of our economy, creating jobs that support families in our communities. That is why we recently announced a three-year freeze to EI rates that would leave \$660 million in the pockets of job creators and workers in 2014 alone.

What is more, beginning in 2017, premiums would be set according to a seven-year break-even rate. This would ensure that premiums are no higher than they need to be.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the grain shipment crisis continues, with the system still short of over 70,000 rail cars. It is impacting businesses across the country.

Flour mills in eastern Canada are running critically low on supplies of high-quality western Canadian wheat. In fact, some mills have had to suspend operations.

The situation has not improved since the government's emergency order three weeks ago. It is a simple question: when will the minister take action to address the crisis, ensure that farmers are going to be properly compensated for their losses, and get grain moving not only across the world but across the country?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that the order in council has had a tremendous effect in western Canada, moving some 4,400 cars for each rail line last week. They are building to that 5,500 number that they say they can do without affecting other commodities.

The member opposite also has a very short memory. Just yesterday afternoon, I briefed him and the other opposition colleagues on the piece of legislation that will be coming forward after question period today, so I cannot understand what his concern is.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us see. What would be the concern of farmers in the western prairies? There are millions of tonnes lying on the ground, there is \$140 million out of their pockets every single week, there are 70,000 rail cars missing in a system that should have had them by now, and of course the minister says, "Well, just trust us. It will all get better. Wait for it. We will get there".

We need to make sure that the money goes back into the pockets of farmers across the country because what the minister has done is taken it out of their pockets and delivered it to someone else. Will the minister agree that what needs to happen is that it is farmers who need to be compensated during this crisis and because of this crisis, and not the government?

• (1450)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what farmers asked for a couple of years ago was the opportunity to market their crop at the time and price and place of their choosing. We did that with no help at all from the opposition.

We have moved forward on that rail review. We had Bill C-52 a year and some ago. The opposition did help us in that one, and that was welcome, but we also briefed them yesterday on the next steps: a piece of legislation going forward that will address a lot of what the member is asking for.

I am not sure just exactly what he misinterpreted from that yesterday. I thought we were very clear and very succinct in exactly what that piece of legislation would do.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that under the briefing we were sworn to secrecy. That is why we are not talking about it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, for 20 years the Liberal and Conservative governments have done nothing to phase out old DOT-111 train cars. Such incompetence. Irving announced that it would phase them out over the course of the coming year and CN announced that it would do so over the next four years.

What is the government's timeline? Can the minister tell us whether it is one year or two? We want a number.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in truth, our government has done more than any other government in ensuring the safety of Canadians when it comes to rail transportation.

Oral Questions

What I can say is this. I was very pleased to read the announcements of both CP and CN today, and of course of Irving Oil, when they indicated that they have taken the principled position of not utilizing older models of DOT-111 cars. Our Prime Minister has been very clear on this matter. He has said that we will be phasing out these older models, the DOT-111 cars.

I was in Washington yesterday meeting with my counterparts on the matter, and we are working together for a North American solution.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again we hear empty words. All we are asking is to make our communities safer. That is all we ask.

We have known for 20 years that DOT-111s are ticking time bombs. Since the government has no timeline, could the minister tell us when will DOT-111s stop going through populated areas?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, and this may be difficult to grasp from their perspective, it really is a North American issue. We have to work in concert with the majority of the DOT-111 cars, which are in the United States. That is why our officials continue to talk to one another.

However, we are seized with this issue. We are absolutely assuring the Canadian public that we are doing everything we can in the timeframe that we have to get to the right decisions with respect to these DOT-111s.

In the meantime, industry is taking their own decisions. I applaud them and commend them for it as well.

* * *

LABOUR

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne, the government committed to public service pay and benefits that are reasonable, responsible, and in the public interest. Federal public servants are fortunate to have access to a generous post-retirement voluntary supplemental health benefits plan that currently receives an unfair 75% subsidy from taxpayers.

The President of the Treasury Board indicated that he was in negotiations to make the plan more fair by moving to equal cost-sharing between taxpayers and plan users. Could he please update the House on the negotiations?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed I can inform the House, in case anyone is not aware, that we have reached an agreement with the public sector representatives as well as the representatives from the pensioners, the retirees. It is a fair and reasonable deal for retirees and public sector workers and it also saves the treasury \$1.1 billion a year for the next six years.

We are getting the job done for taxpayers and modernizing compensation in many different fields, and that work will continue.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people just do not trust the current government to protect

their privacy. We can see that from how quickly Canadians mobilized against the Conservatives' online snooping bill, yet new documents now show that public agencies such as the CBSA are already getting warrantless access to individual customer data from cellphone companies. We now know this regularly includes information about personal identity and addresses.

Would the government tell us how many of its departments are being asked to spy on law-abiding Canadians without obtaining a warrant?

• (1455)

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to privacy, Canada has some of the toughest legislation of any country in the world. On the point that the hon. member raised, I would like to reassure him. This is a common practice, and one that is within the law. In these matters, we expect all agencies to obey the law, and that is exactly the case in the example given by the member.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after the personal information of 500,000 students was leaked, no one trusts the Conservatives to protect their privacy any more.

In the 2012 fiscal year, the Canada Border Services Agency submitted nearly 19,000 requests for the personal information of telecommunications subscribers, and in most cases it obtained that information, without a warrant and without informing the subscribers in 99% of those cases.

Why is the minister allowing this violation of the privacy of honest, law-abiding citizens?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question, but I would like to repeat that Canada has some of the toughest privacy legislation in the world. Our government takes this matter very seriously on behalf of honest Canadians.

As I said, the Canada Border Services Agency complies with current Canadian legislation, in regard to the issue raised and all requests for information.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers are paying for employment insurance, but the Conservatives are cutting services.

The call centres are no longer keeping up with demand and only 32% of calls get a response by the government's own deadlines. The blame for this lies squarely on the lack of resources that has resulted from the cuts. Budgets for services to the public will go from \$521 million in 2010, to \$273 million in 2017. In other words, the situation is not going to get any better.

Oral Questions

Why are the Conservatives saving money on the backs of those who need help?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are still able to improve services. There has been an improvement in services over the past few months. I am working with my officials. I have asked my parliamentary secretary to conduct a study to determine how we can improve services to employment insurance claimants.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has cut \$190 million and fired over 2,000 employees, and now, guess what? People are experiencing some very serious service delays. Families that need EI are hurting seriously, while the Conservatives are adding insult to injury by offering nothing but longer wait times and more service cuts.

When will the minister, when will the current government start providing unemployed Canadians with the service that they deserve and that they paid for?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the majority of EI claimants receive a cheque within 28 days of making their claim. It is true, in fact. I know that the NDP does not like fact-based opposition, but we prefer evidence-based policy. The evidence is that the majority receive their cheques within 28 days.

He talks about laying off 2,000 people. In point of fact, the majority of those people were hired to deal with the spike in EI claims during the global economic downturn. The NDP solution to everything is to spend more and tax more, and that means kill more jobs.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada's budget is about to be cut by 30%, from just over \$1 billion to just under \$700 million. Climate change and clean air programs will be cut by \$179 million, from \$234 million to \$55 million. That is a whopping 77% cut to climate change programs.

Is it any wonder that President Obama is deeply suspicious of the government's efforts to deal with GHG emissions? Will the minister tell us how a 77% cut will help her secure Keystone XL?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no federal government has done more for the environment than this government. We have invested a record amount of \$4 billion in science and technology at Environment Canada alone. We have invested a quarter of a billion dollars in Canada's weather services. We have given new tax support for clean energy generation. Building on our record of protecting historic amounts of land, budget 2014 is also investing a significant amount of money to protect Canada's national parks and the environment, and we are providing almost \$400 million to make even more improvements—

● (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is considering imposing language tests on spouses coming to Canada. At committee yesterday, six out of six witnesses opposed this move, saying it would do nothing to reduce the abuse of immigrant women. The state has no business imposing conditions on who Canadians can marry and bring to this country, other than conditions involving age and criminality.

Will the minister commit right now to not imposing such Orwellian language tests on spouses?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can commit to doing two things: first, to continue to listen to Canadians, as we seek to update, modernize, and improve all of our immigration programs, which badly needed it in 2006, when we took them over from the Liberal government, which had left them in chaos, a shambles; and second, to continue to deliver those programs faster.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2011, the Conservatives abandoned their case against U.S. Steel. They claimed they had forced the company to invest an additional \$50 million in its Canadian facilities. It is now 2014, and there is no sign of these promised investments. There are signs that U.S. Steel is planning to shut things down.

Why has the government repeatedly failed to hold the company accountable? How many times will Conservatives ignore Hamilton's economy, ignore workers, ignore retirees, and let U.S. Steel off the hook?

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, U.S. Steel has had to make some difficult business decisions. The 2011 settlement with U.S. Steel contains commitments that provide economic benefit for Canada, particularly for Hamilton and Nanticoke.

Oral Questions

Many of the commitments in the settlement with U.S. Steel run to 2015, well beyond the original three-year term of the employment and production undertakings, which expired in October 2010. These commitments include that U.S. Steel must continue to produce steel in Canada, that U.S. Steel must operate at both Hamilton and Lake Erie until 2015, generating continued economic activity. It must also increase its original capital expenditure commitment by 25%, bringing it to \$250 million by December 2015.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what have they done to date? That is not an answer that will give any comfort to the retirees and the steelworkers in Hamilton. The Conservatives promised that this would be an investment creating the next generation of quality, decent paying jobs in Hamilton. Now instead of actually investing in our community, the company has said it is “mindful” of the promise, which is good enough for the Conservative government. When will the minister commit in clear and unequivocal terms to holding U.S. Steel accountable for the promises it made to the government and Hamilton?

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question, but let us look at the larger record of this government and the commitments we have made to Canadians. What this government will commit to is continuing the record that has led to over one million net new jobs in this country since July 2009, 85% of those full-time and over 95% of them in the private sector.

The measures that we have taken have led this country to a leadership position in terms of our economy, one where we will have a balanced budget by 2015. I think Canadians would expect the opposition party to support some of these measures.

* * *

SEALING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in today's paper, I read once again about the efforts of an international animal rights activist group, the IFAW, to spread misinformation about the Canadian seal hunt. Groups like them have been profiting at the expense of sealers and communities that rely on them for decades now. Millionaires like Paul McCartney come to our shores and spread misinformation far and wide.

Can the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans tell us about how our government is fighting this misinformation and standing up for sealers?

• (1505)

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Miramichi for the question and for her support of the Canadian seal hunt.

I also want to thank my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, for travelling to Geneva to argue our government's case at the WTO against the unfair and discriminatory European Union seal ban. This seal ban and others have been caused by fearmongering and the blatant spread of misinformation by groups like IFAW.

I hope that the World Trade Organization, other nations, and the Canadian people will look at the facts and see that the Canadian seal hunt is humane, sustainable, and well—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlottetown.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has refused to answer my written question about whether he or any of his political staff have ordered Justice officials to review the use of the notwithstanding clause to overrule Supreme Court decisions.

The courts have slapped down the Conservative legislation on sentencing, fine surcharges, prostitution, their unconstitutional judicial appointment—and lest we forget, this minister fought veterans in court and lost.

Will the minister tell the House, when did he or his staff first order departmental officials to assess the use of the notwithstanding clause?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have no idea why the member is insisting on the government examining the use of the notwithstanding clause, unless it is based on the fact that it was his government, his party, that was only one who ever used it. Maybe the member has a propensity for the use of the notwithstanding clause.

With respect to how we have treated veterans in this country, I want to commend the minister and his predecessors, as well as the defence minister, for the outstanding contributions they have made, with almost \$5 billion in enhanced support for Canada's veterans.

We are extremely proud of those men and women who do so much for Canadians each and every day.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, truckers at Port Metro Vancouver are still on the picket line. This is the largest port in Canada, handling billions of dollars' worth of goods.

Truckers are frustrated. Local businesses are upset. Even warehouses are handing out pink slips. The prairie farmers are suffering. Yet, the Minister of Transport prefers threats to rolling up her sleeves and getting a deal done.

Will the minister finally agree to sit down with the truckers and all involved to get a deal done?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is a serious situation at the Port Metro Vancouver. It is our most important port on the west coast, and that is why we have invested \$1.4 billion in it to make sure the Asia Pacific gateway works well.

To this point, we are working with our partners, the British Columbia government and Port Metro Vancouver. I am in constant contact with both the chair of the port and Minister Stone on this matter.

We want to ensure that we have optimal service at the port of Vancouver. Our 14-point plan is there, and the parties are at the table at this moment discussing how to return to work.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada leads the G7 in terms of its support for research at colleges and universities.

Today, the U15 group of Canadian research universities joined the global network of the world's best universities to propel Canadian research through increased collaboration on science and technology's challenges.

Can the Minister of State for Science and Technology, who happens to come from Canada's 10th largest city, please tell the House how our government remains committed to Canadian research excellence?

Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the question by the hon. member for Prince Albert, as I stand among colleagues for the first time as the Minister of State for Science and Technology.

First, let me congratulate the U15 for joining this prestigious global network. It is my honour to stand in this place and tell Canadians that our government remains committed to Canadian research excellence. Economic action plan 2014 has made historic commitments to science and technology, including the Canada first research excellence fund. This is a generational investment to ensure that Canadian researchers own the podium over the next decade.

* * *

● (1510)

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 14 mayors in my region have had enough of the Minister of Transport's inaction on the Sherbrooke airport file.

They wrote to her to ask for security facilities at the Sherbrooke airport, which would stimulate economic development in my region by creating tens of millions of dollars in economic spinoffs.

Unfortunately, she said no to all 14 elected officials in the region. There is a consensus and just one person is missing: the Minister of Transport.

Why does she want to hinder Sherbrooke's economic development? Why is she abandoning Sherbrooke?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are 89 airports in this country that are already designated to receive services from CATSA. Sherbrooke is not one of them, but Sherbrooke is one of over 20 airports in this country that have had the same requests for the provision of these services. They all go through the same process. It is reviewed by my officials, who are in contact with the various airports around the country with respect to this. However, I want to be clear: we are not expanding this list of 89 airports. Anything moving forward would have to be discussed specifically with CATSA and Transport Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, released his final report on the investigation he was conducting on the government's commitment to close the only French-language science library at Fisheries and Oceans.

The commissioner was clear. He unequivocally called on the government to reconsider its decision to close the Maurice Lamontagne Institute library in Mont-Jolie. The minister has had a copy of that report for 20 days.

She said that she wanted to hear the commissioner's opinion before taking action, so when will she confirm that the MLI library will remain open?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to updating the government with 21st century technology in order to be more responsible to taxpayers. Library users are asking for digital information, which is clear when our libraries average between 5 to 12 in-person visits per year.

We have received the Commissioner of Official Languages' final report and are considering the recommendations. Our libraries will continue to deliver services in both official languages. The commissioner has also recognized that the model for DFO's scientific libraries will not affect service to the public, nor language of work for staff.

* * *

[Translation]

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Michel Pleau, the sixth Parliamentary Poet Laureate.

Some hon. members: Bravo!

Routine Proceedings

[English]

PRIVILEGE

RUSSIAN SANCTIONS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising further to the question of privilege raised yesterday by the hon. member for Wascana on the matter of Russian sanctions.

As discussed yesterday, there were discussions held among the House leaders on arriving at an appropriate resolution for this House to consider. Therefore, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, which will also be deemed to have been seconded by the hon. member for Wascana and the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

I move:

That, in view of the sanctions against parliamentarians and other Canadians announced by the Russian government, this House (a) re-affirm its resolution of Monday, March 3, 2014, (b) strongly condemn Russia's continued illegal military occupation of Crimea, (c) call for Russia to de-escalate the situation immediately, and (d) denounce Russia's sanctions against the Speaker and members of the House of Commons, a member of the Senate, public servants and the President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress;

That the Speaker do convey this resolution to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation; and

That a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours accordingly.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader 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)

The Speaker: Accordingly, I will deem the question of privilege raised by the member for Wascana satisfied by this motion and will, of course, convey the message that the House has just asked me to convey.

The Chair also has notice from the member for Mount Royal, on a point of order.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, in response to the question of the member for Charlottetown, the Minister of Justice said that the Liberal government had invoked the notwithstanding clause.

I just want to say that the Liberal government did not invoke the notwithstanding clause, as a matter of fact. I had stated, as the minister of justice, as a matter of principle and policy we would never—

•(1515)

The Speaker: Order, please. I see that the member for St. Paul's is rising. Is this on a point of order?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, in reference to my S. O. 31 earlier today, I would like to ask for unanimous consent that the House table, in both official languages, the Native Women's Association of Canada's response to the report of the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women, entitled

“Invisible Women: A Call to Action”. Ensuring that this important document is part of the official public record would benefit—

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to two petitions.

* * *

FAIR RAIL FOR GRAIN FARMERS ACT

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Canada Grain Act and the Canada Transportation Act and to provide for other measures.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in relation to its study entitled “Land Use and Sustainable Economic Development”.

While I am on my feet, I move:

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

Business of the House

● (1600)

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

(Division No. 89)

YEAS

Members

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

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 149

Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brison	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Lamoureux
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Trudeau
Turmel	Valeriote — 118

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was hoping to move this unanimous consent motion. If you seek it, I think you will find that there is unanimous consent among all parties for the following motion:

Government Orders

That this House note the allegations that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations and abuses of human rights were committed during the Sri Lankan civil war; call for an independent international inquiry mechanism to establish the truth of these events, given the continued absence of a credible national process; welcome the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka; and encourage the Government of Canada to continue taking a strong position on this issue at the UN Human Rights Council and in other international forums.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the 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)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 11

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved that a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1640)

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

(Division No. 90)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Armstrong

Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 149

Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komamicki
Lake
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Angus
Ayala
Bennett
Blanchette
Boivin
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Caron
Cash

Government Orders

Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cuzner
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeman
Garrison
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Quach
Rankin
Regan
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Thibeault
Turnel

Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Dewar
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Freeland
Garneau
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mourani
Nantel
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Rafferty
Raynauld
Rousseau
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
St-Denis
Sullivan
Trudeau
Valeriote — 112

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Budget.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PROTECTING CANADIANS FROM ONLINE CRIME ACT

BILL C-13—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation to Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, not more than one further sitting day after the day on which this Order is adopted shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and that, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

● (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is now the 58th time that closure, or time allocation, has been brought in this Parliament. We are talking about a sad record that has never occurred before in the history of Parliament.

There have been 58 times where debate has been shut down, and this is on a bill that has not been debated for months. Despite this, the Conservative government is trying to impose this bill and shut down debate, although there have been few speakers on the bill and it has not been debated for months.

I want to quote the Minister of Justice, from a comment he made back in 2004.

[*Translation*]

At that time, the minister made the following statement:

The speed with which the government has acted in this fashion in bringing about closure is a true signal as to how the Prime Minister and the government are going to treat the so-called democratic deficit that the Prime Minister has had a revelation on in discovering that a democratic deficit exists in the country.

This government is the democratic deficit. Fifty-eight times. That is totally inappropriate. When will this government start respecting Canadians and allow Parliament to debate important issues?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his tantrum, I mean his question.

However, before I answer his question, on a point of order, I want to clarify at the earliest opportunity an answer that I gave in response to a question from the member for Charlottetown that became the subject of a point of order by the member for Mount Royal.

I have enormous respect for that member. The member for Mount Royal is in fact a predecessor minister of justice. He has contributed greatly to this place throughout his career, as an educator, a litigator, and an advocate.

For clarity, I wish to ensure that my answer did not imply that the Liberal government of the day “invoked”, which is the word that the member used, the notwithstanding clause, but threatened to use it. Members may recall that former prime minister Paul Martin, and certainly the member for Mount Royal—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): As we have discovered on this particular question, it is a matter of debate. I appreciate the minister's intervention, but I wonder, does he wish additional time to come back to the question that was before the House?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I just want to finish my response to a point that was raised in question period on a point of order. I am simply responding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House concluded that essentially this is a matter of debate. The question before the House is on the time allocation question, and we will move to that.

Questions, the hon. member for Gatineau.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we did not get the response from the Minister of Justice about this very undemocratic way of bringing in a 58th time allocation motion.

I find this all the more outrageous because on March 6 or thereabouts, if I am not mistaken, I asked the minister a specific question when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. My question was about Bill C-13 because we were hearing all kinds of rumours from the Conservative benches about how the official opposition was preventing the government from putting Bill C-13 on the agenda. Only 17 people were given the chance to debate the bill over a period of just three days. I asked him if he supported giving all members of the House, no matter their party, ample time for debate so that we could study it responsibly, according to our principles. The minister replied:

We want to give not only the House [so he was including the House] but this committee in particular ample opportunity to hear from witnesses and to give it proper examination.

I would like the minister to explain the contradiction between what he told us on March 6 and what is happening now. We were supposed to continue the debate today, but here they are with their time allocation motion.

● (1650)

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, my friend has partly answered her own question; she just said there have been 13 speakers. I indicated at the time that we wanted, not only time in the House, which is of course important, but time to get the bill to committee.

That is the reality. In order for bills to progress, and the member has been here for some time, they have to go to committee. That is where we get in-depth study, witnesses, and we have an opportunity to delve into the detail, as opposed to the toing and froing, and often the partisan digression, that occurs in debate.

[Translation]

Members had the opportunity to talk about Bill C-13. I am sure we are all very much looking forward to expert witnesses appearing before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Their knowledge with respect to the bill will also provide a broader perspective for a more informed debate.

We have an opportunity to move this bill forward and send it to committee for study.

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister whether, during the course of his consultations across the country on justice issues, he had the opportunity to speak to family members of loved ones who have been affected by cyberbullying. I wonder if he would take a moment to tell us about some of the things he heard about during those consultations and since the introduction of Bill C-13 and tell us why it is imperative that we get the bill to committee as soon as possible.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Gatineau on a point of order.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, we are debating a time allocation motion. We have 30 minutes to try to learn why the government is shoving a time allocation motion down our throats for the 58th time, and the parliamentary secretary is asking the minister to talk about his bill, which he wants to prevent us from doing in the next few days. Since we are debating the time allocation motion, we should be focusing on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I appreciate the intervention by the hon. member for Gatineau. When there is a debate on a time allocation motion, normally it is appropriate to consider the debate on the bill itself.

[English]

It is very difficult to consider the elements of time allocation without drawing in elements of the sense of the bill, and so this is normally considered to be a pertinent and appropriate part of the debate.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, for his question is a very important one about the consultation. It does go to the sense of urgency and the sense of priority that we place on the bill. We not only met with those in the country who are affected by this particular scourge of cyberbullying, including family members, but we of course consulted with police, with academics, and with individuals who have specific knowledge of the technical aspects required to enforce this new law.

To return to the question, the families, in particular, and the victims and young people in the country who are affected by cyberbullying need to know that this is being given priority by all members of the House, that we will move the bill to committee, and that we will have an opportunity to ultimately enact a law that is designed to protect people and prevent victimization by cyberbullying.

● (1655)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is on process and deals with the fact that, again, the government has chosen not to refer the bill to committee before second reading. If the matter were of the urgency the minister says it is, after five hours of debate the bill could have been automatically referred to committee before second reading, if the government had chosen that route. That would have then allowed committee to hear all the witnesses and to engage in a very constructive manner on that bill.

I do not recall that the current government has, at any time, chosen to use that particular process, which greatly legitimizes the work of committees. It is just forcing a guillotine on the time, again, without using a much more constructive approach by referring it to second reading.

Why has the government, again, decided not to choose a more constructive and, I think, more participatory manner of dealing with the bill?

Government Orders

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that we proceeded in this matter in good faith, expecting that the bill would have ample discussion before the House of Commons. There would be an opportunity for members to speak, and there have been opportunities. As has been noted, some 13 members have already voiced their opinions on the bill. There was an indication and a discussion, I am assuming, that took place among the House leaders. I am a former House leader.

I do not make the decision as to how we proceed in this matter. We proceeded in a way in which we felt we could expeditiously move the bill through the House and get it to committee, a place where witnesses, experts, could then have their say. Then the House, of course, will have the bill return.

Therefore, we have presented the bill in the usual fashion. We have proceeded in a way that we hoped would result in co-operation in moving it toward committee. Unfortunately, that failed. We find it necessary to use this particular process, now, to get the bill to committee for the purposes of protecting and promoting public safety in the area of cyberbullying, as I said.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find myself in a kind of peculiar circumstance in that I am one of the people who has not spoken yet. I care very much about this bill and very much hoped to speak on it.

My question to the minister is this. Where did the sense of urgency suddenly come from?

Eighteen months ago, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord introduced a bill for a national anti-bullying strategy that would have provided concrete measures to end bullying, but that side voted against that bill. Last summer, on June 17, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour introduced a private member's bill to prevent the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. We offered to proceed with that bill immediately and the government was not interested in doing that. We even offered to split this bill when it was introduced in November, I believe, and those parts that were very urgent could have been proceeded with.

I find it very hard to understand the sense of urgency today that would prevent members like me from speaking on this bill.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the very simple and practical answer is that, while we sit here tonight discussing this issue, the world is moving ahead in terms of technology. Canada is lagging in its ability to police the Internet. There has been an explosion of activity on the Internet, we know, some of which is very detrimental to young people.

Three days of debate have been allocated. There will be, even as a result of this procedure, two more days of debate on the subject matter. There is, of course, the opportunity to appear at committee, as the member is entitled to do as a member of the House of Commons; so ample debate and talk has taken place. It is time for action. It is time to move this bill forward, enact the legislation, and protect the youth of this country.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what he is saying is totally wrong. If he were right in his convictions, then he would know that this is how we actually have debate. It is not just at committee. This is to make sure

we have proper oversight. This is a government that is not interested in proper oversight; we have seen it before the courts over and over again on legislation that it keeps ramming through.

My question to the minister is this. Is it the Conservatives' intent to again see their bills go before the courts and be found to be against the Constitution or against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Why is it that they always have to go back and fix their legislation? It is because they keep rushing it through.

• (1700)

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, certainly it is never the intent of any government, I would suggest, that it result in litigation. We, of course, have a very substantial team of individuals at the Department of Justice who review bills, look at their constitutionality, and look for charter compliance.

Returning to where we are and why we want to move this debate forward and get the bill to committee, the days and time are limited. We need to move legislation through the House of Commons rather than railing against the moon. I do not know why members would not want to embrace this opportunity. As was mentioned, there have been previous iterations of this bill. Private members, including members of the NDP, have brought forward bills that embraced the spirit of this legislation.

Now is an opportunity to put partisanship aside and simply move a bill forward that is for the betterment of our country, in particular for the protection of young people who are affected by cyberbullying. Rather than engage in this partisan debate, let us move this bill through the House.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. Minister of Justice is this. He claims there are ample opportunities. All members of the House are equal, at least in theory, but whenever there is time allocation—and this particular administration has used time allocation, smashing through all historical records of any administration in the history of this country—it inevitably means that representatives of smaller parties, such as me as leader of the Green Party, or members of the Bloc Québécois, or independent members of Parliament, are not given any speaking slots whatsoever.

As egregious as it is for my friend from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca to anticipate that he would not be able to speak, at least members of his party will have spoken. As egregious as it is for my friend from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca that he might not be able to speak, at least he could speak at committee, whereas members in our situation are precluded from speaking in committee, in any committee; and when there was an opportunity put forward by the NDP in the procedure and House affairs committee recently, the Conservatives defeated it.

Our constituents are equal to the constituents of any Conservative member of Parliament, but our constituents are denied an opportunity to participate when time allocation is used.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I invite the hon. member to take part in the debate, as she is doing here and will have an opportunity to do. There are two more days.

Government Orders

I did not make up the composition of the House in the last election. That was done by the wisdom of the Canadian people. She may not have representation as a party in the House of Commons. That, again, is a reality of the electoral outcome of the last election campaign. When we have an opportunity to move an important piece of legislation like this through the House, I would suggest it is not a partisan issue. It is an issue for which all members have expressed support in principle.

I am going to make a statement with which I think members may agree. Let us hear from experts on the bill. We all may have opinions. The hon. member from British Columbia might have a strong opinion on this. I would suggest that on a bill of this nature, technical as it is, we should hear from the experts. Let us hear from family members, police, and those who are affected by the explosion of activity on the Internet. The need to move this bill forward and the need for action is now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have been in the House for many years.

When the Conservatives were in opposition, they were the ones yelling at the Liberals, saying that imposing a gag order on members regarding a bill was completely undemocratic. Indeed, it is in the House of Commons that these debates take place. In committee, we do our work and bring forward amendments, but debates among representatives democratically elected by their constituents happen right here.

I remember that same minister rising in this House in anger because a gag order had been imposed on the members regarding a bill.

What does he think of the 58 gag orders imposed by this Conservative government, just since 2011?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his rant.

What we are trying to do is legislate in an area that is very important. My colleague, the member for Gatineau, said this in her opening speech, when we first debated this bill; and of course we did debate the bill. To suggest that members are being muzzled is wholly inaccurate. Members are here speaking. No one is being muzzled.

Here is what the member for Gatineau said. “I think that the minister wants as many members as possible to support his bill”. She is right.

“I therefore hope that he will be open to allowing us to study this aspect [of the bill very] carefully”. We are not studying it here.

She went on to say, “We will have some serious arguments to make in committee about these aspects of the bill”; so let us get it to committee. We are not studying it. We are jawing about it. Let us move it to committee and actually get down to the nitty-gritty of getting the bill right.

• (1705)

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I honestly think all of us

would agree that we need to take steps to make sure our children are being protected, particularly on the Internet. The bill does offer a variety of different means, and I know the minister has been very hard at work consulting with victims and their families, as well as law enforcement.

I would ask the minister what tools this piece of legislation would give to our law enforcement officers, so they could stem some of the very devastating activities that are happening on the Internet. Most people would certainly agree that if we did it here rather than on a screen, the RCMP or OPP would be able to take immediate action to rectify it. Therefore, what tools would the legislation give, so we could actively show support for law enforcement to take on these crimes?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the relevant, pertinent question. What we are doing in essence is empowering police to investigate and police the Internet, but to do so with judicial oversight, by virtue of a warrant. This differs markedly from previous incarnations of this bill.

The bill would allow the police to seek out the offending material and those responsible. We have seen some very tragic cases. As the member is aware—with Amanda Todd in his own province and Rehtaeh Parsons on the east coast—the implications of this type of intimidation and blackmail, the type of very offensive material that can be used to extort and intimidate individuals, can be loss of life. It can result in some very uncomfortable and disturbing situations.

We want to give the police the ability to stop, to intercede, and in some cases to remove that material. The bill would empower them to do that. It would, of course, require a holistic approach. It would not be just legislation. It requires everyone to get involved.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two points to raise.

First, the minister is saying that this is an urgent matter, that it is time for action and not debate. In 2012, the Conservative government defeated my bill that sought to implement a national bullying prevention strategy. Apparently, the matter was not so urgent then. However, it seems that in 2014, it is urgent. I find that the minister is being quite inconsistent.

Recently, this same government took a month off by proroguing the House. If it had not taken a month off at the taxpayers' expense, then we might have had more time to pass this bill and debate it with more experts.

I have been working on this issue for two and a half years, and I have not yet been able to speak to Bill C-13. There are so many of us in the NDP who wish to speak to this that there is a good chance that I will not be able to as a result of this time allocation motion.

Does the minister not want to hear what I, as an expert on the matter, have to say about this bill?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, no. I do not feel inclined to hear from the member.

I feel inclined to hear more from experts. Many people have stated that they want this bill to move forward. The member talked about 2012. I am going to go back further, to 2009, when Bill C-46 was brought before the House of Commons, and Bill C-51 in 2010. There was an individual at that time who seemed to think there was an urgency to move bills forward. He said that the “bill is quite overdue in terms of when it should have been on the law books of this country”.

Those amendments have been planned for some time. There was a sense of urgency then, coming from the NDP. It was the hon. member who was then justice critic and an hon. member of the NDP.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am one of the individuals who will not be afforded an opportunity to speak on this bill, and I would have liked to speak on this bill before it is voted on here and sent to committee.

To the government members, there are not two days left. The minister keeps saying there are two. The motion actually says there will be one more sitting day for members to speak on the bill, which I will not have an opportunity to do.

However, there have been 34 days since the bill was last discussed, and now today. What has made it so urgent that it could not have been spoken on during any of those other 34 days? The government did not bring it forward.

It is not up to us to bring forward bills. It is up to the government. The government says that we have to do this immediately, now, and yet it has let 34 days lapse. It is so hypocritical. I wish the government would answer that very simple question.

Why now?

• (1710)

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I find the hon. member's position and question quite paradoxical.

Obviously, we are moving forward in this fashion because we do sense urgency. We are hearing from police. We are hearing from families. We are hearing from individuals, and, formerly, from individual members of the opposition who said that we have to get this bill in place, we have to have the laws enhanced, and that police need these tools. Our communities and our schools are vulnerable because of cyberbullying. That is the sense of urgency.

As to who takes credit for it or who gets to speak, the sense of urgency is very real. This is not something that has been invented by the government. Members should talk to people in their communities, individuals on the street who want to see tougher laws on cyberbullying. I expect that people will say that they do not want us to debate it more in the House of Commons but want us to pass the law, have it in place, and give police the tools to enforce the law.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that only five pages of his 70-page bill deal with cyberbullying. This bill goes much further than just addressing cyberbullying.

I would like to remind the minister that we have already asked him to divide the bill so that we can pass a bill on cyberbullying. He

Government Orders

knows full well that he is talking through his hat when he says that the opposition is against measures to address cyberbullying.

My colleague from Gatineau mentioned that only 17 people have spoken about this bill. That is 17 of the 308 members of the House. A quick calculation shows that that is only 5% of Canada's population, 5% of the members in the House who were able to speak on this issue.

When does the government believe a democratic debate has occurred? Is it after 1% or 1.5% of members have spoken? Will opposition members no longer have the right to debate bills? When does the government decide that we have talked enough and that a democratic debate has taken place? Is it when only 5% of members have had the chance to speak?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that if it means saving lives, yes.

Bill C-13 combines a proposed new offence, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, to address cyberbullying, along with judicially authorized tools to help police and prosecutors investigate not only the proposed new offence but also other, existing offences.

The member is right; we are committed to policing the Internet via judicially authorized authority that involves electronic evidence.

The elements of this bill are intricately connected. Why would we pass a law and then go about bringing in other legislation to allow enforcement? This bill is in concert with the same theme of helping to protect people from abuse on the Internet.

We are proceeding in this fashion to give police the tools to do their important work.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed for a number of reasons.

A 58th gag order was clearly unnecessary. I am also disappointed with the minister's perception of the value of debate in the House. I am very disappointed to see that he does not feel that debates are at all important. It is very disappointing to know that a minister feels that way.

We are talking about cyberbullying and the Internet. We are therefore entering into somewhat new fields of law. I think that we should take the time to carefully examine this issue.

Earlier, the minister was saying that he wanted to work with experts. I can give him some names right now. The young members of our party use the Internet and can talk about cyberbullying better than anyone. I would like the House to listen to what they have to say even before this bill goes to committee.

Here is my question: does the minister want to pass a bill as quickly as possible or does he want to pass a good bill?

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned, we have seen various iterations of the bill before this place, for years now. We have seen private member's bills and this is, of course, not to diminish in any way the contributions of members opposite or members of this party. We want to bring about the ability to act, to deal with this important issue.

I came to this place almost 18 years ago from working in the criminal justice system as a prosecutor. We know that the issues faced by young people in particular are increasingly complex. The use of the Internet is a wonderful thing if it is used in a positive direction, but we know that is not always the case. We know that the Internet has, in some cases, been a facilitator, an enabler of criminal activity.

We have to keep pace with that change and that modernization of technology. That is what the bill does. The time for talk is past. It is time to move. It is time to get expert input on the legislation, get it on the books, give the police the tools they need to protect people, to prevent the carnage and harm resulting from cyberbullying.

• (1715)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the government is saying that it looks forward to hearing from the experts, given that it does not really listen to them. What the government members say changes daily, according to what suits them. I find it disturbing to hear the Minister of Justice tell a member that he is not really interested in hearing what the member has to say.

When I recommend something to my caucus, I have already had the opportunity to discuss it with all my colleagues, and I do mean all my colleagues. I like to hear what they have to say because it helps me form my own opinion. Perhaps if the Conservative government listened a little more to the experts and the members who have been democratically elected, good laws would be passed instead of laws that are rejected by the Supreme Court of Canada. That is what the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île and others who spoke before me said. I am not going to read paragraph 67 of the Whaling ruling, which indicates that the nature of the debate raised serious questions about whether the bill was constitutional. Perhaps it would be in the Conservatives' interest to be a little more restrained when it comes to justice issues and listen to the opinions of others.

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, we will have ample time to look at the bill at committee to have further debate. Of course, it will be examined in the other place as well. The hon. member mischaracterizes everything that I have said, as she has on occasion. I have in no way suggested that members should not have input into the bill. They are having input into the bill as we stand here. We are discussing the bill.

Again, I hark back to the reality that this subject matter has been before the House, not only in this bill but also in previous bills. There have been numerous efforts to move forward in this area.

In fact, I quote my friend from Beauséjour, a Liberal member, who spoke about the necessity and the support that they expressed in

2009 when he said that the “old tools, the old laws and regulations, and common law around search warrants, lawful access...haven't kept up with the technology that organized crime is using”. I agree with him. We have to be able to give the police at least the ability to be on par with some of the nefarious activity happening on the Internet.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1800)

[English]

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

(Division No. 91)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)

Hawn
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 James
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Leef
 Lemieux
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Maguire
 McColeman
 Menegakis
 Miller
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 O'Neill Gordon
 O'Toole
 Payne
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Seeback
 Shipley
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Tilson
 Trost
 Truppe
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country
 Weston (Saint John)
 Williamson
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Zimmer— 149

Hayes
 Hillyer
 Holder
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Leitch
 Leung
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Merrifield
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Norlock
 Oliver
 Opitz
 Paradis
 Poilievre
 Raitt
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Toet
 Trottier
 Uppal
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Wilks
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Aubin
 Bélanger
 Benskin
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Boulterice
 Brison
 Caron
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Choquette
 Cleary
 Cotler
 Dewar
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Freeland
 Garneau
 Genest-Jourdain
 Godin
 Gravelle
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hughes
 Jacob
 Julian
 Lapointe
 Latendresse
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 Leslie
 MacAulay
 Marston
 Mathysen

Andrews
 Ayala
 Bennett
 Blanchette
 Boivin
 Boutin-Sweet
 Byrne
 Casey
 Charlton
 Chisholm
 Christopherson
 Côté
 Cuzner
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Dubourg
 Dusseault
 Eyking
 Freeman
 Garrison
 Giguère
 Goodale
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Hsu
 Hyer
 Jones
 Lamoureux
 Larose
 Laverdière
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Liu
 Mai
 Martin
 May

Routine Proceedings

McCallum	McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagog)
Mourani	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Rathgeber
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Stewart	Sullivan
Thibeault	Trudeau
Turmel	Valeriote— 108

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from March 25 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion.

● (1805)

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

(Division No. 92)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
 Aglukkaq
 Albrecht
 Allen (Welland)
 Allison
 Ambrose
 Andrews
 Armstrong
 Aspin
 Baird
 Bélanger
 Benoit
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Block
 Boughen
 Boutin-Sweet
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Butt
 Calandra
 Cannan
 Caron
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Chisu
 Choquette
 Clarke

Adler
 Albas
 Alexander
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambler
 Anderson
 Angus
 Ashfield
 Aubin
 Bateman
 Bennett
 Benskin
 Bernier
 Blanchette
 Blaney
 Boivin
 Boulterice
 Braid
 Brison
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooge
 Byrne
 Calkins
 Carmichael
 Casey
 Charlton
 Chisholm
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Cleary

Private Members' Business

Clement	Côté
Cotler	Crockatt
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeshen
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseauult	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Falk	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Freeland
Freeman	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Garrison	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	James
Jones	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Lauzon	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mai	Marston
Martin	Mathysen
May	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Pacetti
Papillon	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Poilievre
Preston	Quach
Rafferty	Raith
Rajotte	Rankin
Rathgeber	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Rousseau	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sgro
Shea	Shipley
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Stewart

Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sullivan
Sweet	Thibeault
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Trudeau	Truppe
Turmel	Uppal
Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 258

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 6:09 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**EMPLOYEES' VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-525, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act (certification and revocation — bargaining agent), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are six motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-525.

Motions Nos. 1 to 6 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[Translation]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 6 to the House.

● (1810)

[English]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-525 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-525, in Clause 4, be amended

(a) by replacing line 14 on page 2 with the following:

“employee who claims to represent at least 50%”

(b) by replacing line 26 on page 2 with the following:

“50% of the employees in the bargaining unit”

Motion No. 3

Private Members' Business

That Bill C-525, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing line 39 on page 2 with the following:

“the application, at least 50% of the employees”

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-525, in Clause 8, be amended

(a) by replacing line 17 on page 4 with the following:

“sent at least 50% of the employees in the”

(b) by replacing line 28 on page 4 with the following:

“any person claiming to represent at least 50% of”

(c) by replacing line 42 on page 4 with the following:

“50% of the employees in the bargaining unit no”

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-525, in Clause 11, be amended by replacing line 11 on page 6 with the following:

“least 50% of the employees in the bargaining”

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-525, in Clause 12, be amended by replacing line 23 on page 6 with the following:

“subsection 94(1), at least 50% of the employees”

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to start this debate with a quotation from Mr. Chris Riddell, who in 2001 published an article in the *Canadian Journal of Economics* entitled “Union Suppression and Certification Success”. He wrote:

Clearly, if a government is opposed to unionization it can accomplish such an agenda through instituting compulsory elections.

That is exactly what the right-wing, ideological, anti-worker, anti-union current government is trying to do with Bill C-525. Bill C-525 would impose a secret ballot every time workers wanted to organize to defend their rights and improve their working and living conditions in general.

We have a card-check system that is simple, works well for the workers, and creates no problems at all.

I will demonstrate to members here tonight that the changes brought forward by the member would create an environment in which it would be much more difficult to institute or create new unions. As such, it would lower living and working conditions for a lot of Canadians. It is sad, because I think the bill would put us much closer to an American model than a Canadian model, which is based on sharing and fairness.

●(1815)

[*Translation*]

Thanks to pressure by people and workers across the country and strong opposition by the NDP, we managed to get rid of all the ludicrous, absolutely absurd things in Bill C-525.

At first, this bill was so anti-union that people who abstained from voting on whether or not they wanted to have a union at their workplace would be deemed to have voted against forming a union. When it came to dismantling the union, then it was the opposite.

The ideological bias was so inflated that the government felt that those who abstained from voting were voting in favour of dismantling the union. Fortunately, the NDP managed to get the government to listen to reason and the government backed down. We got the government to back down and return to a voting system, which we are not entirely sure is necessary, because it opens the door

to shady practices by the employer, including bullying, threats and blackmail.

At least the votes that will be counted are the ones in the box and not the ones of the people who stayed home. The system is like what we do for federal and provincial elections, according to the rules that govern our election to the House.

We avoided catastrophe, but the fact remains that this bill goes against the NDP's principles and values. The NDP wants to help people organize and improve their working conditions, not put up obstacles.

Just now, when I was speaking in English, I said that this bill would put us much closer to an American model and is a departure from the fair and equitable society that has been the trademark of Canada and Quebec for years.

I would like to quote a very interesting document from the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux*:

Why did the provincial and federal legislators provide in their respective labour codes that the choice of belonging to a union would be determined by signing a membership card instead of by secret ballot? [It is simple.] To avoid having employees interfere by intimidating their employees into giving up on forming a union.

The tools available to the two opposing parties can have a huge impact on the result of a vote by secret ballot. How can a union that is just being formed claim to have tools that are just as effective in winning the vote as those of an employer or a group of employees supported by the employer?

...What is more, will these employees be able to campaign at the workplace without the risk of sanctions being imposed, when those who are anti-union will clearly benefit from the support or at least the supportive tolerance of the employer?

In short, a real pre-vote campaign cannot be run on a level playing field, and its results will not truly represent the individual choice of each employee involved.

I will stop quoting there and say that signing a card is an important gesture. By so doing, workers confirm that they belong to an organization and that they want to be represented by that organization, which will negotiate a contract that will ensure that their rights will be respected and their working conditions will improve. It is a gesture that is just as meaningful and legitimate as a vote by secret ballot.

We are beginning to see here how obstacles can be put in the way of employees who, with good reason, want to organize to negotiate a collective agreement.

It is interesting to read in the CSN document the opinions of those involved on the issue of an employer's potential interference in the certification process.

I would like to read a quote from the May 16, 2005, edition of *Le Devoir*: Louis Morin, a former Labour Court judge and the former president of the Quebec labour relations commission, stated:

At no time in my career have I ever met a single employer who was happy to hear that a union was being formed. Sometimes they had very strong reactions to this news. Is it more democratic for workers to vote against unionization after the employer has threatened them with the closure of the business, the loss of their rights and so on than for them to have signed a membership card even if they were persistently asked to do so?

Private Members' Business

This is someone with experience, the former head of the Quebec labour relations commission, who is saying that the card system works well. That is why the NDP believes that we should maintain the existing system. It works well and allows Canada to have a much higher rate of unionization than the United States.

We will see later that this has an economic impact on workers, their families and all communities because it injects money into small businesses, towns, cities and all of our communities.

In a 2001 article entitled *Union organizing under neutrality and card check agreements*, Adrienne Eaton and Jill Kriesky said that employers used fewer unfair practices when card checks were used.

If a union is not always present in a workplace and the employer uses blackmail or promises promotions or particular positions if people campaign for its side, there is no balance of power. The employee's choice will not be fair and informed, and the employee will not be free from intimidation or threats from the employer. This kind of climate can destroy labour relations and can be emotionally traumatic for the employees.

That is what Adrienne Eaton and Jill Kriesky said. These authors even said 50% fewer employers run an anti-union campaign if card checks are used. When cards are signed, there are fewer unfair practices and anti-union campaigns. Furthermore, the number of successful union certifications seems to rise when there is a card check system and a neutrality agreement with the employer.

I have about eight other experts I could quote about the effects in British Columbia and Ontario. The number of attempts to unionize decreased, and their success rate dropped by 20% to 30% in most cases, even though unions offer a clear advantage.

On average, a unionized worker earns \$4.97 more per hour than a non-unionized worker. The benefit is even greater for women. A unionized woman earns \$6.65 more per hour than a non-unionized woman. If we were to take that additional money out of the economy, if we were to undo all of the collective bargaining that led to wage increases, the Canadian economy would lose \$786 million a week. That is a big deal.

That is why the NDP will continue to push for a healthy work environment as well as for opportunities for all workers to organize and improve their working conditions, since that is how we create a more united, fair and egalitarian society and a better place to live.

• (1820)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and—resuming debate, the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand your confusion on this particular issue in calling for questions and comments, because usually the first person to speak to a private member's bill is the person presenting it or a member from that party, but obviously, because of this legislation, it started off with the opposition because there is no one on the government side who is interested in addressing it. That is probably because it is so egregious. It is probably because during the course of the hearings, we saw nothing to substantiate the necessity of this legislation. I am

sure my colleague from the NDP must have been surprised as well to be the first guy on deck to speak to this bill.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: No, I was not surprised.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: My colleague was not surprised, Mr. Speaker.

Canadians know that the current government has no respect for due process or evidence-based legislation. Just like the unfair elections act, Bill C-525 is another example of this. We are debating a bill that has no evidence to support it, while anyone and everyone who has a stake in labour relations is saying this is a horrible way to make labour laws in this country.

I believe that for labour laws to work in the interests of both the employees and the employers, they need to be fair and balanced. They also need to be legitimized through a consultative and consensus-based process with stakeholders that is based on real evidence.

From Bill C-377 last year to the changes to the definition of “danger” in last fall's omnibus bill and now with Bill C-525, the government has been using every opportunity and means to pass labour laws that are based on ideology instead of evidence through backdoor means instead of open, transparent, and consultative ones.

The sponsor of this bill, my colleague from Wetaskiwin, has defended the need for this bill on a mountain of complaints regarding union coercion of workers during union certification campaigns.

In his second reading speech he said:

When we hear one person complain about the actions of union organizers, that can be dismissed as a one-off situation. However when we see the mountain of complaints that end up at the labour relations board, it is concerning to me.

In making a statement like that, especially as a reason to change the fundamental right of how workers can organize, one had better be able to back that statement up with fact.

I think many in this chamber would be surprised, even shocked, to know that when the chairperson of the Canada Industrial Relations Board appeared at committee during a study of the bill, she dropped a bombshell: she said that out of the 4,000 decisions that were rendered by that board, there were only two founded complaints of unfair labour practices by unions in the last 10 years. In fact, she said that there were more founded complaints against employers than against unions. In the 4,000 decisions over 10 years, covering 1.25 million workers, there were only two founded complaints.

Private Members' Business

Although the government said that this is about protecting the rights of workers, we have not heard from one single worker who supports this bill out of the 1.25 million Canadians who are affected. There has not been a phone call, an email, a petition, or a request from a worker or a working group to appear before our committee to say how they had been wronged because of the current legislation, not a single one.

The question that has to be asked and answered is this: why make a fundamental change to the way workers can organize into a union and change the certification process from a card check to a mandatory vote? Maybe it is because research has proven that the effect of such a move would be to lower unionization rates, something the Conservative Party wants implicitly.

• (1825)

I would like to finally talk about the process or, more to the point, the abuse of due process, of which this bill is a perfect example. Although this bill would fundamentally change how workers can organize, only two committee meetings took place to study this; only two meetings. There were two and a half hours of witness testimony, but in those two and a half hours members heard witness after witness, from both labour and employer groups, saying that using private members' bills to make substantial labour legislation changes was not only wrong but would end up hurting labour relations in the long run.

Hassan Yussuff, secretary-treasurer of the CLC, stated:

Amendments should not be made through private members' bills. They should be made with concerted, pre-legislative consultation that engages employers, unions, and government.

How about the other side, FETCO? John Farrell, executive director of the largest federal employer group, stated:

We believe that the use of private members' bills sets the federal jurisdiction on a dangerous course, where, without adequate consultation or support, unnecessary or unworkable proposals come into law, and the balance, which is so important to the stability of labour relations, is upset. We strongly believe that it is not in the long-term best interests of Canadian employers and their employees, and it has the potential to needlessly impact the economy by destabilizing the basic foundation of union-management relations.

That is two very different sides of the fence both saying the same thing, in very powerful statements.

Mr. George Smith, a labour relations expert and practitioner his entire life, stated:

...we are dealing with a private member's bill to amend a significant section of the Canada Labour Code without any view of how this change will impact overall labour relations policy in the federal sector, without any of the necessary due process and public consultation to examine the intended and unintended consequences to such amendments.

Labour law systems are very complex, and the ones that work well are based on a delicate balance that must be respected if and when reforms are made to them. Short-sighted labour reforms driven by ideology rather than evidence and made without a legitimate consultative process are both disruptive and unsustainable.

I and my party may not always agree with labour on everything, but I believe past Liberal governments have used balanced processes and extensive consultation to make labour reforms. This included retaining Andrew Sims and Professor Harry Arthurs to review Part II and Part III of the Canada Labour Code, as well as conducting

extensive consultation with public sector unions prior to the introduction of the Public Service Modernization Act in 2003.

Mr. Sims, in his report, said that if labour laws were to be changed, number one, they should be changed because there was a demonstrated need due to the legislation no longer working or serving the public interest, or number two, it should be done on a consensus basis. I ask members of the House whether they believe Bill C-525 meets these criteria or is based on the principles that employers and unions currently respect and agree upon.

Bill C-525 would impact thousands of employers and approximately 1.25 million employees in the federal jurisdiction, people who have a right to ensure we as politicians respect principles inherent in creating fair and balanced labour relation laws for them and their employers. I believe it is incumbent on any government, if it plans to make major labour law reforms, that this process be done with a consultative, up-front approach. I and my party will continue to oppose labour legislation that does not meet this standard. That is why I am proud to say my party will not be supporting this bill.

• (1830)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to Bill C-525, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act (certification and revocation — bargaining agent).

There are a number of reasons why I am opposed to it. I fundamentally disagree with the thrust of the bill. I am also opposed to the process that has been used here.

Let us look at what has been happening here this evening. The government side has had no speakers lined up to speak on this bill. If the government members believe in this bill and are so fundamentally supportive of it, surely they should have had the pride and been able to stand up and say whatever they have to say about this legislation.

There are no government members lined up to speak, and at this very critical stage, there is no debate. The opposition is left to speak on this very important issue.

Once again, it adds to the kind of atmosphere that exists here, that the government believes that since it has a majority, it is going to get its way. It does not have to have members debate the opposition or even pay attention, to see if, through debate, the opposition might make us see a different point of view.

This is a private member's bill that makes fundamental changes to the Canada Labour Code. That is not the intention or the purpose of private members' bills. We do not bring about such fundamental changes. However, this is an example of a government that has an agenda and implements its agenda through private members' business. We have seen this over and over again.

Private Members' Business

Let us take a look at the process. My colleague across the way who brought this private member's bill forward, which is his right, only appeared for half an hour at committee, and after he had finished speaking for his half hour, he did not even wait to hear the witnesses who had been called to speak on this bill. After his half hour, he left.

When he was asked about consultation, his answer was that he had consulted with his constituents. That was a great idea; we should consult with our constituents. However, we have to note that he did not consult with a single major union, and not the Canada Industrial Relations Board, nor the Canadian Bankers Association, amongst hundreds of others that I could mention.

The member's explanation for not consulting any of the stakeholders was, and I am going to quote it because if I paraphrase nobody is going to believe that this is real: "They've made no effort to consult me".

Well, how would all those stakeholders have known what this member was working on for a private member's bill? Surely when a member is working on a private member's bill, it behooves the member to go out and do some of that consultation, if not at that time then at a different time.

There has also been a sort of urgency from the government to railroad this piece of legislation through this House. I do not see what the hurry was. I have sat on a number of different committees where we have looked at legislation, heard a number of witnesses, and had a lot of time to debate and go through the legislation, clause by clause.

Let us take a look at the process that was used for this bill. There was half an hour for the member who moved the bill to come to talk to us, and two and a half hours, in total, for witnesses. The Speaker should be outraged to find that the NDP could only call three witnesses. We had hundreds of others chomping at the bit, wanting to present their perspective. That was not a thorough way to look at a bill.

Then, after the total of three hours, there was one additional hour to do all the clause-by-clause. When we look at it, this makes a mockery of the legislative process.

● (1835)

Then, after a total of three hours, there was one additional hour to do all the clause-by-clause. When we look at it, this makes a mockery of the legislative process. This makes a mockery of us as parliamentarians who are being very deliberative and listening to the points of view from expert witnesses from all sides and also from listening from the points that we have to make. We have a system that was actually working. I have not heard any petitions. I did not get people rushing into my riding office saying this bill is necessary or our economic system is about to collapse.

The bill will actually accelerate the race to the bottom. It is another example of the government going after decent-paying jobs in this country. People who have decent-paying jobs actually pay taxes. The government uses those taxes to provide services. Yet, once again, instead of listening to experts and people who actually work in the field, instead of looking at the testimony from the department and from the Labour Relations Board that showed the system is

working and is not broken—because we know the Conservatives have an allergy to data and to making decisions based on real information—the government is trying to push this legislation through at rapid speed.

Here is a quote from FETCO, the Federally Regulated Employers—Transportation and Communications branch: "FETCO has serious concerns regarding the use of Private Members' bills to amend the Canada Labour Code".

It went on to say that the code we have right now, as set out by Parliament, is "to continue and extend its support to labour and management in their co-operative efforts to develop good relations and constructive collective bargaining practices, and deems the development of good industrial relations to be in the best interests of Canada in ensuring a just share of the fruits of progress to all".

Of course, we have a government that has an ideology that is not quite built to that. FETCO also talks about how these rules are there and that they exist to provide stability and are constructive, and that they actually act as barriers to the economic impact of conflicts that could arise.

Over the years, this preamble has been adhered to by governments of all stripes, both the Conservatives and my friends over there, the Liberals. However, the government, without any real evidence, has decided that it needs to break the Labour Code.

Mr. George Smith talks about the amazing work done by Andrew Sims who chaired the last series of comprehensive changes. By the way, for full disclosure, he is no relative at all. I am not related to Mr. Sims. His panel did an absolutely amazing job. In the words of Andrew Sims, "We want legislation that is sound, enactable, and lasting".

Instead, what we have here is a government that is going piecemeal at the Labour Code. The Labour Code and industrial relations are very complex and are made up of many components that all fit together. When a private member's bill is used to insert and dissect parts out of the Labour Code, it opens the door for greater instability in our economy.

I am absolutely upset, putting it mildly, that the government has had such lack of process but not only that; it has refused to engage in meaningful debate in the House, which is very disrespectful. On top of that, Conservatives are really out to get at people who are making decent wages in this country and that is quite shameful.

I am proud to be speaking in opposition to the bill.

● (1840)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too am proud to be rising today to speak in opposition to this private member's bill. It is unprecedented in that it changes the Canada Labour Code in ways that only a government should. The Canada Labour Code is one of the crown jewels in the legislative mix the government has at its disposal in that it regulates how labour unions and their employers in the federal sphere do business with one another.

Private Members' Business

We in Canada have an almost unique system of labour relations. If we look at Europe or other parts of the world, the system of labour relations is not governed the way it is in Canada, and to a certain extent, in the United States. However, what drives that is the balancing act that goes on between employees and employers. It is that balance that is being tampered with here by the member's private member's bill. The balance is such that employers and employees have relatively equal weight, particularly in a unionized workplace, to afford themselves the ability to make sure that their working conditions, their level of pay, and the system by which they are hired, fired, kept on, and moved ahead is fair, reasonable, and acceptable to both sides.

Tampering with the Canada Labour Code through a private member's bill sends a bit of a shock wave through the whole labour and management community in our country.

It is not just labour that is opposed to this. We heard the name Mr. George Smith. I sat opposite Mr. Smith in bargaining on a considerable number of occasions. He was on the opposite side of the fence from us. He too is concerned that this is a backdoor way of making changes that have nothing to do with a problem that has developed in the way Canada's labour relations have been conducted. Instead, it is part of an ideological anti-worker drive that has been carried on by the government since at least I have been here, since at least it has had a majority government.

In my first few days as a member of Parliament, we spent quite a few hours here debating whether the government should force an end to a lockout at Canada Post. The government took the position that it should set the wages of Canada Post workers and should return them to the job with a lower wage than the company had already offered. That in itself is an anti-worker position. However, just Monday of this week, the member for Essex told me that Canada Post is an arm's-length agency and the government has nothing to do with it.

They cannot have it both ways. They cannot say on the one hand that Canada Post has nothing to do with the government and is therefore isolated and untouchable and at the same time, two short years ago, force those workers to take a lower wage increase than they had been offered by their employer.

It is part of the government's ideological bent to be anti-worker in our country. I say ideological, because there is no reason to it. Those workers are workers both in union and non-union workplaces.

Following hard on the heels of the Canada Post debacle, we then had the government ordering Air Canada workers, who had not even started a strike, back to work. There was no strike, yet we had a piece of legislation to order them back and to tamper with their collective agreement as well.

Then we had the Canadian Pacific workers. Canadian Pacific is a private corporation. We had the government interfering in that round of bargaining as well.

The government takes a position over and over again that is anti-workers in this country.

Then we had the spectre of the two of the three omnibus bills we have dealt with so far making changes to how workers and their employers manage their relations with one another. In one case, the

government changed the holiday provisions of the labour code in an omnibus bill, which was never referred to in the budget but was in the budget implementation act. All of a sudden we find things appearing that are anti-worker and that change the terms and conditions of how they are to deal with employers. It is done in a sneaky way, with a few lines stuck in an omnibus bill that were never signalled, nor was there any complaint from any employers that there was a problem.

• (1845)

Then we had a reduction in the health and safety provisions of federally regulated workers in the next omnibus bill last year. Was there a big hue and cry from employers that they needed this change? There was none. The government just went ahead and did it. And the Conservatives did it because they are ideologically opposed to workers in this country, which is very dangerous.

We had the President of the Treasury Board trying to create some kind of crisis in the workforce that he represents and is the boss of, with his suggestion that the use of sick leave was somehow out of control. It turned out, when the real data came out, that it was not out of control and that there was not a massive problem of dozens of days of sick leave being used. In fact, his so-called averages had included time not paid for and time on long-term disability. So it made no sense, but it was part of the ideological spectrum that we have seen across the aisle.

Today, he gleefully announced that he had managed to wrest \$1.7 billion out of these same workers, who will now have less money in their pockets. The Conservatives somehow have now reduced not just the workers', but also the retirees' future expectations of how much money they will have. It is part of the government's agenda to attack workers, to lower their standard of living, to lower their ability to pay for their heating bill of this winter, to pay for their drugs. All of the things that we expect to be able to pay for, the Conservatives have just said we cannot pay for as much as we used to be able to.

In the EI system, the current government has taken another ideological bent against workers. Already we are aware that only 40% of workers in this country can qualify for EI at any given moment. In addition, with the changes the Conservatives brought forward last year to the EI regulations, workers on EI will now have to accept a job paying 30% less than the job they were fired or laid off from. So we are driving down wages yet again with the EI regulations.

It does not have to be this way. We know that unions in this country contribute immensely to the gross domestic product of this country. If we compare unionized and non-unionized workplaces, generally across the country unionized workplaces pay about \$5 an hour more than non-unionized ones, which results in about \$730 million, nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars, a week extra into the economy. Where does that money go? It generally goes to purchases, to keeping a family with heat and light and clothing, to managing children's day care. All of these things that ordinary Canadians expect to be able to do, they are better able to do in a unionized workplace than a non-unionized one. Women do even better than that, having an average wage of \$6 an hour more as a result of being in a unionized workplace.

Private Members' Business

So what is this bill attempting to do? It is attempting to make it more difficult to be in a unionized workplace. We have seen lots of statistics showing that is exactly what these changes would do. They would make it more difficult to start a union in the first place, and in workplaces where the unionized workforce decides to remove the union, it would make it easier to remove the union by lowering the threshold at which a vote must be taken.

Those of us who have done this work in the past know that once a vote is taken and that process is commenced, the employer starts to put pressure on the employees. The employer starts to use unfair and illegal intimidation tactics, which I have experienced, pressuring employees to vote against a union. That is precisely why we have card-check certification in this country, to avoid those intimidation and other pressure tactics by employers to force people to turn away from a union. Why do employers not like unions? It is because they know that unions do better for their workers, not because they hurt the workplaces themselves.

I look forward to voting against this bill when it comes up for a vote.

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of many people who would have liked to speak to this bill. I will try to use my time wisely tonight to share with the House both my point of view and that of a union that is close to my heart. I am fortunate to be the NDP deputy critic for public safety. It being such a large file, one that includes police services, the RCMP and federal penitentiaries, I have the opportunity to meet exceptional people who work day in and day out to keep us safe. I salute them.

I salute the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, the UCCO-SACC, which does outstanding work every day to protect us and to make our communities, our cities and our towns safe. Their work is incredibly important for public safety because they ensure that we are safe and that those detained in our prisons are as well. These people put their lives on the line every day. I work closely with them to ensure that their voices are heard in Parliament and that we understand what they face on a daily basis.

Until recently, there were three federal penitentiaries in my riding of Laval: the Leclerc Institution, the Montée Saint-François Institution and the Federal Training Centre. Unfortunately, as a result of a Conservative government decision, the Leclerc Institution was shut down last year. We still do not understand why, though, because there was a need for it, especially in light of the implications of Bill C-10, the omnibus bill implemented by that same Conservative government.

These people are incredible workers. I worked closely with Diderot at the Leclerc Institution, who is now at the Federal Training Centre. I often work with Michel and Manon, the union representatives at the Montée Saint-François Institution and the Federal Training Centre. I know that they work hard to keep us safe. A lot happens inside our prisons that goes unmentioned. No one talks about double-bunking, which puts the work and lives of our correctional officers in danger every day. No one talks about workers' safety, the new workload resulting from the implementation

of Bill C-10, the restrictive measures or the budget cuts in our federal penitentiaries. That affects them greatly.

I would like to point out that “federal penitentiaries” means “federal employees”. Bill C-525 affects them directly. I would like to quote their position on Bill C-525:

Bill C-525: an attack on union democracy. Bill C-525 is the [Conservative] government's attack on the very existence of unions in job sectors governed by the Canada Labour Code, including the federal public service, which governs the job rules for 800,000 Canadian workers. Dressed up as a way to increase union democracy by the party that brought us robocalls, voter suppression, election-expense violations and the Senate scandal, the bill in fact does exactly the opposite.

I could not agree more with the UCCO-SACC. They go on to say:

[The] Conservative MP [for] Wetaskiwin introduced the so-called Employee's Voting Rights Act as a private member's bill...

Important to note is the fact that private member's bills are not subject to constitutional verification by Justice department lawyers—as are government bills—to see if they conform to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is no doubt one reason why the [Conservative] government prefers to introduce oppressive legislation of this sort via private member's bills.

In the case of Bill C-525, [the Conservative government] is attacking our fundamental right of association by making certification of new unions much more difficult, and conversely, the decertification of existing unions much easier.

● (1855)

The bill does so by adding another, unnecessary, step to the tried-and-true method of the card-check system, which opens the process up to employer intimidation. The government's anti-democratic habits come to the fore in this part of Bill C-525. It will only require a minority of members (45%) to initiate a decertification vote overseen by the Canada Labour Board, which, you will recall from a previous tract, will now be politicized under Bill C-4.

Incredibly, Bill C-525 flies in the face of basic democratic principles by requiring that 50% plus one of all employees [and I would like to add that the principle of 50% plus one forms the very foundation of our society in our electoral system], not just those who participate in the ballot, vote in favour of the union. In other words, those who choose not to vote, or who are unable to vote, would be counted as votes against the union in certification or decertification votes.

It is incredible to think that a piece of legislation would determine the meaning of the votes of people who do not vote or who cannot be present to vote for some reason or another. In a federal, provincial or municipal election, when someone does not vote, it does not mean that he or she is voting for someone; it simply means that he or she did not vote. This decision is appalling. My quote continues:

Those who are ill, vacationing or have family emergencies may be in favour of having a union, but will be considered as No votes.

This legislation is only one part of a series of attacks by the [Conservative] government intended to weaken the labour movement and the ability of workers to organize themselves in their workplace. The process of signing membership cards is the best way to protect workers from the pressure tactics of some employers. To impose a vote is to open the door to threats and intimidation. Studies have demonstrated that the government's proposed process leads to a 10% to 20% decrease in union membership where it has been adopted.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would like to thank all UCCO-SACC members across Canada. I would especially like to thank the Laval members, whom I know very well: union representatives Manon and Michel. They are doing an incredible job of standing up for workers' rights and the safety of their workplace.

All three of us talked about this at length. I know that they strongly oppose this bill. I am proud to be their voice in the House today. It is incredible to think that a government like the one opposite, which constantly says it wants to protect our communities, is not helping the workers in federal penitentiaries. That is ridiculous.

I am going to talk about more than just the fact that this is going to affect conditions for unions in federal detention centres. Bill C-525 touches on other aspects. I would like to cite some statistics for my colleagues opposite that might change their minds. Perhaps they will vote against Bill C-525.

Better wages negotiated by unions inject approximately \$786 million into the Canadian economy every week. That is a lot of money. If we have so much money pouring into the economy, it is because of workers who got together and decided to form a union. I would like to thank them today.

Furthermore, as a woman, I am proud to say that unionized women make \$6.65 more per hour than non-unionized women. That is huge.

I know that my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie wanted to talk about the World Bank, but unfortunately did not have the time to do so in his speech. Therefore, in closing, I will talk briefly about the World Bank and its views on unions.

The World Bank has pointed out the positive role unions play in domestic economies. In a 2002 document based on more than 1,000 studies of the impact of unions on domestic economies, the World Bank found that a high rate of unionization led to greater income equality, lower unemployment and inflation, higher productivity and a quicker response to economic downturns.

● (1900)

We should all vote against Bill C-525, which is clearly an insult to workers' rights.

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that I am not particularly pleased to rise and speak to Bill C-525, but it is an honour to do so.

I want to start by paying tribute to the wonderful work done by my three colleagues: the member for Newton—North Delta, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. They put in a valiant effort under some particularly unfavourable conditions.

Fortunately, though, this out-of-touch bill was so flawed that all of the members of the committee had to listen to reason, make some logical changes and eliminate some obvious absurdities.

● (1905)

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to inform the member that he will have only approximately five minutes this evening.

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, the only thing about this bill that I am somewhat satisfied with is the title. For once, the title actually reflects the content of the bill. Indeed, this bill seeks to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act.

However, although I derive a small amount of satisfaction from the bill's title, the rest of the bill is unacceptable, particularly since it is completely hypocritical for the government to try to pass this legislation in the form of a private member's bill. This is comparable to what we saw in 2010, when some little-known Conservative member from western Canada sought to exclude long guns from the firearms registry by introducing a bogus private member's bill. Once the government got its majority, it used a government bill to make this sort of amendment.

At the time, to me that was a great cause for indignation. I had even written an op-ed piece in the media as an NDP candidate in the previous two elections. I was upset that analysts, who are supposed to know a thing or two about politics, were pushing the late Jack Layton to take a stand and have someone force people to vote along party lines on a private member's bill, in complete disregard for the traditions of this House and the parliamentary system we have inherited.

Fortunately, my former leader, Jack, showed leadership and allowed a free vote. He also managed to convince a number of my colleagues to change the way they had voted at previous stages in order to defeat that bill. I have such a great memory of that and, in fact, I would like to pay tribute to my late leader in that regard.

I would like to talk about something else that this bill affects. The changes to the rules that apply to the Labour Code, union membership and how unions operate are going to skew the rules and even give an undue advantage to certain players in our economic environment.

I had the honour of serving on the Standing Committee on International Trade and the Standing Committee on Finance. I can attest to the fact that the market always works. It is important to understand the conditions under which it works and how the usual market trends shift when there are no rules and we allow the players to act as they see fit. This usual trend was easy to see in the past. The multi-billionaire, John D. Rockefeller, is a prime example. He almost had a monopoly, the ultimate accomplishment for any economic player who wants to achieve real security.

Unions, governed by fair rules, act as a counterbalance to this concentration of power and the undue influence of a handful of individuals who, even alone, can shift the rules of the game in their favour. In the next five minutes I have, I will talk about my personal experience as a former unionized worker, and a non-unionized worker, in both the public and private sectors.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1910)

[English]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in adjournment proceedings to pursue a question that I originally put to the Prime Minister in the wake of the February 11 budget.

It is particularly timely and nothing short of an unbelievable coincidence that I rise to pursue the question of why this particular administration has chosen to go after retired civil servants, veterans, and retired members of the RCMP and change the terms on which they retired. I am speaking of their health benefits, which were part of their remuneration package when they were working in the federal government, working for us, defending Canada, sacrificing for this country. Now in their retirement the terms of their medical benefit package are being renegotiated.

I asked the Prime Minister, given that the government is trying to recoup approximately \$7 billion over a six-year period, why it went after retired Canadians, people living on fixed incomes for whom this would be a real hardship when there are other alternatives. I will mention one of the alternatives that I put to the Prime Minister.

There is over \$600 billion currently sloshing around in the bank accounts of corporations. The former minister of finance told us that these corporations are not merely large, wealthy corporations but are the “job creators”. We were given the fiction that by reducing Canada's corporate tax rates, to be the lowest in the industrialized world, we would be liberating corporations that out of the goodness of their hearts would continue to create as many jobs as possible with the monies they now had on hand.

Instead, far in excess of the proportion of such monies held in the United States by corporations there, Canada's corporations now have, as I said, over \$600 billion, which former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney has described as “dead money”. We have the former minister of finance telling us that these guys are job creators while the former governor of the Bank of Canada is telling us the reality. These corporations have accumulated so much cash but they are not using it. That cash described as “dead money” is not doing a single useful thing for the Canadian economy.

In question period I asked the Prime Minister why he chose to go after pensioners instead of making a modest change to the taxation rate of corporations, because this \$600 billion is a staggering 32% of Canadian GDP. This is an amazing opportunity.

The reason I say it is an incredible coincidence that today of all days I am pursuing this question is that earlier today the President of the Treasury Board held a press conference to announce that an agreement had been reached. This agreement is virtually the same thing that was announced in the budget, with some modifications. Retired members of the Canadian civil service, veterans, and so on will still move to a 50:50 cost-sharing instead of the current 75:25. There are a number of other minor changes, but these again are egregious and will create hardship.

The press release says it will not affect anyone considered a low-income senior, but low income is described as anyone making less

than \$16,728 as an individual or less than \$22,000 as a couple. This is not enough to protect people living on fixed income. People living in dire poverty are the only ones who will be protected from these changes.

I ask the hon. parliamentary secretary if Canada could not do better for those who have served us so well.

● (1915)

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss our government's ongoing actions to return to balanced budgets and respect Canadian taxpayers' dollars. This includes the important announcement made earlier today, as my colleague mentioned, by my hon. colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, on the modernization of the public service health care plan.

The President of the Treasury Board announced that our government has approved a joint recommendation from the public service health care plan Partners Committee regarding contribution rates and eligibility requirements for retired federal employees. This also applies to benefit enhancements for all plan members under the public service health care plan. The details are as follows.

Beginning April 1, 2015, retired member cost-sharing will gradually increase over a four-year period to attain equal cost-sharing between the employer and retired members. As promised, there will also be a low-income provision for current retired members.

With respect to eligibility, a total of six years or more of pensionable service will be required to be eligible under the plan as a retired member effective April 1, 2015.

This announcement is in keeping with the provisions in economic action plan 2013 that committed our government to ensuring that the public service is affordable, modern, and high-performing. In that budget, the government confirmed that it would be examining overall employee compensation, including pensioner benefits, to ensure their affordability, sustainability, and comparability with other private and public sector employers. The settlement announced today is indeed fiscally responsible as well as fair and reasonable to all members of the plan.

As members know, our government is committed to reducing Canada's deficit and to balancing the budget in 2015. I am pleased to say that this agreement will result in \$6.7 billion in overall savings.

We recognize the importance of offering a supplementary health care plan to retired members while at the same time ensuring our plan remains affordable and sustainable, given increasing cost pressures. This plan, with its new enhancements, continues to support the health and wellness of all public servants and retired members.

I would reiterate that our government is pleased that we were able to arrive at a new agreement that is fair to both plan members and taxpayers. Not only do these measures fulfill our government's saving commitments from economic action plan 2013, but they also minimize the impact on employees and the Canadian public.

Adjournment Proceedings

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for his presentation, but it does nothing to ease the pain and suffering of the people of Canada who worked for this government, which is the people of Canada, under a contract.

I have received over 800 letters from people in my riding who will be affected by this heartless change. I will read snippets of these letters into the record today without mentioning names.

Here is a letter from someone who writes:

I have attached a copy of my prescription records so you can see how much I have to deal with to keep relatively healthy. My wife has three prescriptions to fill as well. I am offended that a negotiated package and cost that was part of my remuneration while I was working could be taken away while I don't have the recourse to withdraw services. This is another indication that the government of our country has lost its humanity in dealing with its former employees in a drive to cut costs.

Another person writes:

I served the Canadian Forces for 37 years and kept the faith. If I had been called upon to die for Canada, I would have done so, assuming the government would also keep its contracts with me. Please do what you can to stop the Conservatives from making this change.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, I remind my colleague that this is a voluntary plan, and it will remain extremely generous.

Allow me to provide some more details on this settlement announced today.

With respect to eligibility, some exemptions will apply for such people as disabled retired members, survivors, the Veterans Affairs Canada client group, and those affected by workforce adjustment. The settlement also provides benefit enhancement for all plan members. In addition, the annual deductible will be eliminated, starting in 2015. As such, plan members will no longer have to pay the first \$60 for single coverage or \$100 for family coverage per calendar year.

These benefits are of real value to our public servants and to our retired members. They are all part of an ongoing work to modernize the public service. They reflect our commitment to strong financial management as well as to spending restraint.

I commend the employee, retiree, and employer representatives on the public service health care plan Partners Committee for arriving at this constructive and collaborative solution.

● (1920)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:20 p.m.)

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