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(HANSARD)

Friday, April 15, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 15, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for two motions.

That, in relation to the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) Public Consultation, ten members of the Standing Committee on International Trade be authorized to travel to Montréal and Québec, Quebec; and Toronto and Windsor, Ontario, in the Spring of 2016, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member for Laurentides—Labelle have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy 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)

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the second motion:

That, in relation to its study on Rail Safety, ten members of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities be authorized to travel to Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, in the Spring of 2016, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy 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*]

AIR CANADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to commence debate at second reading of Bill C-10, amendments to the Air Canada Public Participation Act. These amendments seek to modernize legislation to allow Air Canada to more effectively respond to the evolution of market conditions while continuing to support jobs for skilled workers in Canada's aerospace sector. This bill would amend the provisions of the Air Canada Public Participation Act dealing with Air Canada's operational and overhaul centres.

Let me first say that this bill is being submitted for consideration to the House in the context of an historic investment by Air Canada in Canada's aerospace sector. As members are aware, Air Canada has announced its intention to purchase up to 75 Bombardier C Series aircraft and to ensure that these planes will be maintained in Canada for at least 20 years.

Air Canada has also said it plans to support the creation of centres of excellence for aircraft maintenance in Quebec and Manitoba, and the company says it will continue to carry out significant work in other parts of Canada. In other words, this bill comes before this place at an important time for Canada's aerospace sector. Not only is Bombardier producing an aircraft that is a game changer for aviation in terms of its efficiency, environmental performance, and noise, but Air Canada is adding this plane to its fleet, creating significant opportunities for high-value employment.

Quebec has estimated that the creation of the centre of excellence in Montreal alone could produce 1,000 jobs over 15 years, while the manufacturing of Air Canada's C Series aircraft could create an additional 300 jobs. Air Canada also intends to support the creation of 150 jobs in Manitoba, with a possibility to expand beyond that. These are precisely the results that we should be pursuing. They are market-driven investments aimed at improving Air Canada's bottom line and ability to serve Canadians, by investing in world-class technology right here in Canada.

As members are aware, the Attorney General of Quebec took legal action against Air Canada following the closure of Aveos Fleet Performance in 2012, accusing the carrier of non-compliance with these provisions of the Air Canada Public Participation Act. In light of Air Canada's investments in aerospace in Canada, including aircraft maintenance, Quebec has since announced its willingness to discontinue its pursuit of that litigation.

This creates an appropriate context for us to modernize the Air Canada Public Participation Act. This legislation is now close to 30 years old. It was created to enable the privatization of Air Canada, which occurred in 1989. Specifically, I am referring to paragraph 6 (1)(d), which calls for Air Canada to have in its articles of continuance:

> provisions requiring the Corporation to maintain operational and overhaul centres in the City of Winnipeg, the Montreal Urban Community and the City of Mississauga;

Let me begin by providing to the House some of the history of this legislation. The Air Canada Public Participation Act was brought in at a time when countries around the world were moving away from a high degree of regulation and public ownership in certain sectors, notably air transport. Canada was no exception. To support economic growth, deliver new services to Canadians, and significantly reduce the burden on the taxpayers, the government took several actions. We deregulated the air transport sector. We commercialized our major airports. Also, by way of the Air Canada Public Participation Act, we transformed Air Canada from a crown corporation into a viable and competitive private company.

The air transport sector has greatly evolved since 1989. Now it is common for global air carriers to outsource aircraft maintenance and to distribute their supply chain across different geographic areas, with a view to being more efficient. This is the competitive environment within which Air Canada operates. Other air carriers, Canadian and international, are not subject to the same obligations regarding their maintenance facilities. That means that they can seek out efficiencies in ways that Air Canada cannot.

● (1010)

Ultimately, the result of this is that Air Canada could be less competitive. Furthermore, if Air Canada's ability to reduce costs is limited by the act, that could make air travel more expensive for Canadians. In other words, the Air Canada Public Participation Act could place limits on the company's ability to be competitive and cost effective, with implications for the travelling public and the Canadian economy. This does not support an approach to air transport that focuses on competition and market forces as the best means to deliver value to users. Air Canada, like any company, needs flexibility to evolve within its competitive environment to remain viable.

Of course, we were all concerned when Aveos closed its doors in 2012, resulting in layoffs across the country. Some divisions of Aveos were purchased as part of the bankruptcy process and kept in operation, but others were not. The closure of Aveos meant that Air Canada ceased to carry out certain work in Canada. The minister objected to this, as did many of our colleagues. That is why we are so pleased to see that Air Canada is now investing in Canada's aerospace and aircraft maintenance sector, and in doing so creating concrete employment opportunities for Canadians in this sector. That is precisely the type of outcome we wanted to see.

The Air Canada investment in the C Series and support for the creation of the centres of excellence in Quebec and Manitoba offer specific opportunities for highly skilled aerospace workers, both during the manufacturing phase, and later, for maintenance. Our intention in introducing this legislation is to strike the right balance.

First, we want Air Canada to have flexibility to organize its activities, to match how the air transport sector has evolved and will continue to evolve. At the same time, we want to ensure that the act continues to require Air Canada to carry out aircraft maintenance in certain Canadian regions. This proposed legislation maintains that commitment.

The act currently refers to the city of Winnipeg, the city of Mississauga, and the Montreal urban community. I note that the Montreal urban community, which no longer exists as a jurisdiction, did not include all of greater Montreal. For example, it did not include Mirabel. Also, Air Canada's activities extend throughout the greater Toronto area, not just Mississauga.

Given this, we have chosen to expand the reference in the legislation to cover the provinces of Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, which allows for Air Canada's maintenance work to extend to areas around the named cities, as opposed to remaining strictly within the city limits. Furthermore, Bill C-10 would clarify that paragraph 6(1)(*d*) of the Air Canada Public Participation Act requires Air Canada to commit to carry out or cause to be carried out aircraft maintenance, including with regard to airframes, engines, components, equipment, or parts, in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

However, this does not mean to specify particular types or volumes of such maintenance in each location, or particular levels of employment. In this way, it will be clear that we are not tying the hands of a private company to manage its operations into the future. Air Canada will be able to adjust its activities to respond to the evolution of the air transportation sector in the same way that any other company does.

I would like to remind the House of the nature of air transport and how it has evolved. This is a truly global business, characterized by large international corporations providing services over vast networks, using extremely expensive equipment. It is also highly susceptible to external shocks and is cyclical in nature. Air transport provides essential connectivity, both within this vast country and to the outside world. It is also a major source of employment. Air Canada alone employs close to 25,000 people.

Air transportation has evolved considerably since the 1980s. We have seen important new aircraft technologies, huge global growth in traffic, new business models, and new air carriers. It has also weathered major shocks, such as pandemics, economic crises, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11. We can only imagine how the sector will evolve in the future.

Federal policy regarding Canada's air transport sector places a premium on competition and market forces. We do not subsidize the sector. Rather, we support the user-pay principle with regard to infrastructure and service. This is not the case in all countries.

● (1015)

Since its privatization, Air Canada has existed as a private enterprise without state support, despite weathering some difficult periods. While the federal government participated in bridge financing, along with private partners, to help Air Canada through the credit crunch resulting from the 2009 global financial crisis, this was done on commercial terms. Any loans were paid back in full with interest.

Where both air transport and aerospace are concerned, it is essential that Canada be competitive, but we cannot rest on our laurels as the world of aviation is changing quickly.

I am particularly pleased that our aviation and aerospace sectors have come together, with the recent announcement by Air Canada regarding its purchase of the Bombardier C Series. This will allow Air Canada to operate aircraft that set new standards in aviation by cutting fuel consumption, reducing GHG emissions, and minimizing noise.

These aircraft will be designed, assembled, and maintained in Canada, creating opportunities for well-paid employment. It is hard to imagine a better outcome. This is the sort of result we hoped to see when we raised concerns around the closure of Aveos.

I am also very pleased that Quebec and Air Canada are nearing an end to the litigation based on the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

I commend Air Canada for supporting the creation of centres of excellence that will provide employment for highly skilled aerospace workers in Manitoba and Quebec.

In this context, it is now time to modernize the Air Canada Public Participation Act to clarify its intent. Yes, we want the legislation to be clear that Air Canada will undertake aircraft maintenance in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. However, as it is a company that needs to compete in an evolving global marketplace, we need to give Air Canada the flexibility to meet these requirements in a way that also supports its competitiveness.

I believe that Bill C-10 achieves that balance. I hope honourable members will join me in supporting this bill and will quickly refer it to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, where we can hear from stakeholders.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, taking into consideration the government's propensity to consult, I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary can tell us which stakeholders have been consulted prior to introducing this legislation.

Has the government consulted with any of the companies that presently support Air Canada's maintenance operations, or a single union, for that matter?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, listening to stakeholders is always very important when government is making decisions like this. That is why we want to move this forward to the committee.

We need to have stakeholders voice their concerns, if they have concerns, and the proper place to do that is at the committee level. That is what we are proposing.

● (1020)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of Parliament who comes from Montreal, I am very pleased that the Air Canada head office would continue to have to remain within the Island of Montreal.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary whether or not she believes that, for the foreseeable future, both the requirement to keep the head office in Montreal and the official bilingualism requirements of Air Canada will remain in place.

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised an important question.

It is important to underscore that this legislation does not talk about the bilingual nature of the Air Canada Public Participation Act. That is not part of any changes. That will continue.

We are all very happy that Air Canada has made the commitment to continue talking and working toward much better service for all Canadians throughout the country.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague chose to use words like “efficiency”, “flexibility”, and a “changing” environment in her speech. It is the same old discourse we hear time and time again in neo-liberal arguments: that corporations must remain competitive in a dangerous time, and we have to give them carte blanche to basically move their operations out of Canada to a cheaper jurisdiction. The Liberals used to stand for this particular act. I remember in 2012, they were expressing their concerns, but my oh my, how the levers of power change one's principles.

I want to ask the hon. member if the government understands that, by instituting these changes to the act, it is in a sense legalizing job losses in Canada.

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, actually we are doing quite the opposite. What we want to do is secure jobs for the future, and that is what making some changes to the act will do. The aerospace industry is so competitive that we must look to the future to make sure we keep jobs and build new jobs right across the country.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures.

As the official opposition critic for transport, I have a number of concerns with both the proposed amendment to this act and the government's timing in introducing this change.

Let us review the facts.

On November 3, 2015, the Quebec Court of Appeal, Quebec's highest court, confirmed an earlier ruling by the Quebec Superior Court that Air Canada had failed to fulfill its legal obligations stemming from the Air Canada Public Participation Act concerning heavy maintenance of aircraft in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Mississauga.

On December 11, 2015, Bombardier formerly requested financial support of $1 billion U.S. from the Government of Canada. This was two months after the Government of Quebec had purchased a 49% stake in the C Series program for that same amount.

On February 16, 2016, Republic Airways, which to that point had placed the largest order for the C Series, streamlined its operations as it filed for bankruptcy protection and cancelled its order for up to 80 C Series aircraft.

The very next day, February 17, Air Canada announced that it had begun negotiations with Bombardier to purchase 45 C Series variant 300 aircraft, with an option for an additional 30.

I will be discussing this announcement further, later on in my remarks.

Considering Air Canada had for years shown no interest in the C Series and had just completed an agreement with Boeing to purchase 61 737 Max aircraft, this announcement surprised virtually the entire airline industry. Prior to Air Canada's announcement, Bombardier had gone nearly 17 months without landing a firm order, so it goes without saying that the timing of this transaction was fortuitous for the aerospace giant.

Furthermore, *Airways News*, a trade publication, estimates that there is a 40% chance that Bombardier will land another order for its C Series aircraft this year. Therefore, to say that Air Canada has saved the Bombardier C Series program would be an understatement.

Concurrent with this announcement, Air Canada announced that it would undertake the heavy maintenance of the C Series aircraft in Quebec for 20 years and create a centre of excellence in the province.

On the same day that Air Canada made its announcement to purchase these airplanes, the Minister of Transport announced that he would lessen Air Canada's obligations under the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

On March 8, the Minister of Transport put the bill we are debating on notice.

On March 14, Air Canada announced that it would move some of the maintenance work presently being done in Mississauga and Montreal to Winnipeg, thereby creating approximately 150 jobs in Manitoba.

On March 24, the Minister of Transport introduced the bill we are debating today.

Given that it is common practice to put a bill on notice and introduce it within a few days, the 16-day delay from when this bill was put on notice to when the minister introduced it has not been explained. In his short justification for introducing Bill C-10, the Minister of Transport hailed Air Canada's decision to purchase the C Series aircraft, combined with the Government of Quebec's and the Government of Manitoba's intention to discontinue litigation against the carrier, as the main cause. He also noted that this would allow Air Canada to be more competitive in an evolving aerospace sector.

While this proposed legislation should have nothing to do with Bombardier, this bill unfortunately appears to have everything to do with Bombardier. If this legislation is part of the government's plan to support Bombardier, then it should just say so.

Let us look at the justification in greater detail, starting with Air Canada's purchase of the C Series airplane.

As was mentioned, Air Canada signed a letter of intent to purchase the C Series aircraft on February 17 this year, with a two-year negotiating window. No money has changed hands, and none will for several years.

● (1025)

Neither Bombardier nor Air Canada has announced the price they have agreed on for the C Series aircraft. However, it is believed to be under $30 million per unit, which is far below the break-even point for Bombardier.

Assuming Air Canada's letter of intent leads to orders at the end of the two-year negotiating window, planes are scheduled to be delivered beginning in early 2020, after deliveries of Boeing 737 Max aircraft are completed, and assuming no delays take place in production.

I would also note that the narrow-body Boeing 737 Max variant 200 and variant 300 airplane that Air Canada is purchasing seats between 160 and 180 persons in a two-cabin configuration, depending on the cabin layout, which is approximately 20 more seats than the C Series.

While I know that all of us here are pleased that Canada's largest airline has made what could be a substantial order for the Bombardier aircraft, none of us should be under any illusion that we will be heading home for the next constituency week on this aircraft.

As is the industry norm, Bombardier will only receive payment from Air Canada once the planes have been delivered, which is many years away. Finally, as with all major orders, due diligence takes time, and either side has the ability to withdraw from the negotiation at any time.

Next is what the Quebec government agreed to, and I will quote Air Canada's press release on this matter:

> Subject to concluding final arrangements—

—and those are important words, “concluding final arrangements”—

> —the Government of Quebec has agreed to discontinue the litigation related to Air Canada's obligations regarding the maintenance of an overhaul and operational centre following Air Canada's agreement to collaborate with the Province to establish a Centre of Excellence for C Series airframe heavy maintenance work in Quebec.

The Government of Quebec has not abandoned litigation against Air Canada. It has temporarily suspended litigation as both sides negotiate a settlement deal. Until Air Canada takes possession of its first C Series and begins maintenance work on that aircraft, or even concludes its purchase with Bombardier, this deal with the Government of Quebec cannot be final.

The Province of Manitoba, which had originally joined Quebec's lawsuit, has agreed to cease pursuing litigation subject to Air Canada moving approximately 150 jobs to the province. These jobs will be moved to Winnipeg sometime in 2017.

I would note that prior to Aveos filing for bankruptcy, approximately 400 heavy maintenance jobs were in Winnipeg. Air Canada is proposing to bring back 40% of them.

It is clear that with Bill C-10, if something happens and Air Canada does not end up purchasing the C Series aircraft for any reason, whether because of a change in demand for air travel or if the C Series does not fulfill its performance guarantees, the Quebec and Manitoba governments will not have a legal recourse because the law will have changed.

If the governments of Quebec and Manitoba are indeed satisfied with Air Canada's commitments to create and maintain jobs in both respective provinces, there is no need to move as quickly to change the maintenance provisions of the Air Canada Public Participation Act, because no further lawsuits would be forthcoming.

Finally, the minister makes the point that this change would allow Air Canada to be more competitive. The amendment that the minister is proposing in Bill C-10 would indeed allow Air Canada to move some of its maintenance work to jurisdictions where presumably the cost of labour is lower, therefore saving Air Canada money.

In making the point regarding Air Canada's competitiveness, the minister has not provided an estimate of the financial benefit this legislative change will give Air Canada, not even for next year. Perhaps this information will come up in today's debate.

What is even more curious is that in its lengthy and detailed submission to the Canada Transportation Act review, which is available online, Air Canada does not mention aircraft maintenance once as a financial concern.

● (1030)

The location where Air Canada undertakes its overhaul maintenance only became a major concern when the carrier lost in court twice on this matter.

In the same public submission, Air Canada, along with virtually every major aerospace sector stakeholder in Canada, lists the air travellers security charge, the rapid growth in airport improvement fees, taxes on aviation fuel, the need for more streamlined customs processes, and the high airport rent collected by the federal government as major impediments to sustained growth of the aviation sector in Canada, especially relative to American competitors.

If the government wanted to take measures that would stimulate the entire Canadian aerospace sector, including Air Canada, it could have chosen to tackle any of the issues above. I would also note that all of these measures have near universal support in the aviation sector and would not lead to a loss of jobs in Canada, but so far, the minister has been silent on all of these.

The Conservative Party believes that Air Canada should become a private sector company that is not supported by taxpayers while ensuring that Canadians have access to reliable air travel. That was the original intent of the Air Canada Public Participation Act when it was introduced in 1988. The act put in place clear conditions to ensure that all of the support Air Canada had received from government to turn it into a profitable crown corporation would not be lost. These conditions will become well known over the course of this debate, but I will take the time and the opportunity to list them here. Air Canada is subject to the Official Languages Act. It maintains its corporate headquarters in Montreal. Seventy-five per cent of its voting shares have to be held by Canadians. Finally and most important for the purpose of this debate, Air Canada has to "maintain operational and overhaul centres in the City of Winnipeg, the Montreal Urban Community, and the City of Mississauga".

Today, Air Canada is the largest airline in this country and an important international player in the sector because of support from taxpayers over the years.

Upon being privatized in 1988, Air Canada inherited a fleet of 109 aircraft.

All of Canada's major airports where Air Canada first flew to were built with the financial support of the Government of Canada and taxpayers. Today, Air Canada is the largest tenant in nearly every major airport in Canada, with the exception of Calgary and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. This gives Air Canada significant influence over each airport's operations and access to the best landing slots in a slot-controlled airport like Pearson. Air Canada also has intangible assets, like landing slots at some of the most slot-controlled airports in the world, such as London Heathrow, Washington Reagan, and New York La Guardia. Earlier this year, Air France sold a pair of its landing slots at London Heathrow for $75 million. For perspective, Air Canada owns 150 weekly slots at that airport.

Air Canada was also the beneficiary of back-to-work legislation in 2012, which was enacted because of Air Canada's importance to this country's economy. I would note that the Liberal Party and the former member for Westmount—Ville-Marie voted against this legislation.

The Conservative Party supports the concept of making Air Canada more competitive relative to other carriers. But as I noted earlier in my remarks, the minister has failed to demonstrate that this will be achieved while ignoring measures that the government could undertake that would achieve this without leading to job losses in Canada.

We know that Air Canada supports these measures because it said so in its comprehensive submission to the Canada Transportation Act review. Therefore, the question remains: Why would the minister undertake to amend this legislation and not take the opportunity to address any of the other measures that Air Canada identified in its submission? Neither this bill nor the Minister of Transport addresses any of these. This is, to me, Bill C-10's greatest failing and why the Conservative Party cannot support this legislation.

● (1035)

To conclude, while it is not clear what level of benefit this legislative change will give Air Canada, we do know that this change will make it possible for the carrier to move thousands of jobs from Canada to other jurisdictions. We also know that the government is missing an opportunity to allow Air Canada to better compete against U.S. and international carriers.

I hope all members will keep this in mind as we continue to debate Bill C-10.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that Air Canada has purchased Bombardier C Series planes, and there is no doubt about that. However, this is about helping to ensure Air Canada can remain competitive on the world stage while supporting Canadian jobs. That is a concept the member's party often claims to support.

It is about supporting Canadian jobs, Canadian ownership, Canadian principles, and Canadian competitiveness. This is a Canadian bill for a Canadian company. I am looking forward to seeing more of Air Canada's maintenance work in my home province of Quebec, with even more pride knowing they are also flying Canadian planes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I recognize there was no question there, but I will restate that Conservatives do support the concept of making Air Canada more competitive relative to other carriers. However, as I also stated, there are more competitive ways and other measures which the government could undertake to accomplish this without leading to job losses in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Since the consequences of the present act do not suit the government, it would rather change the act than enforce it. I will have more to say about that later in the debate.

My question for my Conservative Party colleague is simple: when the Conservatives were in power, why did they do nothing to enforce the Air Canada Public Participation Act?

In 2012, when Aveos went bankrupt and people lost their jobs, we asked the government some questions. I would like to take this opportunity to point out that the Liberals asked the same questions.

Why did the government of the day do nothing to enforce the law? Can my colleague help us understand that?

● (1040)

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier in my remarks, we do support the concept of making Air Canada more competitive relative to other carriers.

At this point in time, we know there is a review before the Minister of Transport which contemplates a number of recommendations from the air industry to make its operations far more competitive. I will just name a few: tying all airport improvement fees to specific projects with explicit sunset provisions; overhauling the financing model for security; replacing the current one-size-fits-all passenger screening approach which treats all passengers equally with an intelligence driven, risk-based passenger screening process; and the list goes on.

I look forward to hearing what the government is going to do in response to the Canada Transportation Act review and how it is going to seek to implement some of the recommendations that were put forward.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had always been of the belief that the Conservative Party stood for free enterprise and stood for Canadian companies, private companies like Air Canada, that needed to be able to compete with our international competitors, including U.S. companies that have recently been restructured.

These jobs are not jobs making widgets. They are technical jobs. They are jobs that Canadian innovation should be able to ensure that we remain competitive in Canada so Air Canada will not move those jobs. That is common business sense.

Does my hon. colleague not believe that Canadian ingenuity and Canadian workers are capable of being competitive enough to have Air Canada keep these jobs in Canada, even if it has more flexibility?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, of course I believe that our aerospace industry is innovative and continues to make improvements that benefit all Canadians.

Let us remember that Air Canada has benefited as a legacy carrier. Air Canada inherited a fleet of 109 aircraft upon being privatized in 1988. Air Canada is the largest tenant in nearly every major airport in Canada, with the exception of Calgary and Billy Bishop Toronto city airport, which gives it significant influence over each airport's operations.

It also has intangible assets, such as landing slots at some of the most slot-controlled airports in the world, and Air Canada also benefited from back-to-work legislation in 2012, which was enacted because of Air Canada's importance to this country's economy. Air Canada also benefited from a deferred pension payment plan in 2013.

Therefore, we have to take into consideration the benefits that it has received as a legacy carrier, which were often borne by the taxpayers, and the need to honour the obligations that were put in this act to begin with.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in one point of principle I agree with my colleague from Montreal in regard to Canadian workers absolutely having the capability to be competitive, but this legislation, based on the decision the Liberal Party made before, imposes an unfair playing field on other airlines, such as Porter Airlines, which does not have the capability of buying the Bombardier airplanes because it cannot have its runway lengthened in order to be able to land those planes there.

I would ask my colleague about the aspect of this legislation that puts other Canadian companies on an unfair playing field as well.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as many members know, we debated that very issue not so long ago when it came to the government's decision to interfere with the process of consultation on allowing Porter Airlines to lengthen its runway so that it could purchase the Bombardier C Series.

Again, the bill will affect jobs in Canada. It will affect up to 3,000 Canadian maintenance workers. There are, as I said, a number of options available to the government that would make Air Canada and other carriers more competitive without contributing to job losses or costing taxpayers.

● (1045)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start by making a few comments.

Air Canada is a private corporation. Everyone in this House acknowledges that, but it is a unique company in that it was privatized in 1989, and it is in the unique position of having inherited many assets that were paid for by the taxpayer. Part of the deal was that the government would give Air Canada the assets that had been funded by the taxpayer, but Air Canada had to keep maintenance jobs in Canada.

Sometimes governments have made deals with corporations based on a handshake, saying "We will give you a tax break here and we will change the laws, but the deal is that you keep jobs in Canada." Those agreements have not always been honoured, and the difference with Air Canada is that we have a law to make sure Air Canada follows the agreement.

Right now we are hearing that the Liberals will change that law. I have heard Liberal members saying this is a Canadian bill for Canadian jobs, and do we not trust in the ingenuity of workers? Yes, we trust in the ingenuity of workers, but I do not trust Air Canada's word on this matter.

My question to the hon. member is this: is the Liberal government placing too much trust in Air Canada's word?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I would not presume to know what the government is thinking or what it may be doing with this piece of legislation. We are questioning the intent of it and also the timing, but we do know, as the hon. member pointed out, that the original intent of the Air Canada Public Participation Act when it was introduced in 1988 was to put in place clear conditions to ensure that all of the support Air Canada has received over the years from the Government of Canada and the taxpayers to turn it into a profitable crown corporation would not be lost.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before I give the member for Beloeil—Chambly the floor, I must inform him that we have about 12 minutes left before member statements.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Before I begin, I would like to thank some of my colleagues who worked on this file. This was a team effort, after all.

[*English*]

I would like to thank, of course, my colleague the member for Edmonton Strathcona, who is our transport critic, and my colleague the member for Windsor West, who is our innovation, science, and economic development critic. Both those colleagues have worked very hard on this issue as well.

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. As an MP from Montreal, he represents a good number of the workers who will be affected by this change. I want to thank my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona as well. Since he represents a riding in the Winnipeg area, he is also seeing first-hand the impact of the decisions made here.

This issue also affects me. I say that with a bit of a smile, since my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent and I have often talked about the importance of Quebec's aerospace industry, specifically. I am from a suburb in the greater Montreal area, where there are workers and machinists in various industries who work hard, particularly at Air Canada. This bill will therefore have a major impact in my region. That is why I am very pleased to share the NDP's position on this with the House.

First of all, we must condemn the government's lack of rigour on any issues related to the aerospace industry. This government has been improvising ever since it was sworn in back in November. Since the Liberals say they recognize the importance of the aerospace industry in Canada, and particularly in Quebec, I think that they should have a plan. That goes without saying. During the election campaign, the Liberals kept saying over and over again that they had a plan, but they do not seem to have one for that industry, as we can see from the many problems that have arisen.

First of all, regarding Bombardier, we asked the minister on the day that he was sworn in what he planned to do about this file. Of course, I did not expect an answer the day that he was sworn in. However, it has been several months now, and the Liberals just keep saying that the situation is being evaluated and that they presented a budget. We have yet to hear anything about this, and they tell us to simply trust them. Instead of saying "just watch me" like his father, the Prime Minister keeps saying "just trust me". The problem is that we do not find him trustworthy so far.

The Air Canada Public Participation Act that we are discussing today is very much intertwined with the Bombardier situation. The Minister of Transport is using the Bombardier case and Air Canada's promise to buy Bombardier aircraft as an excuse to change the legislation, saying that it is a good agreement and giving them carte blanche to decide how they are going to protect jobs here in Canada.

As my colleague put it so well, the problem is that the bill changes the current legislation and asks us to trust Air Canada to meet its obligations. For now, those are legal obligations, but if the bill is passed, that will no longer be the case.

We seriously wonder whether we are seeing a favour being returned. The Minister of Transport seems to want to thank Air Canada for buying Bombardier aircraft, thereby helping the government to off-load this hot potato. This gives the minister some good news to announce during question period, when he is asked about Aveos or Bombardier. He can go on about how nice it was to sit in one of those planes and he also gets to avoid having to defend his colleague, the Minister of Innovation, who remains unable to tell us when a decision will be made in the Bombardier case.

I do not pretend to know what the government members are thinking, but the facts are not reassuring, neither about the government, nor about the future of Air Canada maintenance jobs, which are supposed to be protected by law.

Before I go on, it is important for me to put things into context to better understand how we got to this point.

● (1050)

My colleagues will remember that Aveos announced that it was filing for bankruptcy in 2012. Naturally, the unions representing the machinists and the Government of Quebec sued Air Canada, accusing it of failing to meet its legal obligations. In fact, almost 3,000 jobs were lost after the news broke.

At the time, we asked the Conservative government a number of questions. Unfortunately, we never got an answer. We wanted to know what the Conservatives were going to do to enforce the law. As usual, we were given all kinds of excuses about market realities, even though there was a law. There were legal obligations. The government was not able to give us an explanation.

We now have a new government. What is important and what we are interested in today are the questions posed by the Liberals at the time. They were so indignant that the current Prime Minister, who is an MP from Montreal, protested alongside the workers in Montreal. As my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona said so well yesterday, he wasn't embarrassed to sing *Kumbaya*, to chant "So-so-so-solidarity" and shout out all kinds of slogans along with the protesters.

After all, people often said that the Conservatives came to change Ottawa and Ottawa changed them. Now, the same thing is happening with the Liberals. They came to change Ottawa and Ottawa changed them. In fact, I would even go so far as to say that the Liberals have not changed. These are the same Liberals that we knew before. When they were in the opposition, they tried to tell us one thing, they were going to protest with workers, but now they are flouting the law by changing it to legalize things that are illegal today, that will be illegal tomorrow, and that will be illegal until the bill is passed. It is completely shameful. It is disgraceful and unbecoming. It is particularly unbecoming because they promised to do things differently. Unfortunately, that is not what we are seeing today.

I would like to continue providing more context. After 2012, the situation changed. With the purchase of the Bombardier C Series, or at least the promise to buy since it is not yet a done deal, the Government of Quebec put an end to the dispute. It was only natural to do so until an agreement could be reached. Meanwhile, the government once again took advantage of the circumstances to make changes.

At the time, the Minister of Transport provided a justification. I said "at the time", as though it were a long time ago, because time flies when promises are being broken. A few months ago, the Minister of Transport explained that this was to allow for more flexibility. This sounds as though Air Canada is being given an opportunity to flout the law, but no one is actually saying so. Air Canada is simply being given an opportunity to legally flout the law. It is being given permission to do things it is not allowed to do now.

I want to raise an important point here. I heard a number of Liberal colleagues say the same thing. I even heard a Liberal member question our trust in Canadian workers and Canada's industrial capacity. I would like to give him some figures that are relevant here. The first figure has to do with the export of supply chains to the Asia-Pacific region. From 2003 to 2013, exports of supply chains grew rapidly by 190%. We lost jobs here in Canada. These jobs are going elsewhere. Supply chain exports to the Asia-Pacific region account for nearly 20% of the overall growth in value of exports.

We can see that more and more aerospace companies are outsourcing to Asia and other countries. Jobs here in Canada in these industries have become unstable. That is why we need a law to protect those jobs. We are not questioning the workers' skills or the quality of our industry. We are questioning whether the current market will protect those jobs. After all, they are high-quality jobs with good working conditions, pensions, and guaranteed income. It is so easy for large corporations to outsource jobs like that to places where labour costs less. That is being done to the detriment of the people we represent. That is exactly why the law was passed at the time, because, to put it bluntly, Air Canada benefited from the money of these same taxpayers who are now going to lose their jobs.

● (1055)

Once again, as one of my colleagues put it so well in one of his questions, over the past few years, in cases where the tax rate was lowered for large corporations, for example, companies often promised to return the favour and keep jobs here in Canada. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

I have some other things to say, but it is almost time for question period, so I will pick this up again later.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly will have 10 minutes left to finish his speech when the House resumes debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, the only unilingual francophone minister was chastised for refusing to grant the CBC an interview in English.

Apparently it is fine to have unilingual anglophone ministers and Supreme Court justices, but a unilingual francophone minister causes an uproar. That is unacceptable.

The Minister of National Revenue said that unilingual francophones are perhaps judged a little more harshly than unilingual anglophones. That is an understatement.

I congratulate the minister on standing up for herself. I call on all Canadian MPs who believe in collective social justice to support us.

Enough with the denial. It is high time all Quebec MPs, not just those from the Bloc Québécois, showed some pride and held their heads high.

I will conclude with an old Franco-American saying: We must rise above indifference if we do not want to sink into insignificance.

* * *

● (1100)

[*English*]

ORAL HEALTH MONTH

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand in the House and acknowledge April as being Oral Health Month.

Oral Health Month gives us the opportunity to recognize Canada's dedicated oral health professionals, as our dentists and dental hygienists work tirelessly to keep our mouths and teeth healthy. In fact, this week is also National Dental Hygienists Week.

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting with members of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association, and learning about the numerous innovative ways they were providing front-line services to Canadians in my riding of Brampton West and all across our country.

For everyone involved with providing oral health care to Canadians, please accept my warmest thanks for the countless contributions. I wish them all continued success during oral health month.

* * *

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in recognition of National Volunteer Week, tomorrow the town of lnnisfil is hosting their annual community volunteer appreciation BBQ. I have the honour of attending this wonderful event with Mayor Gord Wauchope, Deputy Mayor Lynn Dollin and members of lnnisfil Council.

This is the first year lnnisfil will be awarding a community volunteer award, and the recipient will be Pastor Howard Courtney on behalf of lnnisfil Community Church. Pastor Courtney's leadership on numerous programs, including the food bank, the clothing depot, seniors programming, youth mentoring, and adult life groups has been simply amazing.

Volunteers in Canada devote approximately two billion hours annually, which is equivalent to about one million full-time jobs. Volunteering has a direct impact on the lives of Canadians, whether it is mentoring children, providing health care, or supporting and giving companionship.

Pastor Courtney is well deserving of this tribute, and lnnisfil is incredibly lucky to have him in the community.

* * *

JACOB KNOCKWOOD

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to recognize the life of a great individual from Charlottetown, Jacob Knockwood, who passed away earlier this week.

Jake was known for hanging out on his bench in downtown Charlottetown. There, he loved to listen to his Walkman, usually decked out in some Montreal Canadiens paraphernalia. He always appreciated any mention of his beloved Habs from passersby.

Jake was an avid sportsman, bringing home countless medals in the Special Olympics as the goalie for the floor hockey team. Jake was born with a cleft lip and palate. He became a champion for the rights of people with disabilities out of necessity when he was placed in a psychiatric institution against his will.

My heart was warmed to learn that Jake had his last eight months out of hospital, living with his advocate and friend, Pat Sobey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for letting me stand to recognize Jake and his downtown family in Charlottetown.

* * *

SARAH BECKETT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the first opportunity I have had to rise in the House since the terrible car accident that took the life of Constable Sarah Beckett of the West Shore RCMP detachment in the early morning hours of April 5.

I want to thank the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra for her kind words earlier this week. I also wanted to pay tribute as the member of Parliament who represents the city of Langford.

Constable Beckett was laid to rest with full RCMP regimental honours on Tuesday, in a service that was attended by thousands. She is survived by her husband Brad and two sons, Lucas and Emmett. A community fundraising effort has already surpassed $90,000 for the family and is still ongoing.

Our policewomen and men put themselves in harm's way every day on the job for our safety and security. I join with all MPs in offering my heartfelt condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Constable Beckett.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the annual commemoration of the Battle of Vimy Ridge took place last Saturday, April 9.

Near the village of Vimy, in 1917, regiments from all across Canada fought together and triumphed as Canadians, thereby contributing to the birth of our Canadian identity. We commemorate the bravery and courage of the 3,600 soldiers who died that day, and we will continue to build the free and peaceful society they gave their lives for.

[*English*]

As my constituents are residents of the newly formed riding of Vimy in Laval, we carry with us a constant reminder of this great Canadian victory and its everlasting impression on our heritage and place in the world. We are forever grateful and in debt to the veterans who served.

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COMMUNITIES WITH BROOMS

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, several years ago, my office joined a group of community stakeholders known then as the Safe City Oshawa Partnership. One of the projects we decided to try was called Communities With Brooms, an initiative that would bring together Oshawa's downtown community for an annual clean-up in the spring of each year.

I am proud to say that next Friday, April 22, Oshawa will come together once again to participate in our eighth annual Communities with Brooms event. Every year, this initiative sees a diverse group of community members from local schools, churches, and businesses along with individuals who band together to make our streets safer and cleaner. Following the clean-up, volunteers drop by my office for an appreciation barbecue.

I want to thank the numerous volunteers who make both the clean-up and the barbecue happen year after year. I also want to encourage my colleagues to take Oshawa's success story back to their communities because when we all work together, great things can happen.

● (1105)

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know, this is National Volunteer Week, and I am pleased to recognize the many volunteers across my riding and in our country. I stand today to congratulate and recognize the well-over 1,000 volunteers who made two events possible in my riding recently.

The Labrador Winter Games, known as the Olympics of the north, has brought together 23 communities in the spirit of sport and sharing of culture in what is dubbed as the friendship games.

The second event, known as Cain's Quest, is the world's longest and toughest snowmobile endurance race throughout all regions of Labrador. It has gained national and international attention and participation from racers.

I want to congratulate the winners and the competitors for their cultural and innovative spirit to their teams, and all participants who help showcase Labrador to the world and to ourselves. We may have a small population, but we have a large geographic land mass, and we are people of large hearts as well.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is National Wildlife Week, and this year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Birds Convention concluded between Canada and the United States. We are celebrating 100 years of conservation of migratory birds and their habitat and 100 years of protecting a critical part of our biodiversity.

Every year, these birds take extraordinary migratory journeys in North America. However, more than 70 species are at risk. The 54 national wildlife reserves and the 92 migratory bird sanctuaries in Canada help protect the birds within our borders, but international co-operation is required throughout the birds' migration.

[*English*]

Canada is committed to working with our continental partners to make a difference in bird conservation and protection. In Washington, the Prime Minister and President Obama committed to developing a vision for the next century of migratory bird conservation. Together, we can give wings to wildlife conservation.

* * *

SALUTE TO AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday in Leslieville Community Centre in central Alberta, I had the privilege of attending the Rocky Mountain House Agricultural Society's annual “Salute to Agriculture” banquet. This event celebrated the achievements of local farmers in the area.

During the event, post-secondary education bursaries were given out. Miss Jadey Van der Vlis from Alhambra, Alberta, in her first year of education at Red Deer College, was one of the recipients. Later on, I was speaking with Jadey about her wishes to become a teacher and her future. During the conversation, she excitedly mentioned that she had been selected as a finalist in the Miss Ponoka Rodeo Queen competition. I have just learned that she was selected.

I congratulate Jadey for becoming the 2016 Ponoka Rodeo Queen and for winning a post-secondary education bursary. Well done, young lady.

* * *

TERRORISM

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the snowy day of April 2, residents of Mississauga—Erin Mills gathered to stand united against terrorism. They voiced their sympathy for victims of terror attacks in Lahore, Peshawar, Paris, Brussels, Ankara, Baghdad, Jakarta, and the list, sadly, goes on. Together we condemned acts of terror and vowed to always speak out against these horrendous crimes.

Allow me to thank Reverend B and Imam Salimi for their prayers and some of my amazing constituents who made this vigil happen. Thanks to Dar, Faisal, Farina, Irfan, Yasir, Saima, Brittany, Hifza, Abdullatif, and the hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

Terrorism has no religion, knows no faith, and understands no conviction. When innocent children are slaughtered, they are not Muslim, Christian, or Jewish. They are not black or white. They are children of humanity. Terrorism does not know that either. I vow today to stand and do my part in eradicating terrorism.

Today is cruel; tomorrow may be even more cruel; but the day after tomorrow will be beautiful.

* * *

● (1110)

MENTAL HEALTH

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to recognize that Mental Health Week is fast approaching; it is actually in early May. Also, in light of events that happened in Attawapiskat and in other communities, I would like to raise awareness about the importance of mental health. One in five people in Canada live with a mental illness. This year's theme is #GetLoud: speak up against the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illness, and use our own voices to raise awareness.

[*Translation*]

We all know someone who is suffering from mental illness, and by talking openly about it, we can keep reducing the stigma that still surrounds mental illness in Canada.

[*English*]

I ask everyone to reach out to a local organization and to check out the web page weareallpeers.wordpress.com for a personal story that sheds some light on these issues. Please support our families, friends, and communities.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is National Volunteer Week, a time to celebrate and thank Canada's nearly 13 million volunteers for the selfless work they do to help those around them.

Volunteers are the roots of our strong communities, which happens to be this year's theme. Volunteers do not always have the time, but they always have the heart.

Nothing is more incredible than to thank all of our incredible citizens who take time out of their day to do something for someone else. There are so many wonderful ways to help each other, and I thank each and every one of them for doing what they do. I am proud to be a volunteer, as should everyone.

In my own community, thousands of volunteers take part in activities for our hospital, food banks, teen centres, and many other charitable organizations and churches.

As we wrap up National Volunteer Week, I would like to thank volunteers for all they do:

> If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life.

* * *

ATTACK IN LAHORE

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 27, as families gathered to celebrate Easter in a park in Lahore, Pakistan, 75 people were killed and more than 340 wounded in a barbaric act of terror.

As a mother and as an immigrant from Pakistan, my heart goes out to the families of the victims. Wherever we live, we should be free to worship how we choose and gather where we choose. No religion teaches hate and violence.

Terrorists cannot justify their barbarity by their distorted view of religion. Terrorists are criminals, nothing more.

As we mourn the victims, I find myself wishing there were easy solutions, but there are not. What we can do is ensure we do not allow these cowards to drive wedges of faith, ethnicity, or culture between us. Let us stand together to reject terror and the fear, division, and mistrust it seeks to create.

As we honour the victims of Lahore, may that be their legacy.

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ABANDONED VESSELS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over 400 abandoned vessels pollute Canada's coasts, and Ladysmith has more than anywhere.

To make things even worse, the vessel *Silver King* from my neighbour's riding was towed this week into Ladysmith harbour in my riding.

The last time the government towed an abandoned vessel into Ladysmith, it sat there for four years. It never left. The vessel *Viki Lyne II* has been rusting in the harbour ever since, and 13,000 litres of oil on board risks jobs in shellfish and tourism.

A Coast Guard report says it is sure to sink, yet there it sits.

The NDP has proposed a comprehensive coast-wide solution to this long-standing problem, and I urge the government to immediately remove the *Viki Lyne II*. Do not wait for it to sink to take action.

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● (1115)

[*Translation*]

LORETTEVILLE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a service group in the riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent, the Loretteville Knights of Columbus.

In December, this organization was awarded the prestigious international service award for community activity for its project to raise the local flea market up from the ashes. Two years ago a fire destroyed the warehouse a few days before the traditional flea market. However, thanks to the hard work of 150 volunteers and the generosity of people in the Quebec City area, the Knights went ahead with their activity, which was a great success.

Knights of Columbus councils across the country are outstanding charitable groups that provide assistance to the most vulnerable through their support and generosity. I invite everyone to visit the flea market at the Loretteville arena, which is being held today through Sunday. One interesting item for sale will be the desk used by my predecessors, which I donated to the Knights of Columbus.

I congratulate the Knights of Columbus in Loretteville and across the country and wish them every success.

* * *

[*English*]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I stand in the House with a heavy heart. Last Thursday, Karen Costa, aged 52, the mother of Western University student Jeffrey Costa, aged 22, was trying to protect her son when both of them died.

This comes at a time when the Richmond Hill community continues to be in deep mourning from the recent lives lost yet again due to mental illness. These families never wavered in their unconditional support for their loved ones who had been struggling with mental health issues.

Access to services is a critical issue, and Canadians need our help now. If we truly are committed to breaking the stigma, we must make mental health services more accessible and affordable for all Canadians.

On April 28, entertainers and activists will unite at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts for the High Notes Gala for mental health. I am proud to support events like this in my community that work to end the stigma, encourage people to get help, and save lives.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to Finance Canada, 622,000 businesses claimed a small business deduction in 2011, and those businesses paid almost $150 billion in wages that year. The Liberal budget proposes to change the Income Tax Act by raising the small business rate by a half point, a point, and a point and a half over the next three respective years. Why did the Liberals break their promise and raise taxes on small businesses that employ more than six million Canadians?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to look at the budget as a whole, because we understand and we know that the budget focuses on the middle class, which is the key for small business. We know that middle-class Canadians are those who own and work in small businesses. They are also customers and clients. We know a strong, vibrant middle class is great for business, and our government is making very important investments, which will directly help small business.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have said they want to transfer wealth from the rich to everyone else, so they should celebrate when philanthropists give millions to food banks or aboriginal job training programs. It used to be that when generous Canadians sold an investment and gave the proceeds to a charity, the money would be taxed. That did not hurt the philanthropist, who planned to give it all away regardless; it hurt the charity, which lost a large chunk of the donation to the government. The Conservatives got rid of this tax on charities. Why did the Liberal budget bring it back?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a budget that works for the middle class, that works for Canadian families. I would just like to remind my colleague opposite that this morning *The Wall Street Journal* called us the “poster child” of the IMF's global growth strategy. The *Financial Times* called Canada a “glimmer of light” in the world. The head of the IMF, Madame Lagarde, has praised Canada for an approach that is credible, targeted, and realistic. We will continue on a path of growth. That is what Canadians want, and that is what everyone in the world is celebrating about Canada.

● (1120)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal budget offers hundreds of millions of dollars in new corporate welfare programs to the wealthy and well-connected. The same budget brings back a tax on charitable donations. A policy that gives handouts to the wealthy and taxes the very groups that feed the hungry and house the homeless is the very opposite of social justice. The Liberals promised during the election to be Robin Hood. Why are they acting so much like the Sheriff of Nottingham?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite my hon. colleague to read the budget in its entirety, because actually this budget is a budget for middle-class Canadians and Canadian families. We are the government that reduced the taxes for the middle class. Nine million Canadians are paying less tax as of January 1 because of this government. We will continue to invest in Canadian families, continue to invest in the Canadian economy, and continue to invest in growth. That is what Canadians want, and that is what we will do.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has a serious problem with transparency.

Not only did it hide the tax hikes that Canadians will face to cover its out-of-control spending, but it is also refusing to release the list of people invited to a questionable fundraiser with the Minister of Justice.

The Prime Minister is now the one showing a lack of transparency, as he refuses to answer questions on his numbered companies.

Will this government finally be transparent on all of its files, or was transparency nothing more than a meaningless campaign slogan?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has demonstrated a level of transparency and integrity that Canada has not seen in 10 years.

With respect to the event in question, the commissioner said before the event that there was no problem, and her opinion has not changed since the event. I do not understand why the opposition continues to ask questions about something that is not a problem.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 8, 2015, someone said, "We have to know that a large percentage of small businesses are actually just ways for wealthier Canadians to save on their taxes."

Who said that? It was our very own Prime Minister.

Small business owners are honest Canadians who work hard. Everyone on this side of the House knows that.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he was perhaps talking about his own finances on September 8? When will we get the truth?

[*English*]

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in support of small business and we know small business needs a robust economy.

I would like to remind my hon. colleague of some of the things that we are doing to make very important investments that are directly helping small business. We are investing over $11 billion in infrastructure spending; $500 million for broadband in rural and remote areas, which is definitely for small business; another $50 million for the industrial research program; $4 million for the Canadian technical accelerator initiative; and $800 million for innovation.

This government is definitely helping small business.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the crisis in Attawapiskat is not an isolated incident. Indigenous youth all across the country are living in conditions that nobody here would accept for their children. These young people need help and resources. However, there is nothing in the budget to address this crisis or the issue of indigenous mental health.

Will the minister commit to increasing the budget for mental health care services and finally help indigenous communities?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this House has talked before about the fact that there are numerous factors that address mental health in all Canadian communities, including indigenous communities.

Our government is investing deeply in those matters to bring better education to these communities, to address the public health needs of these communities, and to make sure that the infrastructure is there.

In addition to that, I will be working with my department to find new ways that we can continue to support these communities in mental health care.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, too many indigenous youth are growing up feeling hopeless instead of hopeful, desperate instead of empowered. Unfortunately, the current government offered no new money in the budget for mental health, no new suicide prevention strategy, no new youth programming. We all know that words alone are not enough to solve this crisis, but there is still time to do the right thing.

Will the Liberals add targeted new investments for mental health services in this year's budget?

● (1125)

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. I agree with her that indeed it is important to empower young people, to give them reason for hope.

We are working hard, along with our colleagues in provincial government and leaders in first nations communities. I have been speaking to the community in Attawapiskat, for instance. I spoke to some of the mental health workers there last evening.

We will continue to work to find ways to work with our teams to address the mental health needs in these communities.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is meeting with his G20 counterparts today.

In the wake of the Panama papers, the world is demanding action. France has called for a tax haven blacklist, and the European leaders are calling for an international registry to track owners of shell companies.

Will the Minister of Finance support these specific measures to tackle tax havens, or is he worried it might affect his company's holdings in the Bahamas?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her question.

This is the government that is tackling tax evasion. We are investing $444.4 million to tackle tax evasion, which will do three things: provide technology to the Canada Revenue Agency, provide teams to the Canada Revenue Agency, and provide the tools they need to detect, investigate, and prosecute those who are doing tax evasion.

This is the government that is going after tax evasion once and for all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is the situation. We have a Prime Minister who is using numbered companies to pay less taxes and a Minister of Finance who runs a company bearing his name that uses the Bahamas to make bigger profits. Meanwhile, ordinary Canadians are paying their fair share of taxes. There is no problem for the wealthy. It is like an all-you-can-eat buffet. It is absolute hypocrisy.

Does the Prime Minister realize that people are fed up with always seeing the same well-connected people benefiting from this system that does not work?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

As I said, this is the government that is tackling tax evasion. We talked about it in the recent budget and even during the election campaign. Well before the Panama papers, the Liberal team was saying that tax evasion was a problem that needed to be solved. In the budget, we allocated $444 million to give the Canada Revenue Agency the tools, technology, and teams it needs to do three things: detect and investigate fraud and prosecute the guilty parties. This is the government that is going after tax evasion.

[*English*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal budget indicates that all public transportation money given to communities will be based on ridership numbers. This means that communities with underdeveloped public transit will receive less funds than those communities with robust, developed public infrastructure. It is precisely those communities that do not have adequate public transit that need those funds the most.

Will the minister amend the statement in the budget to reflect this reality and support small and rapidly growing communities across Canada?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to make historic investments in public transit, including $3.4 billion in the first phase. The money will go where the money is needed to repair, to rehabilitate, and to modernize existing infrastructure across 100 communities in Canada.

Money is also available under the new gas tax to restart and rebuild new systems.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, public transit is one of the most important infrastructure needs for Canadian communities.

Last fall the Liberals made numerous promises in order to get elected. We heard those promises, and they have delivered on none.

The minister talks about fast-tracking public transit projects, but all we are seeing is road repair and data collection. Could the minister tell Canadians when they can expect to see the funding for new transit projects?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, never in my recent memory have we seen the kind of support our budget has received from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, from mayors across this country, from provinces and territories. They understand that we work in partnership and collaboration with them. Our investments in transit, social infrastructure, and green infrastructure are going to make a real difference in building the kinds of communities they want.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, day after day, Liberal ministers follow the recommendations of their communications people, but nothing happens on the ground. Announcements are all well and good, but the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, a former municipal councillor, should know that for job sites to be up and running this summer, municipalities need to get the ball rolling now. Our municipalities have received nothing from the Liberal government but press releases. The clock is ticking.

At what point will the minister take action and create jobs?

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my staff and I are in touch with the provinces, territories, and municipalities on a weekly basis to update them on the way we are proceeding in the delivery of infrastructure.

Our goal is to invest in this construction season, and we are doing that by fast-tracking the existing Building Canada fund as well as making sure that new money gets into the communities in a speedy and timely fashion. We are working closely to deliver on that commitment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next construction season is not in 2017; it is in 2016. What we are hearing is the same plan and the same broken record. It is about communications. There are no measures. We know that budget 2016 has next to nothing for infrastructure for municipalities. This is yet another broken Liberal promise.

Can the minister tell us how many municipal infrastructure projects will happen this year, not in five years?

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to share some information with the House, and that is how much money the previous government actually invested in infrastructure over the last two years. Out of the $14 billion allocated for municipal infrastructure, only $24 million has been invested.

That is not how we will do business. We will invest immediately. That is why we have committed to invest $10 billion of new money in this construction season and the next construction season to support municipalities to build the kind—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Abbotsford.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the Prime Minister's first decisions was to throw $2.65 billion at foreign climate change projects. He then proposed to pay for those with a punishing carbon tax grab on the provinces and territories, something the premiers soundly rejected.

To make matters worse, the recent budget announced another $2 billion for a low-carbon slush fund. When will the Prime Minister stop wasting taxpayers' money?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that reducing emissions will make our economy more competitive, not less. This is about moving forward in a manner that respects our international obligation to address a critical international issue, and doing so in a measured manner whereby we bring along the provinces in a pan-Canadian approach to addressing the critical issue of climate change. It will create economic opportunities on a go-forward basis in a manner that will enable us to have a strong economy as we proceed forward.

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): I thank the member for his excuse, but the Prime Minister continues to break promise after promise on things such as deficits, balanced budgets, and small business taxes, so Canadians want to know why he now wants to hammer them with a punishing carbon tax grab.

With the government spending billions of dollars on the Prime Minister's vanity projects abroad and with thousands upon thousands of Canadians losing their jobs, when will the Prime Minister get serious about looking after Canadians?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and we need to grow our economy in a sustainable way. They also know that reducing emissions will make our economy more competitive, not less.

I was very pleased this week to hear the words of Pierre Gratton, the president and CEO of the Mining Association of Canada. Speaking on behalf of one of Canada's largest industries, he stated that they support carbon pricing and that it represents the most effective and efficient means of driving emissions reductions and making real progress in the global fight against climate change.

* * *

● (1135)

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during a panel discussion at the University of Ottawa yesterday, the Minister of Democratic Institutions presented eight principles of reform. Surprise, surprise: not one of the eight principles had anything to do with the system being more proportional.

Do I have to point out that this government and its predecessor won majorities with less than 40% of the votes? Canadians want a system that makes them feel like their votes really count.

Can the minister tell us why proportional representation was left out of her guiding principles?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we promised to change our voting system. We will change it.

[*English*]

I can say as well that the member can rest assured of the principle that every single vote in Canada will be given voice. We will ensure that everyone is enfranchised and is heard.

When the minister spoke yesterday, she talked about the fundamental principle of ensuring that Canadians are given the opportunity to express their democratic will. We will ensure that will happen in this process.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the government wants to ensure that, then putting proportionality in as one of the principles would be the best way to do it.

As we build this new system, we must enshrine the very best principles and values. Virtually every successful democracy around the world has put proportionality into its system, yet the minister's eight principles are missing this key element.

Canadians want an end to false majorities whereby a minority of voters give a party 100% of the power. It has been six months, and Liberals have been dragging their heels while experts warn us that we are running out of time. At the very least, will the Liberals give up their false majority on the committee so that we can work together on behalf of all Canadians to come up with a good and proportional system in the next election?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have waited since Confederation to evolve our electoral system. In the last election we made a commitment to change that system, to make it more representative and give Canadians a greater voice in our democratic process.

I deeply respect the opinions expressed by the members opposite. I look forward to working with them and I know they are anxious to get to work, but we have to ensure that we do this process right. Prejudging the process by saying we are going to pick a certain system from the onset is the wrong approach.

Let us work collaboratively. Let us sit down and get this right. Let us engage Canadians, think it through and do the—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Lakeland.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' actions speak louder than words. Last night, the environment minister hosted a reception with anti-energy lobby groups Environmental Defence, Équiterre, and the Pembina Institute. No wonder Canadians do not believe the Liberals' empty rhetoric about supporting energy workers and getting market access.

The fact is that the minister's friends at Environmental Defence believe that the energy east pipeline must be rejected. Do the Liberals agree?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we have been very clear. Canada is in the process of renewing and revising its environmental assessment processes. We will kick off that process later this year.

This is a requirement because the members opposite fundamentally lost the confidence of Canadians in the changes that they made in an omnibus budget bill in 2012. It destroyed the confidence that Canadians had in the environmental assessment regime.

We plan to restore the confidence of Canadians so that we can more effectively get our resources to market, and that is what we are going to do.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are undermining confidence in Canadian energy.

Earlier this week, the environment minister tweeted a column that said, "The era of fossil fuels must be brought to an end, and quickly." The fact that the Paris scheme may be in force years earlier than expected is "hopefully a rude shock to the fossil fuel industry", which is cause for "considerable excitement".

It is certainly shocking to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who depend upon our energy sector, but it explains the delays and extra red tape.

Is it the Liberals' real agenda?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thoughtful Canadians know that focusing on reducing our carbon emissions will actually make our economy stronger not weaker.

We plan to move forward with a robust strategy to address climate change, to foster clean tech development, to foster renewable energy development, and concurrently work to get our resources to market in a framework that allows us to build our economy and at the same time become greener and much more carbon friendly.

● (1140)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member opposite brought up reducing emissions. B.C.'s LNG has the potential to provide a positive impact on reducing global pollution.

Electricity generated by natural gas has 50% fewer emissions than other forms of generation, making it the much cleaner option. Canada can be part of that positive change if, and only if, we permit natural gas to be shipped from our shores.

When will the government show its support for projects that can actually help reduce emissions, like Pacific Northwest LNG?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in January, the Government of Canada, as members know, outlined our interim approach of five principles that will guide decision-making on all major resource projects under review.

Budget 2016 provides $16.5 million over three years to the National Energy Board, Natural Resources Canada, and Transport Canada to implement the interim approach.

We look forward to working with our partners in order to implement this process.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, and yet, B.C. waits and waits and waits.

Yesterday I presented a petition, signed by hundreds of residents representing thousands of people in northern B.C., calling upon the government to support B.C. LNG projects. Many of those who signed the petition are struggling to make ends meet due to low energy prices that are hurting our local economy. These are real people.

The fact is that B.C. LNG projects will create thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in tax revenues that they need while also helping to reduce emissions.

My question seems simple to me, and I will just say it for the Liberals to understand it. When are they going to get out of the way and allow these important projects to move forward?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting. The other day the member opposite from Grande Prairie—Mackenzie stated that we should approve a project that has not even applied yet.

I want to say that our government appreciates and sympathizes with the hardships that families and communities are experiencing in this resource downturn.

We are looking forward to working with our partners, including the Province of B.C., to help get our resources to market in a sustainable way.

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[*Translation*]

THE SENATE

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Government Representative in the Senate requested $800,000 in supplementary funding for his office.

We are talking about a total budget of over $1 million. He wants to hire nine staff members to manage the independent senators. He even wants to appoint a whip. It seems to me there is something wrong with that.

The Prime Minister keeps saying that there are no longer Liberal senators in the Senate, just senators who are Liberal. Would the government stop trying to hoodwink Canadians with its so-called Senate reform?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to recognize that earlier this week, seven extremely impressive individuals took their seats in the Senate as independent senators.

Peter Harder, a long–term and highly respected public servant, is named the government representative in the Senate. I am confident in his ability to bring senators together to study, adopt, and when required to improve government legislation.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday news broke that the government's representative in the Senate demanded nearly $1 million to run his office. Talk about entitlement.

Liberals are already spending $1 million a year on the advisory board that recommended him, and now he wants another million to manage supposedly independent senators on behalf of the Liberal government.

Will the government turn down his outrageous request for yet more money spent on this outdated and unnecessary institution?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member is aware that the Senate itself sets its budget. We need to respect that fact.

I can assure the member that there is a sense of accountability and transparency there, and I would remind the member that it was his party and his caucus that resisted, at all costs, proactive disclosure. If it were not for the current Prime Minister, we still would not have proactive disclosure in the New Democratic caucus.

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● (1145)

[*Translation*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month the Minister of Status of Women led a delegation of Canadian women at the 60th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women inform the House of what was achieved at that session?

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I was honoured to be part of the Canadian delegation at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. I am proud to have had the opportunity to work with other nations to give women and girls all over the world the tools they need to reach their full potential.

I am especially proud that Canada was elected to be a member of the commission, which means it will be able to participate more vigorously in defending and promoting the rights of women and girls around the world.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by international standards, Canada has fewer doctors specializing in palliative care than countries such as the U.S. or Australia.

Out of 77,000 physicians in Canada, a recent survey identified only 51 palliative care specialists, as well as 123 family physicians whose practices focus on palliative care.

Where is the evidence that the Liberals have any concrete plans to address this crucial issue of palliative care?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question and for his advocacy on behalf of the matter of palliative care.

Yesterday in this House, we were pleased to present new legislation which will address the needs of Canadians at the end of their lives.

We acknowledged in our communications yesterday that Canada has a long way to go in making sure that all Canadians have access to high-quality care at the end of life, including palliative care.

I am determined to work with my colleagues in the provinces and territories. We are determined to make the investments necessary to make sure that all Canadians have access to the care that they need at the end of their lives.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in reference to the Supreme Court of Canada decision yesterday, our Minister of Health stated that the Liberals need to confront the fact that access to high-quality palliative care is available in a very patchy manner across the country.

While Liberals keep talking about their commitment to palliative care, their free spending budget does not earmark one single dollar for it.

Why do the Liberals continue to break their promises by saying one thing and then doing another?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been clear since the time that we campaigned, and from the beginning of the time that we formed government, that we are committed to making sure that Canadians have access to the health care services they need.

We are investing in home care. We have committed to investing $3 billion in home care. I have spoken with my colleagues in the provinces and territories to make sure that palliative care is part of that package.

We will make sure that Canadians have access to the palliative care they need. We will make sure it is accessible across this country. I am determined to do so.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Daniels decision by the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that 600,000 Métis and non-status Indians are under federal jurisdiction.

This decision will create profound fiscal obligations, and any prudent government would have analyzed the full implications.

Will the minister share with Canadians what the projected costs of the decision will be?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this new chapter of relations between Canada and our indigenous people, we certainly welcome the ruling and the clarity that this ruling gives.

We support and respect all indigenous people in this country, including first nations, Métis, and Inuit. This will be another chapter in which we will be able to lift up indigenous people throughout the country and maintain good on our commitment as a Liberal government in Canada.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only will there be significant costs from the decision, there will be increased complexity in the development of our natural resources.

Once again, any prudent government would have anticipated the implications of the decision. Will the minister explain how this will impact our critical natural resource development and the processes?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject the concept that acknowledging indigenous people and clarifying their rights within our country is an impediment to development of any resources.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1150)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, in fact, if we are ever to move away from the colonialism that we have experienced over the many years of this country in dealing with indigenous governments and people, we have to start thinking differently to get a different result.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Vancouver Islanders are happy to see the government listen to the NDP calls to remove a sinking 100-foot derelict tug from a sensitive area in my riding.

The problem is that there is still no plan to deal with more than 400 other abandoned vessels. These pose a threat not only to the environment but also to the economy of coastal communities like mine. A boat-by-boat approach simply will not cut it.

When will the government present a national strategy to deal with abandoned and derelict vessels?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that everybody realizes that Transport Canada is working with its partners to develop options to address the issue of abandoned vessels and wrecks that can pose environmental and safety risks and cause local economic harm, for example, loss of revenue from reduced tourism.

We are on top of it. We are taking care of it.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we need a national plan, not a ship-by-ship approach, and not more talking.

While the sinking tug that my colleague referred to was removed, it was towed to Ladysmith Harbour, along with dozens of other derelict vessels.

Last year, NDP MP Jean Crowder introduced the kind of comprehensive coast-wide solution that this country needs. Last year, the Liberal Party supported it, including the Prime Minister.

Why the delay? Will the government adopt our bill and finally deal with abandoned vessels?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to reiterate, Transport Canada continues the process. We have consulted on a possible regime to address the hazardous wrecks, and we are incorporating feedback into the development of a comprehensive approach. We would want nothing less.

The cost of removing these vessels can be high and often beyond the capacity of local communities and marinas. We realize that this is an issue, and we are making sure that we address it as quickly as possible.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal budget is almost completely silent on interprovincial trade. Now, interprovincial trade represents about 20% of our GDP, a great chance for us to grow our economy. An agreement on internal trade was supposed to be announced at the end of March, but here we are, weeks later, and still the government is radio silent.

The minister claims that they are close to a new deal, but we do not know exactly when. Can the minister please advise this place as to when we can expect a new agreement on internal trade?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, as he was at the industry committee yesterday, the minister is continuing his discussions with the provinces on working on an agreement on internal trade.

We know it is important. We know it would be an advantage to Canada to create greater growth, better productivity, and sharing our goods and services across our provincial and territorial borders. We are working very hard on the issue.

As the member knows, there are many parties to this deal, and therefore the negotiations get a little complex. I am glad to hear that the hon. member and his party would be supportive of any agreement on internal trade.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that they are working hard, but by the same token, Canadians are being left without. We are seeing foreign direct investment at record paces out of this country. That means it is going to be up to domestic producers to scale up. This is the perfect opportunity, a debt-free way, for us to grow our economy.

What is the holdup? Why is the government continuing to stall on something that could be very good for our economy?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to say that as of October 19, 2015, the top-down, command-and-order approach to negotiating is over.

This is a government that believes in working in partnership with our partners. To have an agreement on internal trade among the provinces and territories requires discussion in good faith. That is what is happening. This is what this government is going to deliver. We are looking forward to the support of all members for an agreement on internal trade.

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● (1155)

WINE INDUSTRY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1994, the government put in place a specialized labelling exemption that allows wine bottled in Canada but made from non-Canadian grapes to be labelled as "cellared in Canada". This was to be an interim measure while our Canadian industry took root, but 22 years later, our industry is thriving and making international award-winning wine. The "cellared in Canada" designation devalues the Canadian wine brand and is misleading for consumers.

Will the government commit to reviewing this decades-old interim measure and ensure truth in labelling for Canadian wines?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an issue which we are taking a look at. I would have to take the question under advisement and consult with officials. I would be happy to speak with the member at any time outside of the House.

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HEALTH

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you may know, the Town of Newmarket recently proclaimed national health and fitness day to be held on the first Saturday of every June, this year on June 4. This initiative is a growing recognition to enhance the health and fitness of constituents and all Canadians. Many local councils across Canada have taken part, all with the goal of raising awareness to celebrate and promote the importance of health. Physical activity and healthy eating go hand in hand.

Will the Minister of Health please tell me what the Government of Canada is doing to promote healthy lifestyles across Canada?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a family doctor, a parent, and the Minister of Health, I know that healthy lifestyles are key to a high quality of life. That is why our government is committed to restricting commercial marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children, regulations to eliminate trans fats, and to reduce salt in processed foods, all while improving food labels to support Canadians in making healthy choices.

In the months ahead, I look forward to working with the provinces and territories and all members of the House, including my neighbour and hon. colleague from Newmarket—Aurora, to build a better and healthier Canada.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister claimed last night that her consultations with Canadians have revealed eight consensus principles to guide electoral reform. We have seen no evidence of these supposed consultations, so it would be awfully nice if she could share the process, what it has been, if indeed one exists at all.

One piece of public consultation that we have seen is the poll showing that by a four-to-one margin, Canadians demand a referendum on any voting change, whereas only 17% think it is okay for the Liberals to impose a new voting system without a referendum. Therefore, will the Liberals stop posturing and hold a referendum?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us start with principles. One of the principles is that the so-called Fair Elections Act needs to be amended. One of the principles is that every Canadian be empowered and given the opportunity to vote, and that the kind of voter suppression that we saw and the sort of anti-democratic measures that were brought about need to be changed. In the last election, Canadians spoke very clearly for that change. We are at the beginning of the consultation process.

I am excited that the member is so anxious to begin those public consultations. The minister has been talking with stakeholders. We have met a number of times with the critic himself. I look forward to that being very robust and pan-Canadian. It is coming soon.

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IMMIGRATION

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people in my riding know the immigration minister is committed to cutting processing times for spousal sponsorships and family reunification. Our campaign commitment to eliminate the two-year requirement for spouses to become permanent residents is another positive step to continue building on our inclusive society.

Could the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship inform the House on the work he is doing to help families like those in my riding who agree that we should do away with the two-year waiting period?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I totally agree. We will get rid of this two-year waiting period.

When we were in opposition, expert groups made it abundantly clear that this system gave rise to unacceptable domestic abuse, and for that reason, we committed to getting rid of it. We will get rid of it in the coming months. At the same time, we will introduce major new initiatives to reduce processing times for spouses, who now have to wait up to two years or more which is totally unacceptable.

● (1200)

HEALTH

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more than 200 Canadians die each year waiting for an organ transplant. While 90% of Canadians support organ and tissue donation, less than 25% have made plans to donate. Our organ donation rate is among the world's worst. Yet, one donor can save up to eight lives.

Could the Minister of Health assure this House that her government will support my Bill C-223 to establish a Canadian organ donor registry?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his advocacy on behalf of the important matter of organ donation and the development of a pan-Canadian organ donation registry. I am pleased to report to him that this is a matter that I have discussed with my colleagues in the provinces and territories who, as he knows, play the role of the delivery of health care services, including the matter of organ donation.

I have also had the privilege of meeting with Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec. I am very impressed with the work that Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec are doing on this matter. There is, in fact, a tremendous amount of work being done on the matter of a national organ donation registry, and I would be pleased to discuss this matter further with my colleague in the future.

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[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that in Quebec, the unemployment rate of newcomers who speak only French is 40% higher than it is for those who speak only English. In the meantime, the federal government is promoting English in Quebec, funding the anglicization of public services in Quebec, and preventing the francization of enterprises under federal jurisdiction.

Does the minister responsible for official languages realize that the language at risk in Quebec and in Canada is French, and that her language policy is a factor in the anglicization of Quebec?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

This government is passionate about defending both official languages of Canada, whether it is English in Quebec, French outside Quebec, and French in Quebec. This includes the entire immigration process, access to employment, and access to the federal and provincial systems. We are fighting for this issue and will continue to do so.

AIR CANADA

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the law requires Air Canada to have all the maintenance of its aircraft done here in Canada. We are talking about 2,600 jobs and dozens of providers of airplane parts. The Air Canada outsourcing legislation would require Air Canada to have only some of its maintenance work done here. Two people and an oil change is all well and good, but it is the aerospace cluster that will be dismantled.

Can the minister repeat here in the House what he said to me during the briefing session for the introduction of this bill, namely that he did not even assess the impact on the Montreal aerospace cluster before drafting this shameful legislation? Let him admit it.

[*English*]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Air Canada Public Participation Act is under debate today in the House. I am grateful to the hon. member for bringing that up. We will be debating it throughout the day, and I hope he will stand up and talk about his concerns with the act.

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[*Translation*]

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Carter ruling required the government to revise the Criminal Code because it violated section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, the bill introduces a grey area with respect to eligibility for medical assistance in dying. This morning, the Minister of Health has an obligation to be clear and rigorous.

My question is simple: on the basis of the "reasonably foreseeable natural death" criterion, would Kay Carter have been eligible for medical assistance in dying without going on a hunger strike?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. Medical assistance in dying is a difficult and extremely personal issue for all Canadians that is informed by life experience and personal beliefs. Medical assistance in dying is troubling for some, but for others this bill does not go far enough.

We are of the opinion that this bill is the best approach to take in order to ensure that the rights of a dying patient are respected and that vulnerable people are protected.

● (1205)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: This will conclude question period for today.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington on a point of order.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, if one were to review *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, O'Brien and Bosc, there is an interesting discussion throughout chapter 24 on the importance of parliamentary records. Specifically, pages 1209 to 1210 speak to the importance of the corrections to the official record.

In an effort to ensure the record reflects that the Conservative government left a $4.3 billion surplus, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to table January's Fiscal Monitor.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Perth—Wellington have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Employment Equity Act of 1995, c. 44, art. 20, I am pleased to submit to the House, in both official languages, copies of the Employment Equity Act 2014 annual report. I request the report be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

* * *

CANADA STUDENT LOANS PROGRAM

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Canada Student Loans Act, 1985, c. S-23, Canada Student Financial Assistance Act, 1994, I am pleased to submit to the House, in both official languages, copies of the Canada student loans program 2013-14 annual report. I request the report be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

* * *

PETITIONS

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Family Action's national organization believes a healthy, functioning democracy requires engagement of citizens in the country. As an expression of that belief, Canada Family Action has launched a petition campaign that asks the federal government to do three things: that members of Parliament consult broadly on the matter of legalizing euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide; that members of Parliament ensure vulnerable Canadians are protected; and that members of Parliament speak out and defend the conscience rights of medical professionals.

Hundreds of Canadians have signed the petition, and I would like to table it forthwith.

● (1210)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

AIR CANADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly has 10 minutes to finish his speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will pick up my speech where I left off. I was saying that this bill is a betrayal of workers since it seeks to amend the law that ensures that their jobs remain in the locations indicated in that law.

However, this is not just about job losses. Although the job losses that will occur as a result of this bill are very worrisome, the instability of the jobs in this sector is also a cause for concern. That is perhaps an unintended consequence, and it makes us wonder how much the government really thought about the consequences of its bill. Let me explain.

According to the bill, it would be deemed appropriate to outsource these jobs if that allowed Air Canada to maintain its competitive advantage. After the bill is passed, jobs may stay in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Mississauga. However, we do not know how long that situation will last and we will have to deal with the fact that these jobs will become unstable. Air Canada may justify outsourcing jobs by saying that it wants to avoid raising prices for consumers. That is a problem.

As I said before question period, we have high-quality, well-paying jobs here. It will be counter-productive if those jobs become unstable. We are not just talking about job losses, but about job quality as well.

Since this debate began, Liberal government members have been arguing that Air Canada has to remain competitive in an ever-changing industry. The problem is that we not only have to stand up for the workers affected by this bill, but we also have to think about the precedent that this bill sets.

Imagine a world where every time something like this comes up, the government claims that the company's legal requirements prevent it from remaining competitive and will cause rates to increase and all kinds of problems.

If, every time, the government decides to change the law and make legal something that used to be illegal, namely the loss of good-quality jobs, what will prevent the government from doing the same thing again for another company that has similar legal obligations, under the pretext that the industry is competitive?

How many jobs would be in jeopardy and would become precarious? How many jobs are we prepared to outsource to keep our companies competitive? That is not what a free market is. By intervening to favour a company on a legal level, the government is going against the idea of a free market. This is not the role of a responsible government.

A government, especially this one, which was elected on its claim of wanting to stand up for the middle class, is responsible for standing up for the workers who are protected by law.

I want to reiterate that this is a betrayal. During the last Parliament, in 2012, the Liberal Party was outraged about the Conservative government's refusal to step up and enforce the law. However, the Liberals are now saying that they will absolutely enforce the law, because they are going to change it.

● (1215)

Changing the law makes the Liberals even worse than the Conservatives. The Conservatives did not enforce the law, but the Liberals have simply decided to change the law at the expense of workers.

I am thinking about all those members from Montreal.

[*English*]

The same goes for members from Winnipeg or Mississauga, members who are from cities that have workers who rely on these jobs which are protected by Air Canada's legal obligations. Today we see a betrayal of those workers, those workers who now are now seeing the Liberal government change the law after saying that the previous Conservative government should apply the law. The changes to that law are not only creating a situation where those workers will lose their jobs, but those who manage to hang on to their jobs will no longer be guaranteed the same high-quality long-term jobs and the long-term guarantees which the law affords them today.

Therefore, Canadians should remember this the next time the Liberals tell them how they set bar so much higher than the previous Conservative government. It is rare that I will take the side of the Conservatives in an argument. The Liberals are doing worse than what the Conservatives did. They propose to change the law, and that is a slap in the face for the workers who are protected by the legislation.

[*Translation*]

We also need to consider the situation at Bombardier. I will have to say more about that later because I did not have enough time to delve into the subject as much as I wanted to during my initial remarks on this subject. We need to consider the fact that Bombardier is going through a tough time across Canada, but especially in Quebec. That has major repercussions on the entire aerospace and aeronautics sector. The problem today is that people are trying to take shortcuts.

I will admit this is speculation, but we have the right to ask certain questions in this debate, and we have to ask them. This bill was introduced before an announcement about the decision on whether to provide, or not provide, assistance to Bombardier.

The answer is clear to the NDP: yes, we should help Bombardier, but there should be strings attached. We should have a solid agreement with provisions to ensure utmost respect for taxpayer dollars throughout the process. We certainly do not want to give Bombardier a blank cheque.

The problem is that there was no mention whatsoever of Bombardier, and no mention of the entire aeronautics and aerospace industry in this budget. Today we are debating Bill C-10, which will have a serious impact on the aeronautics and aerospace industry and on all related decisions, even though we have no idea what direction the government plans to take.

This is quite problematic because, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, it really seems like this is about returning a favour, after Air Canada committed to purchasing the C Series planes from Bombardier. Every time we ask the minister any questions about this file, he simply gets up and says that it does not matter, that we have good news from Air Canada. Of course we have some concerns about this. We will continue to stand up for workers.

That is why we will be voting against this bill and why I am pleased to move, seconded by my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith, the following amendment:

> That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:
>
> the House decline to give second reading to Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures, because it:
>
> (a) threatens the livelihoods of thousands of Canadian workers in the aerospace industry by failing to protect the long-term stability of the Canadian aerospace sector from seeing jobs outsourced to foreign markets;
>
> (b) forces Canadian manufacturers to accept greater risks and to incur greater upfront costs in conducting their business;
>
> (c) provides no guarantee that the terms and conditions of employment in the Canadian aeronautics sector will not deteriorate under increased and unfettered competition; and
>
> (d) does not fulfill the commitments made by the Prime Minister when he attended demonstrations alongside workers in the past.

● (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a question in terms of where the NDP might stand in relation to the Provinces of Quebec and Manitoba.

I was around when these decisions were being made back in 2010 and 2011. I was very much involved here in the House of Commons. There was a great deal of concern expressed by both the Province of Manitoba and the Province of Quebec, which ultimately led to a substantial court case against Air Canada. It would now appear that the Province of Quebec has recognized that this is in fact in the best interests of the province, from what I understand in terms of this settlement.

Can the member provide any information whatsoever related to the provincial government of Quebec and what it might be telling the member?

My understanding is that this is something that the Province of Quebec, along with Air Canada and other stakeholders, sees as a possible way out. Would the member not agree that the Province of Quebec's thoughts should be respected?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, as far as Quebec is concerned, the lawsuit was dropped until an agreement could be reached between the parties.

However, the workers are also part of the lawsuit.

[*English*]

To the member coming from Winnipeg who stands up and asks who we are standing with, we are standing with the workers who are going to lose their jobs because the Liberal government has decided to make legal what is now illegal.

I have a hard time wondering how that member goes back to his home city in Winnipeg and tells the workers in that city that their jobs that were guaranteed by the law are no longer guaranteed. Not only that, even if they do manage to hang onto their jobs, there is no guarantee there anymore because of the bill drafted by the government.

[*Translation*]

To the NDP, it is very clear. We are not standing up to pit one region against another, but to protect the workers whose jobs are protected by law.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the crux of the matter is that we have an attempt here to go retroactively back and affect workers' rights, collective agreements, and all of those things that were set in place by legislation, which was clear at that time.

At that time as well, these companies received the benefits of corporate tax reductions. They received the benefits of R and D SR and ED credits. They received a lot of public investment with regard to their operations. That was the deal that was set going into this situation here, so why would the government give this extended benefit and give them a holiday from protecting workers?

By the way, in Canada, those workers have invested their family income to be trained, whether through university, college, or other types of training programs, and so has the government. However, that is cast to the wind for political expediency.

What we are trying to do, including the industry committee, is protect value-added jobs for Canadians, which is the essence of building a stronger Canada.

I would like my colleague to talk about those things.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and the work he does on this file.

At the end of the day, that is precisely the problem. This is a situation where we have a Prime Minister who was not shy about demonstrating with the Aveos workers in 2012. What is more, the re-elected Liberal members, including the hon. member who asked me the question, expressed their indignation during the previous Parliament. This is a betrayal that is absolutely unacceptable to us. We have legislation to protect these jobs.

To get back to what my colleague was saying, I would say that in changing the law, we might assume that some of the workers we are trying to defend will manage to hang on to their jobs. However, the problem with the way the bill is drafted is that we are creating uncertainty. We are allowing Air Canada to provide no guarantees, to outsource these jobs, and to create completely unacceptable instability. Furthermore, we will be creating problems for the aerospace and aeronautics sectors in Quebec and Canada. We are going to end up losing our expertise because these jobs are unstable and they could potentially be lost, although with this bill, I should probably say they will inevitably be lost. It will be very difficult to regain this expertise and rebuild our industry in Quebec and Canada. The government may not have thought about these consequences. That is why we are rising today to oppose this bill.

[*English*]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was wondering if the member has any indication as to how this amendment would affect the level of safety regulations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I can assure her that there will be no impact on safety regulations. We are just telling the government to start from scratch. We are telling the government that Bill C-10 does not work and will not protect the jobs currently protected by the law. Questions about safety will surely come up when we are talking about air transport and workers. However, all the NDP is saying today with our position and our amendment is that this bill is harmful to the sustainability of the aeronautics and aerospace industry in Quebec and Canada. It is also clearly harmful to the workers we are defending here today.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the idea of the role of the provinces. They have been fairly involved in the negotiations and the talks, and I like to think that they also have a vested interest in protecting their respective industries within their provinces. I wonder if the member would at the very least acknowledge that provinces do matter and that their discussions and their beliefs should be taken into consideration.

Provinces that have worked along with Air Canada and other stakeholders are inclined to say that these multi-faceted agreements are at least protecting the future of the aerospace industries. Does the member believe that there is any obligation on his part, or in particular on the part of the New Democratic Party in the House of Commons, to at least try to reflect some honesty as to what provinces are actually saying in their involvement in this process?

● (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party has nothing to teach me about how to treat Quebec or other provinces that have definitely been impacted by the Liberal Party's lack of respect. We need only think of the cuts to transfers in the 1990s, not to mention all the other consequences that have been felt over the years.

Let us be clear about Quebec's decision with respect to the dispute. It asked that the suit be suspended until the two parties reach an agreement. Air Canada agreed to purchase C Series planes, but that does not give the Liberal government carte blanche to completely flout the law, change it, and betray the government's previous positions. Nor does it give the government blanket authority to remove legal protections for workers who currently have good jobs that are protected under the law.

I would like to reassure my colleague. We will always listen to the Government of Quebec. There is no doubt about that. However, we are here listening to Quebec workers who will lose their jobs. Why? Rather than singing *Kumbaya* and chanting "So-so-so-solidarity", the Prime Minister has simply decided to slap them in the face, change the law and remove these protections. That is a disgrace and we will never be ashamed to say it.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mount Royal.

This is an issue about which I feel very passionate, because at the end of the day, I have had first-hand experience of the ramifications of decisions that were made five, six, even seven years ago in the lead-up to those decisions.

I can recall meeting with many of the workers and other stakeholders, particularly in my home province of Manitoba, who were directly affected. I could only wish that we had this type of resistance at that time from New Democrats and Conservatives, because when I was meeting with employees and other stakeholders, especially in Manitoba, I felt very much alone as an elected official in trying to make sure that the employees in the aerospace industry in the province I love were in fact being protected.

Let us have a review. We had legislation to protect a series of obligations when Air Canada was privatized. I would argue that those were very important obligations, because it has been difficult at the best of times to ensure that industries in my home province were being protected.

I have talked in this House on numerous occasions about the importance of the aerospace industry to Manitoba, and even beyond that, when I have talked about Quebec and Ontario, because that is what we are really talking about here today.

That said, it gives us a sense that whether it was through petitions, postcards, question period, questioning the Prime Minister directly when these decisions were actually being made and the government should have been taking a more proactive approach at protecting the employees, that was the time when we really needed to see action. That is when we saw the Conservative members sit on their hands, and I cannot recall seeing New Democrats jumping from their seats to protect jobs back then. I cannot recall seeing that.

Let us fast-forward a little. Now we have the provincial government of Quebec, which responded a little ways after some of those decisions were made, and we had the NDP provincial government in Manitoba respond a little bit later by saying that it will become involved. I can remember talking to employees, saying that Manitoba should be a stand-alone, that we had to hold Air Canada accountable and so forth. There was a great deal of emotion.

No one can tell me that they are more concerned about the former employees who got shafted. I am very much concerned about those employees. I wanted to see answers. This goes back a number of years.

Now we have a situation in which the Province of Quebec, the Province of Manitoba, Air Canada, and other stakeholders have been negotiating, the best I can tell, for a good period of time to try to rectify what I believe was a significant wrong, which I have been anxious to see resolved.

There are two issues. The first issue has to be, from my perspective, the long-term interests of the aerospace industry in our country, and more specifically for me and my constituents and the area I represent, the interests of the aerospace industry in Manitoba.

The desire of this government is to see those industries grow, and we will do what we can to facilitate that growth. All one needs to do is look at the budget we have presented, which the NDP and the Conservatives are voting against, and one will see that there are significant things in that budget that will help our aerospace industry, help those individuals who will be future employees in that industry, and even help those who are currently employed.

I am very much concerned about the many different ways this agreement seems to be moving forward. Hopefully we will see more light and more benefit for all three provinces going forward.

● (1235)

Why do we have this bill? The essence of the bill, from what I understand, is that we have a sense of an obligation that Air Canada has to maintain a presence not only in the province of Manitoba, but also in the province of Quebec. I am very pleased to see that.

From what I understand, Air Canada has also announced an agreement with the Government of Manitoba for the establishment of a western Canada centre of excellence, which is expected to create 150 jobs in aircraft maintenance starting in 2017, with the possibility of even further expansion and job creation.

Given the importance of this industry to the province of Manitoba, I see that as a positive thing. I realize there is a cost going into negotiations, and if the New Democrats were fairer in their criticisms, they would acknowledge that the employees who were burnt by what took place four, five, six years ago are still feeling the pain of it. Some of them actually had to move outside the city of Winnipeg. I know of a family that ultimately had to move Calgary. That is an issue which still concerns me.

I am open, willing, and want to meet and work with, in particular, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley who has been a very strong advocate for the aerospace industry and its employees. I am very concerned with regard to whether we can do something to support those former employees. I am prepared to work with the Government of Canada, the Government of Manitoba, unions and whoever else it might be. If there is something that can be achieved, I am open to doing that.

For me, that is a very important issue, a reality that I cannot express strongly enough, in terms of how I feel for those families that were affected. I walked on picket lines with them. I protested at the Winnipeg International Airport. I had meetings with them on the side. The care and compassion for those who have lost their jobs is there. It is real. If something can be done, I am open to doing that.

Let us move on to the terms of the overall impact on the industry. If members believe that Manitoba has the potential to continue to grow and prosper in the aerospace industry, I would suggest that at the very least we should support this bill to go to committee. If members say that they are an advocate for some of these workers or for the aerospace industry, whether it is in Manitoba, Ontario, or Quebec, we should at least have a vote on it and allow it to go to committee.

We are more than happy to have opposition members invite witnesses to the committee, and we will see government witnesses. I suspect we will have representatives from many of the different stakeholders. Let us hear first-hand what they have to say. I am very much interested in the proceedings that will be taking place at committee.

The Prime Minister himself has talked about the importance of our aerospace industry. Given the sense of commitment and expenditures that we are seeing in the budget, I believe that right from the Prime Minister to the minister responsible to cabinet to all members of the Liberal caucus, there is a desire to see our aerospace industry prosper. It is very real. This is the motivating factor behind this particular bill.

At the end of the day, I would highly recommend to opposition members that when they comment on this piece of legislation to please take into consideration the efforts the stakeholders are making to try to rectify a very serious issue. When we are talking about stakeholders, it is not only the national government but provincial jurisdictions, private corporations, unions, and others as well.

I hope that this legislation will be allowed to pass in a timely fashion. In view of the importance of this industry, we need to emphasize the importance of passing this legislation in a timely fashion. Let us see what happens at the committee stage.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

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

In his speech, as well as in those of his Liberal colleagues and our Conservative colleagues, to some extent, it is argued that Air Canada should be allowed to compete with other airlines around the world.

Their speeches seem to suggest that the Government of Canada accepts and encourages the outsourcing of good jobs to other countries, whether it is Mexico or any other country where labour is cheaper. We even heard some members say that this would allow Air Canada to be more competitive.

Since when has the Government of Canada encouraged the outsourcing of good jobs to other countries?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me clearly indicate that the bill would continue to reinforce the government's expectation that Air Canada would undertake aircraft maintenance in Quebec, Manitoba, and Ontario. In fact, Air Canada has entered into an agreement with the Province of Manitoba, where we will see the establishment of a Western Canada centre of excellence.

This is something I do not want to write off. Others have spent a great deal of time trying to develop it. I want an aerospace industry that is going to prosper not only in my province, but in Canada in general. There are certain aspects to the legislation in this holistic package that would actually derive some benefits.

All I am suggesting to the member is to remain open-minded. I am going to stand for workers too. Let us see this bill get to committee and listen to what people have to say.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Air Canada employs 26,000 people across Canada. We need to ensure that Air Canada can be successful moving forward. Could my hon. colleague explain to us how the bill would give Air Canada more flexibility to be more successful moving forward?

● (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Canadians as a whole understand and appreciate the importance of flight today. One of the things we want to do as a government is ensure that Air Canada is there for future generations.

I believe there are certain aspects of the original act, which was brought forward back in the late eighties, that we need to continue to fight to preserve. As a government, where it makes sense, we can provide encouragement through these centres of excellence where future jobs could be created to enhance and build upon our aerospace industry. There is an obligation that the Government of Canada today is prepared to recognize and support where it can. That is something completely different from the former Conservative government that did absolutely nothing. It sat on its hands.

We have to make sure that Air Canada is able to sustain itself well into the future. There is a role to ensure that Canadians have that sense of pride. Air Canada used to be a fully public corporation, but is now a very responsible private entity that sometimes might go off the rails, to use a different mode of transportation metaphorically. It might need to be put back on the rails so that we have the long-term viability of good quality jobs, a fantastic airline, and something that would provide competition well into the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my great honour to rise in the House today to talk about the changes to the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

The bill is very short, and I do not suppose that much of it is controversial. For example, I do not think that the changes with respect to the City of Mississauga, the Montreal Urban Community, known as the MUC, the City of Winnipeg, Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba are controversial.

[*English*]

I imagine that the fact we are updating the definition of what constitutes maintenance is not controversial.

What I do hear from the opposition, and I understand, is the concern about jobs. It is a concern about the fact that the law would allow more flexibility to Air Canada and would not require that all of its maintenance be done in Montreal, Mississauga, or Winnipeg, or even in those provinces. It would give flexibility to Air Canada to decide where it may locate workers, provided that it retains centres of excellence in those three provinces.

I can understand. I hear the NDP. I understand from the perspective of unions that they are nervous. They are worried that jobs may be lost because there would no longer be the same legal protections there were before. I get that.

I listened to the Conservatives. I heard the argument that Air Canada originally, in the late 1980s, when it was privatized, had received from the Canadian taxpayers a certain amount of equipment and landing rights and other things, which meant that Air Canada had certain obligations that would not be imposed upon other airlines. I understand that, as well.

Let me explain why I do believe this amendment to the act actually does make sense.

[*Translation*]

First, I would like to say that, as a Montrealer, I am very pleased to know that Air Canada's headquarters must remain in Montreal. Also, we still have the same bilingualism requirements as before.

[*English*]

On the other hand, Air Canada is a company in a market that has changed very significantly since the 1980s. In the 1980s, there were far fewer airlines. Those of us who, before we came into this House, travelled a lot for business know that today there are low-cost carriers domestically and abroad. There are carriers from the Far East and the gulf states that now have taken over a lot of the international routes.

American aeronautics companies have merged and have been restructured. Almost every one of them has passed through bankruptcy protection. Even Air Canada went through the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act 10 years ago.

Air Canada is not the healthiest financial company that there is. We all understand that. The success of a very strong domestic airline like Air Canada—and it is good that we have other domestic airlines as well, like WestJet and Porter—is a prerequisite for the Canadian economy to be successful because Air Canada employs not just 2,600 people in maintenance, but 26,000 people across Canada.

Air Canada does need, now that it is a privatized company, the ability to move jobs sometimes. It is clear. I was in private industry. Before I came here I was the general counsel for a multinational. We always wanted to keep jobs in our major centres, but it is important to have flexibility, because companies owe debt. There are shareholders of those companies, and there is a need for success. We do not want to, as a government, be told that we will need to put another $1 billion, $2 billion, or $5 billion into Air Canada to keep Air Canada afloat one day.

We really do need to look at what Air Canada needs to do.

I have looked at it from this perspective. Yes, there were assets, but I think the main argument—and I would hope to convince my Conservative counterparts of this—is there were obligations that were given in the late 1980s based upon the Canadian taxpayers having helped set up Air Canada. However, for every one of the assets that Air Canada would have received in 1989, the amortization period would long since have ended. The usefulness of those assets would be hardly the same today as they were in the late 1980s. So, not only has the market changed, but the situation has also changed 27 years after this law was first adopted.

● (1250)

It is true that we put obligations in the law in the late 1980s, but now Air Canada may well need to compete with more flexibility. Let me also say that, when I talk about flexibility, because this was the case in my company, I am not talking necessarily about moving jobs out of the domestic market. We would be looking at whether all jobs should be in Montreal or whether we should put jobs in Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, or Halifax.

Why are there are only three provinces in the country where Air Canada can locate these jobs? Why can Air Canada not say it is more competitive, that there is a company in Vancouver or Edmonton? The Alberta economy is suffering and maybe there is a company in Edmonton that can do this work cheaper and better than the companies that it is outsourcing to in another city that is covered under the law. Why can Air Canada not decide to move jobs there, when every one of its competitors can make that rational decision?

I understand the need to protect Canadian jobs, but all of the domestic air carriers in Canada do not have the same limitations as Air Canada. As I hope I have successfully explained, the historical context is not as relevant today as it was in 1989 when this law was adopted, because the assets provided, the lending rates provided, and everything have depreciated since then.

Let me then go back to the issue of what this allows Air Canada to do. There was litigation with Aveos in 2012. Quebec commenced litigation and won in both courts in the first and second instances with respect to the fact that Air Canada had an obligation legally to keep jobs in Montreal. There were discussions with the Quebec government and the Government of Manitoba. I assume the federal government, at the time and continually, was kept up to date and in the loop on those discussions.

I do not know of any of us in this room who were sitting at the table at those settlement discussions that probably went on for a very long time. The conclusion was that promises were made. There has been a contract given to Bombardier. There has been a commitment to the Government of Quebec that the Bombardier aircraft will be maintained in Quebec for the next 20 years after delivery. There is an agreement in Manitoba that there will be a centre of excellence in the Winnipeg that will hire and employ 150 people.

Air Canada does, indeed, seem committed and has actually negotiated settlements with governments in these jurisdictions, at least to the satisfaction of those governments, to keep jobs in their respective provinces and agree to drop the suit. At that point, the federal government also needs to look at what has been negotiated. It was not necessarily right at the table, but it was probably kept in the loop. We need to say that the Quebec and Manitoba governments are satisfied with these changes. Air Canada has said that, as a prerequisite probably of doing these buys and making the commitments, it needs more autonomy, that it needs to be able to compete, and the federal government is acting to allow that.

Again, am I sorry for the people who may be worried that, as a result of these changes, their jobs may be more at risk? Yes, I am, and I think this government has committed in the budget to do more to enhance technology in Canada, to enhance aeronautics in Canada, to invest in middle-class jobs. However, am I panicked about this? No, I am not, because these are not widget-making jobs that can be easily exported to China or India. These are highly skilled mechanics doing work on specific aircraft owned by Air Canada.

In my view, Canadian workers who are highly skilled and highly trained are able to convince any company to keep jobs domestically. That is my feeling. I feel that the workers in Montreal, Winnipeg, Toronto, and across the country will be able to convince Air Canada that they can do the job more effectively and more cost-effectively than relocating those jobs abroad. While I understand the concerns and acknowledge the concerns—I am not going to say there are no concerns—I do believe that the amendment to the law is correct and I am proud to support it.

● (1255)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member laid out in his eloquent speech, there were significant taxpayer concessions that were given at the time of the agreement, but I also recall the Prime Minister sitting here not two days ago saying a deal is a deal is a deal as it related to the Saudi arms deal. I am wondering why it does not apply to this.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, what the Prime Minister was speaking of was a deal with a foreign country, where Canada's reputation abroad is at issue. We are talking now about amending the law. There was no signed agreement related to the federal government adopting a law. These were terms laid out by the federal government at the time. We are not breaching a contract. We are going back to the Parliament of Canada and asking the Parliament of Canada to legally amend the law. I really do not see that there is the same issue there.

[*Translation*]

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

I am quite surprised to hear that kind of speech from a Liberal. In the past, their messaging was completely different. I distinctly remember seeing the current Prime Minister on the steps of Parliament with his microphone, chanting rousing slogans in support of workers and demanding that the law be enforced and that jobs be maintained. I think he was particularly concerned about jobs in Montreal, and I expect my colleague is too.

What has changed since then? Not much time has passed since the days when the Liberals demanded that the law be enforced and that Aveos workers be respected. Now they are saying that Air Canada will decide where the jobs should be based on market forces. That will not prevent them from moving jobs outside of Canada.

Why did they not, at the very least, make sure that jobs would stay in Canada? If my colleague is so concerned about the fact that designating three cities is too restrictive, why not at least ensure that jobs will stay in Canada?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his question.

That is precisely why we should all support this bill, so that it can be examined in committee, where he and his party could propose an amendment in that regard. Personally, I am quite pleased to see that the environment has changed since 2012. The dispute has been settled, which has protected many jobs in Montreal. Bombardier has received a number of orders for planes, and a contract will be signed. Under the contract, Bombardier will keep jobs in Montreal for 20 years after the planes are delivered.

[*English*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the existing rules require that the maintenance be performed in the Montreal Urban Community. The Montreal Urban Community has not existed in 15 years or about three prime ministers.

I would like the member to speak a bit about why it is important to modernize the laws and bring them up to date.

● (1300)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, that is true. I was a mayor in the region of Montreal. Since the forced mergers in 2001, the MUC has not existed in that name, so technically we would certainly want to amend the law for that reason.

As I mentioned in my speech, the situation has changed in 27 years. Twenty-seven years ago, the state was giving assets and privatizing a company, and as a result the state felt that it was incumbent upon it and reasonable to impose limitations on that company. Some of them remain in effect, such as the need to keep a head office in Montreal and the requirement of Air Canada to provide services in English and French across the country. Due to the changes in the industry and changes in Air Canada, which went through CCAA proceedings not 10 years ago and was losing money until 2011, some changes may need to be made, and the government is modernizing the law to make them.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

I am pleased to speak to Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures.

This bill would amend the articles of the Air Canada Public Participation Act that stipulate that the carrier undertake operational and overhaul maintenance in Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba. For all intents and purposes, these articles would be removed. This would allow Air Canada to fulfill its maintenance needs outside of Canada and presumably at a lower cost. Consequently, Air Canada would no longer have to employ approximately 3,000 heavy maintenance workers in Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba.

The language that is used in Bill C-10 states:

> ...while not eliminating those activities in any of those provinces, change the type or volume of any or all of those activities in each of those provinces, as well as the level of employment in any or all of those activities.

I challenge any Liberal member to inform the House what he or she believes are the minimum number of Canadian jobs that article would protect.

Every member knows that all airlines do some maintenance work in every airport out of which they operate. This is called line maintenance, the routine checks that ensure that the planes are in good order and safe for passengers on a day-to-day basis.

Heavy or overhaul maintenance is the work that takes several days. It involves high skill because the mechanics are performing tasks such as replacing an engine or airframe upkeep. These are all high-end jobs, vital to Canada's aviation sector because of how skill-intensive these tasks are. By not specifying the type of maintenance work that needs to be done in Canada, as Bill C-10 proposes, Air Canada would be able to fulfill its legal obligation without having a single heavy maintenance person on staff.

While all Air Canada overall maintenance work would continue to be done in facilities that are certified by Transport Canada, the Liberal member for Scarborough—Guildwood made the following point a few years ago. He stated:

> By keeping Air Canada's maintenance in Canada, we ensured a superior level of safety with tight regulations and a highly skilled aerospace workforce. By shuttering Canadian overhaul centres, Canada is losing its ability to ensure that our aircraft meet safety regulations.

While the government should be commended for looking at ways to make Air Canada more competitive, and we agree with that, it cannot be commended for introducing a measure that would lead to job losses in Canada before even considering anything else.

Earlier this year, the Minister of Transport tabled a statutory review of the Canada Transportation Act, and the review looked forward 20 to 30 years to identify priorities and potential actions in transportation that would support Canada's long-term economic well-being. The report makes a number of recommendations concerning the aviation sector that stem from many months of analytical work, significant public consultation, and experience from eminent Canadians, including the Hon. David Emerson, who actually chaired that review.

Some of the examples of these recommendations include establishing a set of principles to guide all airports in Canada when determining fees, tying all airport improvement fees to specific projects with explicit sunset provisions, and overhauling the regulator, financing, and delivery models for security.

None of these initiatives would have cost the taxpayers any dollars, and considering the size of the Liberals' budget deficit, this would be especially important and, for the context of this debate, lead to job losses in Canada.

● (1305)

This legislation can and should be modernized without removing one if its key provisions. Air Canada has important heavy maintenance operations in Richmond, B.C., that should be considered by this act, but it is not even mentioned.

Canadians benefit from the efficient, affordable aviation sector. As Canada's largest carrier, having carried 40 million passengers last year, ensuring that Air Canada can provide affordable service to Canadians is extremely important. However, the government should always exhaust all measures available to it to achieve its objective, before picking the one that could cost Canadian workers their jobs.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member did not sit with her colleagues in the last government, but that government was saddled with the distinction of making changes to regulations in the tax structure that allowed 400,000 well-paying jobs to leave Canada. The Conservatives' idea was light touch regulation or deregulation.

Now I hear the hon. member talking about holding on to regulation to hold somebody's feet to the fire in order to make it potentially uncompetitive and less able to sustain itself and good Canadian jobs.

How does the member reconcile those two?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, the previous government was very proud of the 51 trade deals that it signed. They were negotiated in good faith, and they were signed by all parties.

With respect to this, there is an issue with amending the legislation and not looking at other options. These are the issues that the Conservative Party has. We have no issue with modernizing legislation and with making companies more competitive, because that is what we do. However, it cannot come at the loss of Canadian jobs when other opportunities have not been realized fully.

[*Translation*]

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

I am wondering whether she believes, as I do, that the government should be encouraging the creation of new jobs in Canada rather than introducing legislation that will legalize something that until now has been illegal. In addition, we know why those jobs were in the agreement that was signed. Air Canada wanted to take advantage of taxpayers' money when the transfer took place and the company was privatized.

Does my colleague believe that the government should instead be encouraging job creation, or at least preserving the jobs we already have in this sector and at Air Canada? Should we at least be ensuring that Air Canada will keep a minimum number of jobs here in Canada, instead of encouraging the outsourcing of jobs to other countries?

● (1310)

[*English*]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, that is precisely the point. This was embedded within the agreement in 1988 because significant concessions were given by Canadian taxpayers. We want to ensure that Air Canada is viable, that it has opportunities in the market. It is our firm belief that there are many other options for doing that, not losing these Canadian jobs. As well, a fundamental piece of the agreement was to keep those jobs in Canada.

As a free enterpriser, it is important to maintain that undertaking as well as look at opportunities for expansion in trade and opportunities to expand business.

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, would the hon. member agree that this issue should be debated at the committee level so we can hear from witnesses and hear more of the discussion we need to have on this issue?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, I always believe open discussion is a good thing to have when we look to amend any bill. However, extracting fundamental components out of it prior to having those conversations is backward. We should maintain the fundamental components of the agreement and the deal that was put in place in 1988, but the committee can still come forward with additional amendments that look at other options, other than losing Canadian jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures.

So far, we have heard members on the government side and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport go on and on about the quality of the Bombardier C Series aircraft and about how happy they are that Air Canada has ordered so many aircraft.

Bombardier has been promoting its new aircraft for several years now, and what Bombardier needs is to get more orders. The government's platitudes here will unfortunately not help Bombardier sell a single aircraft.

That said, it does not matter that the minister is justifying Bill C-10 by saying that Air Canada's will purchase C Series aircraft and that the maintenance of these aircraft will be done in Quebec. None of this has anything to do with Bombardier or its new aircraft.

The text of the act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures makes no reference to Bombardier or its C Series aircraft. The changes that the government is proposing in this bill make no reference to Bombardier or the C Series aircraft. Even if Air Canada purchases and takes possession of 45 of Bombardier's aircraft, that will represent only a small portion of its total fleet, about 15%.

We all know that most of Air Canada's fleet consists of Boeing, Airbus, and Embraer aircraft. This bill is only concerned with where Air Canada must do its maintenance. Talking about other things only diverts attention away from what is important. What is important is to strike a balance between keeping good jobs here in Canada and making it possible for Air Canada to continue becoming a more flexible and competitive private company.

Let us go back in time in order to understand why the federal government at that time included a provision on aircraft maintenance that read as follows:

> The articles of continuance of the Corporation shall contain
>
> ...
>
> (d) provisions requiring the Corporation to maintain operational and overhaul centres in the City of Winnipeg, the Montreal Urban Community and the City of Mississauga;

By passing legislation guaranteeing that operational and overhaul centres would be maintained, the then government ensured that Air Canada maintenance jobs would stay in Canada. This condition was deemed necessary because we, the taxpayers, had invested a lot of money and implemented policies that supported Air Canada. Accordingly, in 1988, when Air Canada was privatized, all parties felt that Air Canada's good maintenance jobs had to stay in Canada and, more specifically, near the cities of Montreal, Mississauga, and Winnipeg.

These policies and this financial support still exist today. That is why the government at the time ensured that this condition for privatization was included in the legislation. That way, only a change to that legislation made by the Parliament of Canada would allow Air Canada not to have its maintenance done in the three cities named in the legislation.

We all know that the airline industry has changed a great deal since Bill C-129 was introduced and debated in 1988. We all know that the Montreal Urban Community no longer exists, but we can all see that the law intended for the maintenance to be done in Montreal, Mississauga, and Winnipeg.

What has not changed is the need to have aircraft regularly maintained by reliable mechanics with the necessary experience and training to ensure passenger safety.

● (1315)

Canada has one of the best air safety regimes in the world, possibly even the best. We can be proud of that, and it is not something that should be changed overnight. We all recognize that aircraft maintenance is not the same now as it was in 1998. The technology and maintenance practices have changed a lot since then.

However, this bill does not propose modernizing the act to take into account the changes that have occurred in the airline industry with regard to aircraft maintenance. It proposes eliminating Air Canada's obligation to have its aircraft maintained in Canada. That is not modernization. Modernization would be an amendment that describes the type of maintenance that must be done in Canada, for example, with regard to airplane engines or flaps. My government colleagues are arguing that Air Canada is going to maintain the C Series in Quebec, that it is going to move jobs from Mississauga and Montreal to Winnipeg, and that that is enough.

Air Canada has a fleet of nearly 300 planes that need maintenance. Its Airbus and Boeing aircraft and even other planes that were built by Bombardier but are not part of the C Series could be maintained outside Canada. As a result, 85% of the fleet of Air Canada's largest planes, such as the Boeing 787, the Boeing 767, and the Airbus A330, could be maintained abroad.

Given the comments that the parliamentary secretary made in her speech and particularly outside the House, and given the content of the bill, it seems that the government intends to pass this legislative measure before Air Canada has even taken possession of a single C Series aircraft.

That is surprising because there are many measures that the government could introduce that would make Air Canada more competitive without affecting Canadian maintenance workers.

The government could link airport improvement fees to specific projects with clear end dates. It could do a complete overhaul of the airport security funding models. It could increase the number of trusted traveller programs, such as NEXUS and CANPASS. It could increase the ownership limits to at least 49% for commercial passenger carriers. It could also reduce or eliminate the aviation fuel tax, better align the regulations with those of the United States and Europe, and simplify customs and immigration processes.

All of these measures could be introduced quickly, and they would stimulate Air Canada and the country's entire airline industry. All of these measures have Air Canada's support. Unfortunately, the government is ignoring all of these measures in this bill.

I hope that the government will explain why it is ignoring many measures that would support Air Canada without affecting nearly 3,000 maintenance jobs in Canada.

● (1320)

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

I was wondering how much confidence my colleague has in the Air Canada executives. They are trying to reassure the government and tell it what it wants to hear. They also seem to want to charm us by saying that they are going to keep the jobs in question, there will be no outsourcing, and this will not change anything, when in fact they are lobbying the government for change.

Does my colleague trust Air Canada and its executives, even though they are calling for change while, at the same time, trying to reassure us that nothing is going to change, all the jobs will stay here, we should not worry, and there are going to be even more jobs created? Does he trust this company?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for the question.

I would like to say that I do not trust this government to make changes to help Air Canada, or other Canadian airports and companies.

Our party thinks that the government should do whatever is necessary for every industry that might contribute to jobs in Canada. It has to be said that the Billy Bishop airport is a good example where we can help the airline industry. However, the Liberal government said that we cannot make any changes to the Billy Bishop airport. I therefore do not trust the Liberal government, but I am confident that the airline industry will survive.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party's position is not entirely clear.

Am I to understand that the bill does not go far enough, or does it go too far?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I thank my Liberal colleague for his important question.

We think that Air Canada must respect certain obligations, since Canadians gave Air Canada certain benefits when it was privatized in 1998.

The Conservative Party believes that we must protect Canadian jobs, especially well-paid jobs. We think that the government can do many things, but it is not doing them, according to Air Canada.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, earlier, members on the Liberal side said that there were other ways to help Air Canada. The Conservatives said the same thing, claiming that we should not take it this far and that we should look for other solutions to help Air Canada.

Could my colleague elaborate on how these alternatives will help Air Canada stay competitive in this extremely competitive market, while requiring it to maintain these jobs in Canadian cities?

● (1325)

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke.

The government could be doing many things, but it has done nothing.

[*English*]

For example, it could be tying airport improvement fees to certain set projects, with clear deadlines once these improvements have been made; changing the financing model for security; and replacing the one-size-fits-all screening approach to the airlines so we could tailor certain approaches—two different airlines, two different airports—for a more agile, more nimble response to the airline industry. It is something that is important, certainly to the Quebec industry, but to all provinces as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, who will deliver her speech when we come back next week.

On March 24, 2016, our government introduced Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures in the House of Commons. The purpose of the bill, more specifically, is to amend the sections of the act that have to do with Air Canada's operational and overhaul centres.

It is important to point out that this bill is being introduced at a time that is quite historic for the Canadian aerospace industry. As members will recall, in February 2016, Air Canada announced that it planned to purchase up to 75 C Series aircraft from Bombardier, and that it would carry out the maintenance of those planes in Canada for at least 20 years, beginning with the first delivery.

Air Canada will also help establish a centre of excellence in Quebec for the C Series aircraft, as well as another centre in western Canada, to be located in Manitoba. These centres will be able to not only service Air Canada's planes but also to offer those services to other national and international airlines.

In other words, we have introduced a bill at a time that is pivotal for Canada's aerospace industry. Not only is Bombardier offering a product that is a game changer for the aerospace industry worldwide, due to its efficiency and environmental performance, but our most important Canadian airline, Air Canada, clearly intends to make massive investments in the renewal of its fleet of aircraft.

Investing in a cutting-edge product that was designed and manufactured mainly in Canada will improve Air Canada's ability to compete globally and to serve Canadians.

In this historical context, we propose to modernize the Air Canada Public Participation Act, which we find to be outdated in part.

More specifically, the bill amends paragraph 6(1)(*d*) in the provisions requiring Air Canada to maintain operational and overhaul centres in the City of Winnipeg, the Montreal Urban Community, and the City of Mississauga.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I know that the member would like to finish his speech, but it being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper. The member will have time to continue his speech the next time this bill is debated.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S BUSINESS

[*English*]

CANADIAN ORGAN DONOR REGISTRY ACT

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC) moved that Bill C-223, An Act to establish the Canadian Organ Donor Registry and to coordinate and promote organ donation throughout Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I wish to speak today in support of my Bill C-223, an act to establish the Canadian organ donor registry and to coordinate and promote organ donation throughout Canada, which I hope will receive support from all members of the House.

As you may be aware, I myself am an organ donor. In 2003, I made a living donation. I gave part of my liver to my son Tyler. This was not something I did lightly. It is a dangerous operation for both the donor and the recipient.

For Tyler, it was life or death. I love my son. The choice was easy.

At that time, I was becoming increasingly aware of the unmet need for organ donations in Canada. There are literally thousands of people waiting for that telephone call that will change their lives and the lives of their family members. Tragically, for more than 200 Canadians each year, the time runs out before the call comes.

More than 90% of Canadians support organ and tissue donation in theory, but less than 25% have made plans to donate. Canada's organ donation rate is among the world's worst, yet one donor can benefit more than 75 people and save up to 8 lives.

Sometimes, organ compatibility is not enough. Shortly after that transplant, the portion of my liver that Tyler received began to die. For me to donate again was not possible. Another donor was needed or my son would die.

On Christmas Eve 2003, it looked like Tyler's time had run out. His life expectancy was now days, perhaps hours. Almost miraculously, a liver became available from a Quebec man who had just died. We were told it was not a perfect solution. It would only buy time, but time was what we desperately needed.

My wife Liz and I were so thankful to the family of that anonymous donor. In their grief at the loss of a loved one, they cared enough to think of others. We will be forever in their debt. Their gift gave us our son when we thought we would lose him.

Having experienced the organ donation system first-hand, I became acutely aware of the need for a more coordinated effort in this area, both locally and nationally. I became an advocate for all those like Tyler, those in need of a life-saving transplant. All too often, it seems to me, the difference between life and death is one of simple awareness. People do not know the good they could do. Such awareness is key.

While some provinces have a large percentage of citizens who have indicated they wish to be organ donors, others have very few, far below the national average. As I stated earlier, Canada is far behind other countries in the percentage of citizens who have let authorities know of their willingness to be organ donors. I have been told by many of the people I have met who work in this area of medicine that there is a real need for a national registry, such as is proposed in this bill. Representatives of awareness groups, health care organizations working in the transplant field, and donor and recipient families have been overwhelmingly positive in responding to the bill. Everyone I have met with has had one simple question: how can we help?

● (1330)

To return to my story, with Tyler's second transplant, our journey was not yet over. We knew in 2003 that the liver he received was not a long-term solution. After a decade it too began to fail. Once more we entered the medical system, our emotions a mixture of hope and fear. There were no guarantees. We knew the statistics. We knew the odds. We prayed yet again for a miracle.

Once again a grieving family offered a loved one's organs for the good of the community, and a match was made. This time we hope Tyler has a liver that will be with him for the rest of his life. We are so grateful to have a healthy son, now a young man beginning to make his way in the world, someone of whom we are very proud.

Our good fortune brings with it a sense of not only gratitude but also responsibility. I firmly believe that it is incumbent on each of us to give back to our community, to work to make it a better place. Tyler's health problems have caused me to become an advocate for increased awareness of the need for organ donations in Canada. I promised myself and him that if the day should ever come when I would have the opportunity to make a positive difference on a national level, I would do so. The time to do that is now, and I hope I have members' support.

Why this bill at this time? What need would it serve?

This legislation would serve a huge need. In 2014, for example, 2,433 solid organs were transplanted in Canada. That is a 25% increase since 2009. These transplanted organs included 1,430 kidneys, 537 livers, 226 lungs, 161 hearts, and 79 pancreases.

One of the things a national registry would do is improve the wait times for Canadians who need a transplant. Right now that can vary considerably from province to province. If an individual needs a new kidney, for example, it can take more than four years to make it to the top of the list. If an individual needs a new lung, that could take 19 months.

Far too often people on the transplant list do not live to receive a donation. The number of patients on the waiting list for kidney transplants is approximately two and a half times higher than the number of transplants performed. More than 1,600 Canadians are added to wait-lists each year. The demand for organs is increasing, but the supply is not maintaining the pace. We are falling behind.

Transplantation is expensive, but there is a quality-of-life issue as well for those in need, and as it turns out, the cost to our health care system is actually lessened by transplantation. Once a patient receives a transplant, that patient can return to a relatively normal existence, their extreme medical difficulties behind them. For example, a kidney transplant candidate is very likely to be on dialysis, a procedure that will no longer be necessary after the patient receives a new kidney. That saving alone can be about $50,000 annually. Medical treatment should not be about dollars and cents, but it is good to know that we can do the right thing and save money for taxpayers at the same time.

An integrated system such as proposed by the bill would have a major impact on patient outcomes. This registry would facilitate organ donations in all of the provinces and territories and greatly assist medical professionals in providing timely aid for those in need, saving lives in the process.

● (1335)

A national organ registry has been discussed for years. Now is the time to do something about it. We have the opportunity to do something positive that will save Canadian lives. That, it seems to me, is what Parliament should be doing.

Without a national registry, it is all too easy to imagine someone not receiving the gift of life simply because the need was not known. When a kidney, lung, or heart becomes available on one side of the country, doctors should instantly be aware on the other side.

A national donor registry would give the gift of time to health care professionals. With many transplant opportunities being time-sensitive surgical procedures, anything that can save hours or minutes in uniting donors and recipients is going to be a literal lifesaver.

The time for talking about a national organ donor registry is over. It is time for action.

● (1340)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the idea of having an organ donor registry is a pretty good idea. That is why several provinces already have them. Is the member not concerned about interfering with provincial jurisdictions on this file?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, actually, there would be no interference. We have a national universal health care system, and each province has its own budget to run its own health care system.

What we are proposing is this. We are proposing that the Minister of Health needs to be able to bring all the provinces together, let them coordinate, and let the national registry be mostly utilized in the best interests of the people waiting for organs. If we did not need it, we would not see Canada ranked among the lowest in performance in that area.

The national registry would be run by professionals, NGOs, all third parties, and even individuals. I have heard from so many different areas across the country, and it is a must. We need a national registry. It is a must. It will never interfere.

It is up to the Minister of Health to put together the best mechanisms to coordinate the efforts of all provinces.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Edmonton Manning for bringing forward this legislation. It is a wonderful bill. However, I have a question for him.

In 2014, the NDP supported removing the ban on certain organ and tissue donations made by men who have sex with men. Efforts to create a national registry, we believe, should go hand in hand with efforts to remove this unscientific discrimination and replace it with a science-based behavioural screening process.

In 2014 also, the member of Parliament for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke moved a motion in the House of Commons calling for the government to do just that.

The goal is the same. We want to link donors with people who need the organs. If we get this bill to committee, would the member support bringing something like that forward?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member on the NDP side for his support. It is great to hear.

What we were suggesting is that the minister should be able to find the proper mechanism to coordinate all the efforts. We want to make this bill as perfect as it can be, to serve every Canadian waiting in need and to save the 200-plus lives that we are losing every year because proper coordination is not in place.

With all respect to the efforts and activities happening right now in that area, they are not enough. We need a national eye on that, and only Health Canada is able to do that. I support every effort going into making this legislation as perfect as it can be.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member. I have found in my short time here that quite often private member's bills really do reflect the spirit that this place should have, coming forward in the national good.

What I hear is the need for leadership, directed appropriately at the government side. Is the member aware of any impediments or opposition to the kind of national coordination which he has called for? Has he heard from any of the provinces that suggest there may be some barriers here?

● (1345)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, as far as reaching out to different areas, from coast to coast to coast, everything we have heard is extremely positive. Everyone said that it was time, that they needed a hero to carry this and take it through. We have been waiting a long time to have a blessing on the federal stage, or someone who will carry this torch through.

I do not necessarily want to be the hero, but I have a good cause. I am a donor, and my son was a recipient. I and my family have been faced with this since 2003. We got to know so many cases across the country.

We have spoken about the necessity of organ donations, and there has been nothing but positive feedback. With this historical opportunity, I hope the minister will get on it and the government will do the same.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-223 and to highlight our government's efforts to improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada. Let me begin by thanking the hon. member for Edmonton Manning for bringing this important topic to the attention of this House and for his advocacy on this important file. As a registered nurse, this issue is extremely important to me as well.

Our government recognizes that organ and tissue donation and transplantation saves lives and improves the health status of Canadians. Transplantation is a unique and complex service, for it depends on the donation of an altruistic gift from one person to another. It involves several hospital departments and medical disciplines. It crosses provincial and territorial boundaries, and it has a significant safety component.

Organs are our scarcest resource and are in high demand. According to the latest statistics released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, in 2014 there were 2,356 transplants performed. However, over 4,500 Canadians were waiting for an organ transplant. Of those, 3,400 Canadians were waiting for a new kidney. While the number of patients waiting for an organ varied by organ type, Canadians waiting for a new kidney accounted for more than 77% of those waiting.

The need for organs will continue to increase because the Canadian population is aging, and because of the persistent shortages of certain organs, especially kidneys. End-stage kidney disease is a primary cause of kidney failure. According to the latest statistics, there were more than 5,200 newly diagnosed cases in 2014, of which 36% had diabetes, a most preventable disease, as a main cause. These numbers suggest that we can do more, and our government is firmly committed to working closely with our provincial and territorial counterparts and key stakeholders in the health community to provide the very best results for Canadians as it relates to organ and tissue donation and transplantation in Canada.

In the area of health, it is important for the federal government to work together with the provinces and territories, and in accordance with the Constitution of Canada, which indicates our federal, provincial, and territorial governments' respective powers. Under the Canadian Constitution, the provinces and territories are responsible for delivering care services within their jurisdiction, including the donation and transplantation of organs and tissues. The federal government has a key role to play in improving the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada, and that is exactly what we are doing through strategic investments and overseeing the safety of the system.

Since 2008, the federal government, the provinces, and the territories have invested over $64 million to support the efforts of Canadian Blood Services to coordinate a nationally focused organ and tissue donation and transplantation system. The Canadian Blood Services is a national not-for-profit charitable organization that manages the blood supply in all provinces and territories, and works collaboratively with Héma-Québec for the Province of Quebec. Together, the Canadian Blood Services, in conjunction with the federal government and the provinces and territories, has been collaboratively making progress towards improvements in the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada.

One of the major improvements has been establishing the Canadian transplant registry, a national donor registry that has three interprovincial organ sharing programs. Two of these interprovincial programs relate specifically to kidney donation and transplantation. The first is the paired kidney donation program, which facilitates the matching of kidneys between living donors and recipients. The second is the highly sensitized patient program, which facilitates sharing of kidneys for hard-to-match patients. The third is an interprovincial program that is the national organ wait-list, which facilitates the sharing of organs among high-needs patients.

Currently work is under way to formalize existing guidelines for interprovincial sharing of high-status organs such as hearts and livers. The Canadian transplant registry is guided by interprovincial policy and informed by evidence-based leading practices. It is a single window that ensures that our organ donor list is comprehensive, timely, and readily accessible. In addition to investments in the Canadian Blood Services, the federal government is responsible for regulating the safety of the donation system and transplantation of organs and tissues by ensuring the safety of cells, tissues, and organs for transplantation.

● (1350)

Organ and tissue donation and transplantation is a complex health service that our government takes seriously. Improving the system requires federal, provincial, and territorial leadership, as well as key stakeholders support. This is not an easy task.

However, I am pleased to say that through this collaborative approach between federal-provincial-territorial, and stakeholder partners, we are making real progress to improve the system. Over the last decade, the number of deceased organ donors has gone up by 44%. Although more people are donating, there is still more to do to meet the need for more organs.

When looking at transplant trends in Canada, between 2005 and 2014, the number of lung transplants performed increased by 52% and the number of liver transplants performed increased by 27%. However, there is still more to do, and our government will continue to support this work to ensure that Canadians have access to a world-class system of donation and transplantation of organs and tissues.

Regarding Bill C-223, an act to establish the Canadian Organ Donor Registry and to coordinate and promote organ donation throughout Canada, the government agrees with the objective of improving the donation and transplantation of organs and tissues in Canada, but does not support this bill for a number of reasons.

First, the bill would duplicate existing initiatives between the federal government, provinces, territories, and the Canadian Blood Services. It would also duplicate provincial and territorial efforts. For example, provinces and territories already have legislation on organ donation and tissue transplantation, and many of them already have registries of organ donors that are linked to an already existing Canadian registry of organ donors.

Another reason why this bill will not be supported is because it would shift federal, provincial, territorial responsibilities. For example, the recommendations proposed with regard to the national strategy for consent, confidentiality, health policies, and procedures are all responsibilities of provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

Looking more closely at the issue of privacy, Bill C-223 would require that the federal government collect personal health information on organ and tissue donation and transplantation. This is already being done by the provinces, territories, and Canadian Blood Services, with appropriate data-sharing agreements to meet provincial and territorial privacy requirements.

Introducing new federal legislation at this time would raise provincial and territorial concerns about jurisdiction over the delivery of health care in the area of organ and tissue donation and transplantation. This could become an impediment to the work that is currently under way. Our government's approach is to build stronger partnerships with our provincial and territorial counterparts.

Bill C-223 anticipates an increase in organ donation rates. However, the evidence does not support registries as a way to improve donation rates. The evidence has found that there is no relationship between the number of registered donors and donor numbers. In fact, donor numbers tend to remain flat even when there is an increase in registries.

Recent provincial and territorial experience shows that registries alone do not impact donation rates without an optimal identification and referral process. Provinces and territories found that 85% to 90% of donors had not indicated a decision to donate unless they were approached. Bill C-223 would not lead to increased donation rates and would not provide further benefit to Canadians.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that our government recognizes the need for improvement in the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada. Collaboration, consultation and engagement with the provinces and territories as well as key stakeholders are necessary to address the complexity of the changes that are required in the system.

Our government will continue to support the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system improvements that are under way. We are committed to producing results for Canadians to ensure that Canada has an accessible, safe, and comprehensive world-class organ and tissue donation and transplantation system.

I look forward to working with my colleague, the member for Edmonton Manning on this file.

● (1355)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like again to offer my congratulations to the member for Edmonton Manning for bringing forward this legislation.

I am proud to be one in the long line of New Democratic Party members of Parliament to speak in favour of this issue over the years. It is absolutely crucial that we support the creation of a pan-Canadian registry for organ donations in collaboration with the provinces and territories.

This is the latest attempt of a parliamentary colleague taking up the NDP's torch from the 40th and 41st Parliaments where former MP Malcolm Allen tabled similar bills. In this Parliament, a Conservative colleague is sponsoring the bill and I truly hope that through debate we can come to an all-party consensus.

It is unfortunate to hear that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health has indicated that the government will not support the bill. I really thought this would be an easy bill for Parliament to pass, but unfortunately it is not.

Back in 2011, Canadian Blood Services and organ and tissue donation transplant communities produced a call to action. This call to action formally recommended the establishment of an integrated interprovincial organ donation and transplantation system by 2017. That is next year.

Every year that we do not act upon this, more Canadians will not get the help they need. According to the Canadian Transplant Society, 1,600 Canadians will be added to organ donor wait-lists every year. This means that at any given time there are approximately 5,000 Canadians who are in need and waiting for an organ or tissue transplant. This is no small matter. These Canadians waiting for transplants often live with severe medical conditions and they must also endure end-stage organ failure.

We know based on surveys that over 80% of the people in this country would donate their organs but fewer than 20% of us have actually made arrangements to do so. Our country's deceased donation rate is relatively low when we put it up against other comparable countries. This is in part due to there being a lack of a nationwide registry that would unify the provinces and other actors that are currently operating independently.

Talking about the benefits of having a registry, my colleague rightly pointed out some clear benefits to this registry, but I would like to highlight some of my own thoughts on this legislation.

The national registry would improve the availability of organs to patients in need of transplants. This is the most obvious benefit, but something else that should be brought up is that it is likely also to reduce provincial health care costs. The reduction in people waiting with severe medical conditions caused by easier access to organs for patients in need would allow costs to come down and also would reduce wait times for other health care needs.

While mentioning wait times, by increasing the efficiency in the supply of donor organs and tissues, a national registry would be fairer and more equitable when it comes to waiting for transplants as right now there are wild disparities in wait times across regions and provinces.

This gives the call to action a very clear context for why such a registry that is accessible, consistent, and allowed to legally authorize donations based on the wishes of the donor is so important.

With all of this in mind, New Democrats are supporting the bill to go to a parliamentary committee so that we can perform an in-depth study of this piece of legislation. The bill is potentially life-saving to many of our fellow Canadians and it is vitally important that we get the details right.

To make sure we get these details right, we should look at the experiences of other jurisdictions before we get rid of the bill wholeheartedly. We have to look at jurisdictions which have implemented presumptive organ and tissue donation as a means of dramatically increasing potential donors to save lives. Right now, we are unfortunately behind countries like Spain, Cuba, Uruguay, and even the United States on donation rates.

We should also, as I mentioned earlier in a question, be speaking about the current discriminatory practice in blood, tissue, and organ donations. New Democrats moved in 2014 that the Government of Canada take immediate measures to end the current discriminatory policy governing blood and organ donations from men who have sex with men. We believe that efforts to create a national registry should go hand-in-hand with efforts to remove this unscientific discrimination and replace it with a science-based, behavioural screening process. It is time for evidence-based decision-making. This would ensure that all potential donors are treated with equal dignity and respect.

● (1400)

The Liberal platform during the election also promised to end this discriminatory ban. Therefore, I think we can find common ground in the House on this issue.

Other reasons for bringing this bill to committee lie with some of the issues we believe need to be worked out. The bill would give substantial power and responsibility to the health minister, rather than delegating it to the administration of the registry, to a registrar, not to mention we would need to make clear the reporting mechanisms to Parliament. There should be a clear, detailed process for provincial affiliation to a national registry.

The parliamentary committee study would give members a chance to hear from witnesses on this bill, something which is incredibly important. These witnesses would inform our opinion on what the final outcome should be.

There are clear details that need to be worked out on this legislation, but we are also in need of it to pass as soon as possible.

This debate makes me remember the struggle of Hélène Campbell a few years ago to find organ donors. She was looking for a double-lung transplant. Instead of just waiting on the list, she was able to raise international awareness to her plight and to the lack of organs that were required for people to heal. She was featured on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* in the United States, and also had a public exchange with Canadian pop star Justin Bieber over social media, which raised awareness and reportedly led to a surge in donor rates.

Personal stories like these enable people to make personal decisions to become organ donors. She was able to get the organs needed and was greeted by the then federal health minister upon her return home.

Hélène's personal story was subjected to media attention and led to some very positive results. However, there are still many more personal stories that are not told internationally but still require just as much immediate attention.

The statistics are clear, and they are dire. Over the past decade, more people have waited for a transplant than the number of operations actually performed in a given year.

With respect to seniors, which is something I take very seriously as the NDP's critic for seniors' issues, there is an increase in end-stage kidney disease linked to the growing aging population in our country. Over the next two decades, our senior population is expected to double. Therefore, this is a particularly strong issue among many and it will get out of hand even more if there is not swift and specific action on that front.

The New Democrats have been highlighting tragic stories in the House for many years. We asked the government to address the issues of desperate Canadians heading overseas to buy organs on the black market, only to see the organs fail when they got home. These Canadians ended up in hospital and, tragically, some died.

We should not be putting the citizens of our country in that kind of a situation.

The situation is currently unacceptable. I think we could move forward swiftly with this legislation if only we had the government's support. We really should be hearing witnesses and discuss the implementation of a national organ donor registry. At least give the committee time to hear from experts on this matter.

We owe it to the people of our country who are living with a stressful wait of organ and tissue donations. They need to see federal leadership on this issue to ensure Canadians get the health care they need.

I would like to again congratulate the member for Edmonton Manning. I know he is personally affected, with his son, and has gone through this. As members of Parliament, when we bring personal stories like his to the House, it brings the betterment out of us. We leave the partisanship behind the door when we bring forward an issue that we know will truly benefit Canada.

I am proud to stand as a member of the New Democratic caucus to lend my full support to getting this bill to committee.

● (1405)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-223, an act to establish the Canadian Organ Donor Registry and to coordinate and promote organ donation throughout Canada.

This is monumental legislation and I am very proud of my colleague, the member for Edmonton Manning, for introducing it, as it will absolutely save lives.

My comments this afternoon will come from a different perspective than most of those who will have the opportunity to speak to the legislation. I do not presume to be an expert on organ transplant issues. Therefore, I ask the indulgence and patience of my colleagues as I share some of my personal journey over the past several years, some of whom may already know it.

On the May 2, 2011 election night, as my wife Betty and I were watching the early results of the election along with a campaign volunteer, Betty suddenly experienced a headache. Within seconds she collapsed to the floor. While she was breathing normally and had a strong pulse, there was no response. Minutes later, following a 911 call, local volunteer firefighters from the New Dundee detachment were on the scene to provide assistance. They were followed very closely by EMS personnel.

Betty was taken by ambulance to Grand River Hospital, placed on life support, and immediately transferred to a major health centre for more specialized care. ICU personnel and surgical specialists cared for her. They explained in some detail that Betty had experienced a spontaneous intracranial hemorrhage and that in spite of surgical intervention attempting to stop the bleeding, their best efforts had been unsuccessful. The intense bleeding had applied extreme pressure to sensitive brain tissue and brain function had ceased.

After consultation with neurosurgeons and ICU doctors regarding Betty's neurological death, we now were faced with the question of the possibility of organ and tissue donation. We were then introduced to a team of very compassionate personnel representing the Trillium Gift of Life Network. They presented the options to us and provided the answers to all of the questions that were raised by me and my three adult children. There was no doubt in our mind as to what Betty would want to do. We knew that she would want to continue giving in the same spirit of generosity in her death as she had always done in her life.

Betty and I had also discussed this issue openly each time we renewed our driver's licence, and had always both agreed that should anything ever happen to either of us we would be open to the question of organ donation. We would want to help in that way.

As I reflect on the difficult journey of our grief during that difficult time, that journey of grief has been made less difficult by two key factors: first, our personal faith journey as followers of Jesus Christ, and our confidence in the resurrection and the certain hope that he gives us; and, second, our decision to follow through on Betty's wish that upon her death, if possible, her organs be donated.

Why not help out one of those thousands of people who are currently on the waiting list for a specific organ? Many of those who are waiting are still in the prime of life, and organ donation can make the difference between life and death. Our decision, while not easy, was made somewhat lighter knowing that someone else would possibly receive the gift of life, even as we journeyed into our own grief and loss.

As an aside, on a technical note, let me assure members of the House and Canadians that we can rely on the safety of organ transplants in our country. This is because of Canada's strong organ transplant community, and Health Canada's work in establishing rigorous safety standards and requirements through the implementation of the safety of human cells, tissue and organs for transplantation regulations.

In the years and months following Betty's death, the Trillium Gift of Life Network followed up regularly with letters of support, offering access to resources, and letting me know of the health status of the organ recipients. Five people had received the gift of life through organs that were transplanted: heart, liver, lungs, and two separate kidney recipients. In addition, others have benefited from the gift of her eyes, bone, and muscle tissue, which will aid in the transplant process. I know that because of our decision to donate, there are now at least five people enjoying fuller, richer lives, and even more who are benefiting from tissue transplants.

We are in a death-denying society. No one wants to think he or she will die before 80 or 90. Because of amazing medical advancements, many people will live to that age, and even beyond. However, we have no guarantee, as my family discovered so quickly, and with no advance warning of any kind. We know that 4,000 Canadians are waiting for organ donation at any given period.

● (1410)

In Ontario alone, more than 1,500 people are waiting for a life-giving transplant. More than 1,000 of those people are waiting for a kidney transplant.

It is easy to register one's intention to donate. In Ontario, one can simply go to the website beadonor.ca. Elsewhere in Canada, one can go to www.transplant.ca.

Right now, only 20% of Ontario's residents have registered their intent to be an organ or tissue donor. Why not go online right now and register?

In addition to registering, it is important for individuals to discuss this matter with their families. They should let their families know their decision and then register at beadonor.ca. This decision could very well save a life and offer hope.

Thousands of adults and children are counting on us and our fellow Canadians to give the gift of life. It is time that we as a nation closed the gap between the need for life-saving and life-enhancing organs and the supply of organs that are available. Why not take steps now to make a difference? It could be anyone: a son, a daughter, or a granddaughter who will be the recipient of our or someone else's good decision to register to donate our organs.

I think all my colleagues will understand why I seconded this fantastic initiative by my colleague. It really is unacceptable that 200 Canadians die each year waiting for an organ transplant when only 20% of Canadians are registered.

Canada needs a national initiative that raises organ donation awareness and encourages people to register to be a donor.

As I said at the beginning of my talk, a Canadian organ donor registry would save lives, and I am hopeful that all parties in this House will unanimously support this extremely important legislation.

Let me just add that I ask the government not to hide behind potential jurisdictional challenges and to support Bill C-223.

Private Members' Business

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-223 and our government's efforts to improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada.

Indeed, the member for Edmonton—Manning has put an important issue before the House. Evidence demonstrates that organ and issue donation and transplantation saves lives, improves the health status of Canadians, and is cost effective for the health care system. It is, in a word, important.

For example, in 2014 2,356 Canadian lives were saved through organ transplants. Patient and family testimonials attest to the improvements in longevity and quality of life of patients receiving organ transplants.

Transplantation is also cost effective for our health care system. For example, the most cost-effective treatment for end-stage kidney disease is transplantation. Dialysis costs between $40,000 and $60,000 a year. A kidney transplant costs approximately $40,000, followed by approximately $10,000 in transplant drug therapy. Over time, that would lead to over $100 million in cost savings for the health care system per year if all patients waiting at year end received a transplant.

Our government is committed to working closely with our provincial and territorial counterparts and key stakeholders to provide the best results for Canadians as it relates to organ and tissue donation and transplantation in Canada.

As my colleague, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health noted, the government of Canada is doing its part by recognizing that improvements are needed in the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada. Together with the provincial and territorial governments, we have invested over $64 million since 2008 to support the Canadian Blood Services' efforts to improve the system. This funding supports its work in establishing three vital interprovincial organ sharing programs under the Canadian transplant registry.

We know from recently published statistics from the Canadian Institute for Health Information that over the last decade the number of Canadians waiting for a new organ has been higher than the number of transplants performed within a given year. In fact, we know that more than 4,500 Canadians were waiting for a transplant in 2014.

With an aging Canadian population, we expect that there will be a higher demand for organs over time. This means we must collectively focus our efforts on increasing the number of organ donors across Canada. One donor alone can save up to eight lives and benefit more than 75 people.

We can all help. Organ and tissue donation is a unique opportunity to make a concrete difference in the life of someone else. Three ways that have been proven to increase the number of organ donors across Canada are strengthening public awareness, improving health professional education, and implementing leading practices.

Our government is committed to encouraging Canadians to become organ donors through active public awareness campaigns. Since December 2013, Health Canada has had a web page on the Healthy Canadians website to promote organ and tissue donation across Canada and assist Canadians with registering as donors with their provincial and territorial organizations through an interactive map. I would invite all my colleagues in the House to visit the website.

April17-23 is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week , and our government, the provinces and territories, and Canadian Blood Services are sending messages to Canadians and promoting events to raise public awareness.

Our government is committed to encouraging all Canadians to consider becoming donors. It takes a few minutes to take the important step of registering to donate. Canadians are also being encouraged to discuss organ and tissue donation with their doctors and their families and friends. It is important that they know your wishes and you know theirs.

In addition to raising public awareness, the other proven methods of increasing the number of donors are through improving health professional education and implementing leading practices. Health care professionals are a critical factor in improving the number of donors. Opportunities may be missed if physicians are unaware of best practices, do not know the patient's wishes regarding donation, or do not ask families about donation.

Over the last decade, the skill level among clinicians in the organ and tissue donation and transplantation community has increased through professional education on leading practices. For example, through the Canadian Blood Services' initiative, new leading practices have been developed on topics such as donor management, death determination, and end-of-life family conversations and consent. These leading practices are being shared and implemented across the country through training health care professionals and changing health care policies or procedures for organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

Our government applauds these efforts and is committed to continuing to work with the provinces and territories, the Canadian Blood Services, and other key stakeholders to enhance the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada.

Our government strongly supports the objective of improving the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system but believes that Bill C-223 would not lead to improved donation rates. As my colleague the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health noted, the evidence does not support registries as a way to improve donation rates.

● (1415)

The other measures proposed in the bill would duplicate the collaborative initiatives already under way with the provinces and territories, and with Canadian Blood Services. The proposed measures would also infringe on provincial and territorial jurisdictions for the delivery of health care in the area of organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

Provinces and territories are already investing in strategies known to improve organ donation rates, such as professional education, implementation of leading and best practices, compilation of quality data to support performance management and public reporting, investments in research and innovation, and enhancements to health system capacity.

We believe that introducing national legislation without adequate consultation, engagement, and buy-in from the provinces and territories and other key stakeholders would be detrimental to the system improvement work that is already under way. It is an implementation, jurisdiction, and co-operation issue, not necessarily a philosophical one.

Our government is committed to improving the organ donation rates to ultimately improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in Canada.

Our government commends every living and deceased donor and their families who have saved the lives of thousands of Canadians. We applaud every Canada who has registered to become a donor, every organization that is promoting organ donation awareness, all health care professionals who are enhancing their skills through training, and every health care institution that is implementing new policies and procedures to improve organ donation.

Together we can make a difference. Together we can produce results for Canadians. Together we can ensure that Canada has a world-class organ and tissue donation and transplantation system.

I would like to congratulate the member for Edmonton Manning for his hard work on this file, and I look forward to the debate continuing.

● (1420)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, first I want to thank the member for Edmonton Manning for bringing the bill forward and also sharing his very personal story.

I am so pleased to speak in support of Bill C-233 . Last week, my son Henry donated blood for the first time. His commitment came from having a cousin who battled leukemia and at this point is healthy, as his mother watches and waits.

Often when we know what we can do to help, we do it. For many years I was a volunteer with a hospice. Every Saturday evening, I would sit with the palliative patients and their families. Some of these families were still holding out for an organ donation to save their family members. It was incredibly hard to sit with these families who could do nothing but hold onto hope.

We know that every year 1,600 Canadians will be added to the organ donor list, while 5,000 Canadians are still waiting. These numbers tell us a story. They tell us the story that we need to do better.

A national registry would make a significant difference. It would help people across this country. It would increase access, address disparities, and increase efficiency. It would be a national program that could bring all the provinces and territories together to make a difference, to give people a second chance in this life.

In my riding of North Island—Powell River, I have a constituent named Debbie Hooper, who is a 56-year-old grandmother. She has been waiting three years by her phone, waking every morning hoping the call will come that means her lung disease will be fixed by this amazing gift of an organ transplant.

Across this country, people are facing challenges that many of us have never experienced. We have to do our due diligence as people who have been elected to sit in this place to make sure we are helping save the lives of people in this country, and that we are creating accessibility.

I have heard from the other side, and I am so sad to see that the bill will not be passed by the other side.

We need to send the bill to committee. We need to be hearing those witnesses from across this country. We need to hear how it is going to work. We are asking that the bill be before committee so that we can see potential solutions that would make a difference and give people their lives.

Brenda Small is another constituent who received a transplant, and she said something extremely poignant. “It’s the worst day of somebody’s life and the best day of yours. I cry every time I think about it.”

If we are not doing our work, bringing forward this issue to committee, having the discussions we need to have so that we can make the best decisions, bringing together the provinces and territories to see how we can do this more effectively, then we are not doing our jobs.

I ask, please, for people to take this into their hearts, to think as we are supposed to in the House of Commons, and to make a decision that looks after the people of Canada.

I thank the member for his hard work. I am thankful for the history that we have in this place of multiple members bringing forward private member's bills in this same theme of creating a united country, acknowledging that we have a universal health care system, and making a change that will save lives.

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have to admit that I was not anticipating getting to speak today, until a couple of minutes ago, but I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House on this private member's legislation. One thing I would like to do is explain to new members in the House why, even if they are not at this point convinced of the legislation, the bill needs to go to committee.

I heard the parliamentary secretary's arguments earlier today about jurisdictional issues, and the various problems that this bill may have, but I will remind hon. members, particularly government members, who, of course, will naturally have a certain degree of deference for the parliamentary secretary, which no one is disputing, that this is a bill that seeks to solve a real problem. It is helping to save people's lives. The principles underlying this I am sure every single member of the House agrees with. The parliamentary secretary and members of all parties have said that.

I ask hon. members on the other side to think about this and vote for the bill at least at second reading. Why? We are voting for the principle of the bill. The underlying principle is to save lives. This is what the hon. member was trying to point out with his very compelling personal story of his great courage with his son and so forth.

Yes, the details of every piece of legislation sometimes are not perfect and sometimes they need to be worked out. However, this is what we need to think about and why this legislation needs to go to committee, so that we can make a better and more perfect piece of legislation to advance this cause.

No one in the House disputes that more lives could be saved if more Canadians were interested in signing up and supporting organ donation to save lives. However, if we end this piece of legislation before it gets to committee, we won't have the ability to understand, argue in a positive sense, and figure out ways to improve the system that we have in Canada.

I have been in the House for a few years, on both sides of the aisle, previously in government and this is the second time in opposition. I realize governments tend to be a little hesitant in supporting private members' legislation that the government is not deeply invested in, but in the previous session, I was the second most likely Conservative member in the House to break party ranks, often because I believe things should be voted on and sent to committee to be discussed and thought about. I was sometimes the only Conservative to back NDP or Liberal legislation. When speaking with voters after having voted for legislation that was not perfect, I never found that people told me it was not a perfect bill and that I had made a mistake by voting for it. That is why I am making the case for what we are doing today.

I will admit that I do not completely understand the differences and the jurisdictional issues between the provincial system and the federal system. I do not totally understand what all may be involved, but I do understand this absolute one simple fact, that this is an attempt to make a system better, a system that is not world class, that is not first, that is not the best. On something this serious and substantive, human life, we should absolutely give our all.

That is why I am asking all members, even if they are unsure of the legislation, to give this piece of legislation a chance. Organ donation saves lives. It is one of the most noble causes we will ever be able to support around here, because there is nothing more precious than human life.

I encourage all hon. members to think about this. Even if they are not completely convinced of the merits of the legislation, they should remember to vote for it in principle at second reading so that we can make it better.

I am happy to have had the time to share my words with the House.

● (1425)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have another five minutes for debate, should he so choose, the next time the matter is before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 2:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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