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(HANSARD)

Friday, September 23, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 23, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

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

[*Translation*]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.) moved that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be concurred in at report stage.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to be here once again to speak to the House about this legislative package, which would help all Canadians, businesses, and workers. That is really the ultimate purpose of the bill, to reduce conflict and ensure that our economy will be working as harmoniously as possible so that we can create jobs and have a healthy, strong economy, which is what every single member of the House is working toward.

This is the final reading of Bill C-4.

Our relations with the labour movement are not based on conflict, and should not be. Rather, the solution and the best approach is collaboration. We believe in co-operation with the labour movement because it benefits all Canadians. This was a promise that our leader made last year during the election campaign and introduced through the legislation known as Bill C-4. We believe that our system of open negotiations serves the interests of both the employer and the employee, as was clearly evident in the recent negotiations between Canada Post and CUPW.

Not only is the bill a significant step forward, but it also has a strong symbolic value. It sends the message that a partnership, rather than adversity, is now the basis of our relationship. Our government takes an approach to labour relations that is based on collaboration, respect, and engagement, not the Conservative approach. We believe in fairness and justice for Canadians.

Truth be told, the labour movement has been an essential building block for a stable and strong economy, which we have now in our country, as well as a fair and inclusive society. The labour movement provides a collective voice for workers in their negotiations with employers. Unions have had a historical concern for the interests of the middle class, whether they are members or not, and strive for fair wages for all workers. They have been instrumental, in fact they have been central, in the movement to achieve fairness for women in the workplace, for indigenous workers, for workers with disabilities, and for all workers across this land.

This is in harmony with our values and our thinking as a government. This is also in harmony with our values and thinking as Canadians. This is why we believe our labour laws should be balanced and fair. Why have we put so much effort into this piece of legislation? Simply stated, we wanted to restore fairness and balance in labour relations because this has been missing for the previous 10 years.

The objective of Bill C-4 is to repeal the legislative changes brought in by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 and supported by the previous government and delivered via a backdoor, sneaky approach to governing. The situation is very straightforward. These two bills upset the balance that has been carefully maintained for years. They upset a balance that ensured fair treatment for employers and workers, and that served as a solid foundation for collective bargaining and for our economy.

I do not mind calling this what it is. Those bills were anti-union legislation, and we would now correct the state of affairs.

Government Orders

During the committee hearings, we heard from a number of key stakeholders who provided specifics about the serious flaws in Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. For example, let us consider the fact that Bill C-377 forces labour organizations and labour trusts to provide to the CRA very detailed financial information such as expenses, assets, debts, salaries of certain individuals, and other information. This private information would then be publicly available on that website.

• (1010)

They would also have to provide details on the time spent on political and lobbying activities, as well as any activities not directly related to labour relations. Thankfully, the Minister of National Revenue has already taken steps to suspend these obligations in 2016, while Parliament has been examining Bill C-4.

We must all understand that if this key financial information, including strike funds, were made public, these measures would put unions at a huge disadvantage, because employers are not required to publicly disclose similar financial information. It is totally unfair and unbalanced.

As well, Bill C-377 imposes a large financial and administrative burden on labour organizations and labour trusts, information that is not required from others. Why would unions be the only ones forced to comply with these requirements while other organizations, including professional organizations, would be exempt? Frankly, it is difficult to see how that legislation could actually benefit hard-working Canadians.

Some think that Bill C-377 was necessary to improve fiscal transparency. They say that it was necessary to guarantee public access to information. I fail to see the link between Bill C-377 and transparency. The rules contained in Bill C-377 are one-sided and discriminate against unions, and they upset the balance in labour relations. They add nothing to the current regime.

We already have legislation in place to ensure that unions are financially accountable to their members at both the federal and provincial levels. For example, section 110 of the Canada Labour Code requires unions and employer organizations to provide financial statements to their members upon request and free of charge. This is more than sufficient to ensure that both parties can negotiate in balanced conditions.

We knew from the onset that Bill C-377 was unnecessary and redundant. Not only does it disadvantage unions during collective bargaining, it is also an impediment to the bargaining process itself.

This brings me to Bill C-525. This bill has made changes to the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, and the Public Service Labour Relations Act, and affects how unions are certified and decertified. It replaces the previous card check system with a mandatory vote system, despite the fact that the traditional system worked well for decades and there was little pressure to change it. In fact, the Conservatives hide the evidence in a labour department report that showed the success of the card check approach. It is shameful.

Bill C-525 makes it harder for unions to be certified as collective bargaining agents and makes it easier for bargaining agents to be decertified. However, it is not just a problem for unions. Consider the implications to the Canada Industrial Relations Board and the

Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board. These boards are responsible for the full cost and logistic responsibilities involved in holding representation votes.

Under these changes, the Canada Industrial Relations Board is required to hold a vote to certify a union, not just in roughly 20% of the cases where less than a majority of workers have signed union cards but in all cases. That translates into roughly five times the board's current workload. Unions now have to obtain support from 40% of workers before a mandatory secret ballot vote can be held. That is a great way to ensure that the unionization process is as complicated as possible.

Perhaps more alarmingly, the changes would also mean that the process is more susceptible to employer interference. During our committee hearings, Dr. Sara Slinn, associate professor at York University's Osgoode Hall Law School, agreed.

• (1015)

She stated:

Employees require greater protection from employer interference under a vote system. These include access to expedited unfair labour practice procedures and more substantial interim remedies, but such necessary protections were not provided by Bill C-525.

It is evident that Bill C-525 does not represent a positive contribution to labour relations in Canada, not to mention that it is simply not necessary. The card check certification process that had been in place in the federal jurisdiction for decades worked well. We see no need to change that.

Bill C-4 represents the kind of positive contribution we want to see and that Canadians deserve. This action to repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 is part of a larger effort to repair damaged relationships with those who are producing prosperity and quality of life for Canadians.

Our premise is simple on this side: we know that working people are not the enemy. We also know that a backdrop of conflict and mistrust cannot be productive for either side when it comes to reaching agreements.

I am not implying that all is perfectly smooth and that there are not points of contention between us and the labour movement. The point is that discussions must take place on a level playing field and in a setting of respect and transparency.

Canada watched as recent negotiations stalled between Canada Post and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. We were asked if we would get involved and introduce back-to-work legislation. However, we did not go there. We respected the process, and alone, together, Canada Post and CUPW came to a tentative agreement.

We are also seeing this in provincial jurisdictions. Earlier this week, General Motors Canada and Unifor came to their own tentative agreement without any work stoppage.

Our conviction in the collective bargaining process is not misplaced. We are seeing real problems turn into real results through respect at all levels. When we give a little, we get a little.

Government Orders

We know that the labour movement deserves fairness from the federal government, and we have delivered in Bill C-4. This is only one of a number of initiatives we are undertaking to improve the workplace in this country, and we are just getting started.

Not only do we have a focus on fairness, but the fact is that in many respects, we have to get with the times. In this respect, we have pledged to amend the Canada Labour Code to allow workers the right to formally request flex work arrangements from their employers. This will help federally regulated workers balance their professional and personal responsibilities.

We are also working on reforms to facilitate flex parental leave, which will allow parents to create a plan that makes sense for their unique family and workplace circumstances as they expand their families. Both those initiatives are good for the middle class and good for our economy.

We are also putting forward many other measures that will benefit hard-working Canadians and their families. I hope that in both our actions and our words members can see that our government is committed to achieving real results for Canadians.

When it comes to dealings with the labour movement, I am the first to admit that we might not always agree on everything, but it is essential that our larger relationship be based on trust. Our rapport is built on the bedrock of common goals, goals like helping the middle class and those working hard to join it and creating good jobs for hard-working Canadians.

However, there is more to do on many other fronts, including ensuring fair and equitable conditions for workers and building a sustainable economy. Let me remind my hon. colleagues that we can only achieve these goals by having frank and honest discussions about the things that matter, by sticking to our values, and by never forgetting just who we are here to represent.

• (1020)

As I have said before, sound labour relations are essential for protecting the rights of Canadian workers and for helping the middle class grow and prosper.

I thank members for their time and attention and for the ability to put these comments on the record.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will have the opportunity to make my case shortly, but for now, I want to pick up on something the minister said.

[*English*]

All we know is that Bill C-4 was tabled to kill two former bills that were adopted by the previous legislature, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. The minister referred to those as “backdoor” bills. As far as I am concerned, every bill and every member is a front-door bill and a front-door member. There is no back door here.

I offer the hon. minister the opportunity to rise up and recognize that she has made a mistake. If she will not, would she rise up and recognize that the bill tabled a few weeks ago by the Hon. Mauril Bélanger concerning the national anthem was also a backdoor bill?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, the reference to a backdoor bill is of course with respect to the way the bill was introduced by the previous government, which was not by the government itself but by a private member and through special negotiations. When it comes to something as significant as a labour relations bill, it is important, for a government position, for the government to have brought forward the legislation. That is the point.

We are here to say that our Liberal government is supporting Bill C-4.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, having fought hard against the Conservative anti-union bills, we on this side of the House welcome the changes tabled by the government today.

I agree with the minister when she mentioned that the rights of working people have been under attack for too long, and the repeal of the Conservative bill is a good first step. Of course, I would remind the government that there is so much more to do. The minister mentioned the need for more reform and that it will be coming.

As the government plans to move forward with labour policy reform, I am wondering why we would review bad legislation that is contentious and unconstitutional. I would ask the minister to immediately repeal all the provisions of the previous government's bill and restore balance and fair collective bargaining for the public service.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the previous government had a political agenda to attack the labour movement, which I think was quite unwarranted. It took positions that went well beyond being fair and reasonable; they were ideological and based on political rhetoric rather than on the facts.

We have seen many organizations that have harmonious employer-employee relationships, which results in the company growing. There is no reason to fear the labour movement. In fact, a better way to achieve economic development is to work in partnership with workers, who often have very innovative entrepreneurial ideas that can benefit all companies, including their own.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the minister for her hard work and the committee's hard work on Bill C-4 to restore fairness and balance to the collective bargaining process.

I am wondering if the minister can offer some insight or analysis as to how important fairness and balance is, given the Canada Post negotiations over the last few months. I am wondering if the minister would offer some insight into how important fairness and balance is for labour relations in this country.

Government Orders

•(1025)

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, I think Canada Post negotiations are a good example of how collective bargaining can work. There was suspicion and resentment at the table, and in fact, for months there had not been any significant movement on finding a deal.

Both sides, I think, in fairness, thought that the government would rush in with back-to-work legislation, as happened under the Conservatives in the last round of negotiating. Once they realized that the government would not be heavy-handed, and indeed that they had to get down to the business of finding a solution, they were able, right to actually past the last minute, with an extension and help from a mediator we brought in, to find a deal.

Those deals are never easy. They are deals of compromise. They are deals where both sides have to give. It proves that collective bargaining works.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Employment and Unifor for her wonderful speech.

We have seen in the House this week the despicable, shameful actions of the Liberal Party paying off its political friends, Gerald Butts and Katie Telford, wasting millions of dollars of taxpayers' money.

When we look at Elections Canada, the top 10 third-party spenders were unions supporting this party. How does the minister sit there and not accept that this is just more political payback by Liberals to their friends for supporting them?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, a little bit of historic reflection might indicate that maybe unions are actually supporting the third party, called the New Democratic Party, much more in terms of their political donations. I am hoping to convince them to start investing in the progressive Liberal Party.

In effect, each and every Canadian can support the political party they choose. We, as our Prime Minister has indicated, want to establish a fair and balanced relationship with the labour movement. Hopefully, we will gain their confidence in the next election.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, certainly working people need access to collective bargaining in the workplace, but they also need access to employment insurance when they are laid off.

Yesterday, Statistics Canada reported EI figures for July, the first month in which extended benefits took effect. As one would expect, that led to an overall increase in the number of beneficiaries across Saskatchewan, except in Regina, which the government excluded from extended benefits, where the number of recipients went down as laid-off workers ran out of benefits.

I did an adjournment debate on this question on Monday. The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour and her parliamentary secretary did not show up, so instead I got a response from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, which really did not explain the decision to exclude Regina from extended EI benefits. I am

wondering if the minister could let us know why the government is continuing to keep Regina out of extended EI benefits.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, we were very proud to provide extra benefits to those communities and areas that were hit the hardest by the commodities downturn. Both hard rock and soft rock were hit in the last four years.

Regina is an outstanding example of a diversified economy that has resisted some of the most challenging economic situations. Because of its innovative and hard-working prairie spirit, it has done better than most cities. We are all very proud of Regina.

There will always be cases where there is a certain area that is next door to an area that is more impacted that does not get included. I understand that. However, we must celebrate the success Regina has had in terms of a very strong, robust economy.

•(1030)

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for her speech and for correcting the balance that is necessary in this country as it relates to the labour movement and the business community.

I want to remind my colleagues on the opposite side that there is a big discussion going on in different countries around the world, one being Brexit and the other the U.S., as it relates to the benefits of certain kinds of agreements vis-à-vis the working person in those countries. The whole objective, from a larger value issue, is the ability of the working man and woman to be able to get good benefits for their labour. Therefore, I commend the minister for doing that, and for the beginnings of a process of making sure that the labour movement plays its historical role here in Canada.

Now, with the structure changing, as the economy shifts and things change, the importance of changing the Canada Labour Code is extremely important. Could the minister maybe give us some insight as to what those changes can be to improve the abilities of working men and women to be in the labour force?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, we will be making changes to the Labour Code. We have been consulting on a tripartite basis with labour, employers, and with the people of Canada and this House to make those changes to the Labour Code.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak, but I would rather not have to do so on the subject of Bill C-4. Today is not a good day for Canadian democracy.

This is the final stage of debate on Bill C-4, a bill that takes aim at union democracy, the transparency that must be present in certain unions, and the accountability that is so vital not only within unions, but everywhere. People are becoming increasingly aware, particularly this week, that the government is in no position to lecture anyone on accountability.

Government Orders

Bill C-4 seeks to literally kill two bills that passed during the previous Parliament, two private bills that we, the Conservative Party, fully respected. We fully respect private bills, because we believe that all members of the House are equal, and all bills introduced here are equal. There is no such thing as front-door bills and backdoor bills. Every bill is voted on by members who all enter through the front door. Why? Because we are all accountable to our constituents. Regardless of whether a member is a government member, a cabinet minister, an opposition member, or an independent member, we are all members of the House of Commons. We all have the same authority to introduce bills. Shame on this government for referring to private bills as backdoor bills.

I want to repeat what I said earlier. I offered the minister the opportunity, the possibility, the chance, and the privilege to recognize that she has made a mistake. Everyone makes mistakes. Referring to the private bills we passed during the previous Parliament as backdoor bills is insulting to the House of Commons, and it is insulting to the 338 people duly elected by Canadians, our constituents.

I did not want to have to say this, but unfortunately I have to repeat that when a private member's bills is introduced, it is a front-door bill, not a backdoor bill. If we apply the Liberals' logic to the bill that was passed a few weeks ago, the one introduced by the Hon. Mauril Bélanger on the national anthem, are the Liberals prepared to say that that was a backdoor bill?

[*English*]

Are the Liberals ready to say that Mauril Bélanger's bill was a backdoor bill, yes or no? If they are ready to say that, they can rise up and say it.

It is impossible. We cannot say that a bill tabled by a minister or by an opposition member, or any member, is a two-tier bill. We are all members.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Bill C-4 seeks to kill Bill C-377 on accountability, and Bill C-525 on transparency. Let us look at them one at a time.

In our opinion, one of the fundamental principles in any organization is democracy. We want people who operate in a democracy to be accountable to their constituents, and also to earn that mandate. That is why when it comes to forming a union, we think all potential employees should have the opportunity to express themselves freely by secret ballot.

We were elected here, to the House of Commons, by secret ballot. Did we go to people's homes asking them to vote for us and sign a document? Of course not because we respect the voters' secret ballot.

However, this government prefers to uphold the old union ways, which require people to sign an application for union certification. We think that people would be more comfortable forming a union by secret ballot. For that matter, we think that would put the unions on a stronger footing.

A union formed by secret ballot proves that a majority of the workers really want it and that no one was subjected to undue

pressure, whether from people wanting to unionize or from the company's executives who do not want the union.

We often think that unions are the only ones putting pressure on the workers by telling them they have to sign a certification application, but the opposite is true as well.

A business owner could go see new employees and tell them that they just got hired and that it would not be a good idea to sign. That would make employees think twice about doing so. However, allowing employees to vote by secret ballot on forming a union would respect the fundamental principle of democracy. That is why Bill C-4 is no good. It seeks to do away with this notion of democracy.

Let us also remember that union democracy is based on Canada's fundamental principles, and the best way to establish that democracy is to ensure accountability. On that note, I would like to mention another bill that will be killed by Bill C-4, and that is Bill C-525.

Bill C-525 sought to increase transparency and accountability. We believe that, when a union receives nearly \$500 million in tax refunds, it needs to be accountable. That is not just peanuts. It is half a billion dollars. That is a lot of taxpayer money that is being given out in the form of tax refunds. That is why we believe that the salaries of executives, the way they manage their money, and the choices they make when it comes time to support political parties must be made public. However, Bill C-4 seeks to eliminate the transparency that we Conservatives think is critical.

My NDP colleague was saying that she organized and presided over a postal workers' union where all financial information was made available, but only to members. If that information is available to members, why not make it available to all Canadians, who contribute to unions through tax refunds? If that information is so public, why not make it really public? What do they have to hide? Making the information public would not bother anyone who did not have anything to hide. Why then are some members opposed to accountability and transparency?

That is why I am saying that Bill C-4 is a bad bill and that this is a bad day for democracy, because this legislation undermines the fundamental principles of democracy, accountability, and transparency.

When it comes to accountability, this government has a long way to go, and that is putting it mildly. Day after day, we discover situations that embarrass the government. It is not a good sign when the Minister of Health uses a limousine service and gives out contracts to a Liberal friend but only apologizes and promises to repay the bill after she is caught.

Government Orders

Over the past few days we have learned that the Prime Minister's advisors expensed \$200,000 in moving costs. At first, the Liberals said that this is no big deal. Then, they said these expenses would be repaid. That is definitely proof that the Liberals are not very proud of their record on accountability. However, accountability is vital.

MPs file a quarterly expense report, which includes travel expenses. It is very public. Woe to anyone with an ineligible expense, because they will be taken to task very quickly. Clearly, these are fundamental principles that we all support. However, when the time comes to make unions accountable, the Liberals, and I assume the NDP as well, do not want to have anything to do with it. That is unfortunate. Democracy, accountability, and transparency are fundamental principles in this place, and they must also apply to labour organizations.

The truth, as everyone knows, is that the Liberals wanted to thank the big union bosses who helped them out so handsomely during the election campaign. Let us not forget that PSAC was prepared to spend \$5 million in August alone to attack the former government before the writ was even dropped. The former prime minister had to call the election in August so that unions spending massive amounts of money to attack a political party—spending that was not approved by all union members—would not completely destabilize our democracy.

That is why we had the longest election campaign in history. Unions wanted to spend millions attacking one party without even getting their members' approval.

• (1040)

I know what I am talking about. In my Quebec City riding, which many federal and provincial employees call home, I met a woman who told me that she actively opposed her union's choice, that she strongly condemned it, and that she was not even given the right to vote on whether the union should spend the money. That is what has been happening. The unions spent millions helping the Liberal Party rise to power, so the party is thanking its union friends by introducing a bill that will destroy everything we did for democracy, accountability, and transparency.

Maybe the government could have paid more attention to what union members and even some union leaders are saying. Not everyone is comfortable with Bill C-4. In fact, some union leaders are very comfortable with the principles of transparency, democracy, and accountability. People have spoken out about this a number of times.

For example, PSAC's Robyn Benson said:

PSAC has no issue with voting by secret ballot. We do it regularly to elect our officers, ratify collective agreements, and vote for strike action, as examples.

That is not a Conservative or a right-wing group talking. That was Mr. Benson of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. I have other quotations, too.

[*English*]

Dick Heinen of the Christian Labour Association of Canada said:

We think that workers should have the right and be free to make their own choices when it comes to which union represents them or whether they want to be represented by a union at all.

Brendan Kooy, Christian Labour Association of Canada, said, "To be clear, CLAC would support a secret ballot vote where possible."

[*Translation*]

Here is another quotation, this one from John Farrell, executive director of the Federally Regulated Employers, Transportation and Communications:

[*English*]

Members prefer a secret ballot vote to a card check system for the purpose of determining if a union is to become a certified bargaining agent for employees. A secret ballot vote is the essence of a true democratic choice and is entirely consistent with Canadian democratic principles.

I agree with him.

Also, Paul Moist, national president, Canadian Union of Public Employees, said, "Asking Canadians a question about voting — most Canadians, me included, would say voting is good."

Chris Aylward, national executive vice-president and executive officer, Public Service Alliance of Canada, said that there was not issue with voting by secret ballot. He said:

But we're not sitting here saying that secret ballots are bad. As a matter of fact, in my submission I said that we have nothing against secret ballots. We use secret ballots at our own organization....So it's not that a secret ballot is now going to be imposed on employees and we're opposed to that. We're not.

It is hard to argue against a secret ballot vote as this is the basis of democracy.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

Those are the foundations of democracy. Secret ballot voting is one of the foundations of democracy. Accountability is one of the foundations of democracy. Transparency in how union leaders spend union dues is one of the foundations of democracy. That is what we established, and that is what Bill C-4 seeks to destroy, specifically the foundations of democracy in the labour movement. That is troubling.

This is being done elsewhere. We did not invent anything new when we introduced this bill two or three years ago. On the contrary, we were inspired by what we saw being done elsewhere. Secret ballot voting exists in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. Why can it be done at the provincial level, but not federally? Does that mean that the people of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia are against unions and against freedom of expression? Quite the contrary. If it can be done at the provincial level, why not at the federal level? So much for democracy.

Government Orders

The same goes when it comes to transparency and accountability. This exists in certain provinces, but also in certain countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, and even France. If there is a country that leans more to the left than Canada, it is France. If there is a country that has been led by the left for years, it is France. If there is a country where unions are fully free to be active and have a very powerful presence in the economy and society, it is France. France has provisions to ensure transparency. Who are they to say that France would not be open to the unions when we know how powerful and strong the unions are in France? It is absolutely false.

I invite the government to look at what is being done in Canada and in the provinces, as well as what is happening in countries that are more to the left than we are, where unions are more powerful than ours and have room for transparency, accountability, and democracy.

There have been court challenges, which is absolutely legitimate in our system. People brought challenges before the courts over certain legislation that was adopted by the provinces. Look at what was said in Saskatchewan by the court of appeal that ruled on whether changes like those the Conservatives made two or three years ago should or should not be made to the employment legislation of that province.

Let us look at the statement made by Justice Richards of the Court of Appeal of Saskatchewan, who says on page 38:

[*English*]

...a secret ballot regime does no more than ensure that employees are able to make the choices they see as being best for themselves.

He also says, "The secret ballot, after all, is a hallmark of modern democracy."

[*Translation*]

This is not coming from a Conservative, but from a judge of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. We know that Saskatchewan is not a right-wing province. Was it not in Saskatchewan that Canada's major social movements were born? Was it not in Saskatchewan that T. C. Douglas founded the party that would later become the NDP? Saskatchewan, which is not recognized as being the most right-wing province in Canada on the basis of its history, has acknowledged through an appeal court judge that the secret ballot is a good thing.

To summarize, Bill C-4 is not a good bill. It seeks to kill two bills that were duly debated and passed by the former Parliament, two private bills, which, for the Conservatives, are not backdoor bills, as touted by the minister and other Liberal members in such a mean, petty, aggressive, and haughty manner.

In our opinion, all bills are equal, starting with the bill introduced by the Hon. Mauril Bélanger on the national anthem. It is exactly the same thing. It is not a backdoor bill, but a bill that was duly introduced by a member, a bill that came in the front door, and not the back door.

Unfortunately, Bill C-4 will likely soon be passed, even though it undermines principles that are fundamental to Canada and so important to Canadians. It undermines the principles of democracy. People should be allowed to vote by secret ballot rather than be

asked to sign a sheet of paper. We want to protect the secret ballot. That is how everyone here was elected.

Bill C-4 seeks to attack a bill that would increase the transparency and accountability of unions. The government is sending the wrong signal to unions and all organizations because when it is time for accountability, they all need to do their part, to be accountable.

The bills that we passed under our government improved democracy, accountability, and transparency, while Bill C-4 undermines those principles. That is why today is a sad day for Canadian democracy.

• (1050)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my Quebec colleague for his speech.

He said that the government has a long way to go. I think that members on this side of the House would agree with me that the reason why there is a long way to go is that the previous government went to great lengths to undermine the labour movement, the environmental movement, and other movements in this country, for example by conducting audits of environmental groups in Canada. There is a long way to go because the previous government relentlessly attacked civil groups and longstanding principles, such as collective bargaining and the Rand formula. It also attacked our country's labour institutions. If the government has a long way to go, the fault lies with the members on the other side of the House.

Perhaps the member would like to reconsider the relentless attacks made by the Conservative Party and the previous government. Would he like to reconsider how that government relentlessly attacked our country's civil and democratic groups and institutions?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be a member of a political party that fought hard for the principles of democracy, transparency, and accountability when we were in government.

Why? Because we imposed those same principles on ourselves. As members will recall, when the Right Hon. Stephen Harper first became prime minister, transparency and accountability measures were introduced right away. Since the Right Hon. Stephen Harper came to power, members now have to make all their expenses public.

That was our signature achievement. That is what we did. Yes, I can say that I am very proud that our political party fought hard for democracy, accountability, and transparency.

This government's spending has been scandalous and appalling, day after day, and as soon as the Liberals are called out on it, they apologize and say they will pay back the money. The Liberals are the ones who have a lot to learn.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was here during the previous Parliament and I was very involved in the debates on Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. I have a great deal of respect for my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, but his speech was extremely simplistic. All throughout his speech, he talked about secret ballot voting, but the scope of Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 went much further. These bills were clearly an attack on unions in general.

Government Orders

My colleague failed to mention two specific points. The first has to do with the fact that unions had to disclose all expenditures over \$5,000. Never mind the red tape and possible delays in the labour process, this would have also created a clear imbalance. Of course, management would be aware of the amount of a union's strike funds, for instance. Even that was unfair to the unions.

The second, which is even more interesting, has to do with the vote my colleague was talking about when he said it was totally anti-democratic. Under the bill that was passed and that will be repealed, union certification or decertification required the consent of 50% of the members plus one, including abstentions, which is absolutely anti-democratic.

Can my colleague comment on the anti-democratic nature of these two points?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, that is the first time I have ever heard someone say that the 50% plus one rule is anti-democratic. Very few of the people here were elected by 50% of the voters plus one. I know I was not and that many other members were not either. Nevertheless, it is a bit of a stretch to say that the 50% plus one rule is anti-democratic.

I would point out that these measures apply to all workers, which is why the threshold has to be so high. I will not get into the Clarity Act, but it is clear that the 50% plus one rule is the gold standard for democracy. We must act accordingly.

As to whether asking unions to report expenses over \$5,000 constitutes a massive administrative burden, all of the union members told us they had access to that information. If they have access to the information, they should make it public.

We think making expenses public is totally legitimate. Yes, democracy and accountability come at a price, but that is the price of democracy.

• (1055)

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was happy to hear my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent debunk some of the gross mischaracterizations that had been made about the bills of the previous government, which this bill would replace. I thank him for doing so.

I am particularly struck by my hon. colleague's defence of the role of private members in the House. Could he comment on how the private members on the other side of the House must surely feel when told a private member's bill is a backdoor bill?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, the point is that in democracy, and especially in the House of Commons in the heart of our democracy, we are all equal. We have received the vote of our constituents. Even if we have been elected with only 28%, like some of my colleagues on the other side, or guys like us who have been elected with more than 50%, we are all equal here.

When I hear my hon. colleague from the government describing a private bill as a backdoor deal, it is a real shame. Again, can any government member stand and publicly say that the bill tabled by the Hon. Maurice Bélanger was a backdoor bill? Are the Liberals ready to say that? If not, members should stand and excuse themselves.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the interventions and speeches by my friend from Louis-Saint-Laurent, which are always done with a great deal of enthusiasm and passion, no matter how misguided his position might be. I always enjoy his position.

I know him to be a reasonable guy, a fair and reasonable member. With that sort of understanding, when Bill C-377 came through the House, the member would understand that in order to practise law in Ontario, lawyers have to be a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada. There is a mandatory fee and that fee is tax deductible. Likewise, in order to practise medicine in this country, doctors have to be a member of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. The fee is fair and it is all tax deductible. These are professional organizations that receive that tax benefit.

When the Liberals put forward an amendment to Bill C-377 that if the disclosure of the accounts of organized labour in this country were a good measure, being about openness and accountability, then it should apply to everybody.

What did the Conservative Party do at the time? It voted against that amendment. It voted against openness and transparency. Why would organized labour not then think this were a target placed on them?

Would the member not see it as reasonable and that if it is good for the goose, then it has to be good for the gander?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I can say that I deeply appreciate my hon. colleague for his passion, too, even if he is all wrong sometimes.

I would have preferred the member to rise and say that the Liberals are sorry and that there is no backdoor bill. I am sure he shares my principles.

The question that arises is quite interesting and quite important. We are talking about where people are working. We are talking about the way they have to deal with their bosses. They are talking about when they will work and the wages they will get. We are talking about unions. It is quite important.

It is so important, and that is why this country recognizes it. That is why this country spent \$500 million of taxpayers' money for unions. This is why we recognize that. Our bills were made not for the union bosses but the humble workers who work hard, pay taxes, and want to know exactly where their money is going.

That is why Bill C-4 is killing the transparency, democracy, and accountability bill we tabled two years ago.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

●(1100)

*[English]***MATTHEW HOUSE**

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past summer, I was invited to have dinner at Matthew House in my riding, a largely volunteer initiative that provides shelter to newly arrived refugees who have nowhere else to turn.

I had the privilege of spending several hours with the residents of Matthew House, discussing their hopes and their dreams. Though they had only just arrived, the refugees I spoke with were already eager to find jobs, to build lives, and to contribute to our community.

[Translation]

Matthew House does not feel like a shelter. It feels more like a home. I want to congratulate the staff and volunteers at Matthew House for their generosity, dedication, and their willingness to welcome people in need to their home. They are an example of what Canadians can accomplish when they excel.

* * *

*[English]***CONSTABLE CHELSEY ROBINSON PARK**

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back with my fellow colleagues from across Canada.

Tomorrow, September 24, Parkland County in my riding of Yellowhead will be holding a grand opening ceremony for its newest park. I was extremely moved to learn that local residents voted to name this park “Constable Chelsey Robinson Park”.

Constable Robinson, aged 25, has been a member of the RCMP for only seven months when she lost her life in the line of duty. For a member who paid the ultimate sacrifice, I am confident that the naming of this park will keep her memory close to the hearts of her family, friends, and community.

Although I am unable to attend in person, I look forward to visiting the park personally to pay my respects to the memory of Constable Robinson.

* * *

CANADA ARMY RUN

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to recognize veterans. Many veterans live in my riding of New Brunswick Southwest, and much of Base Gagetown's training grounds are there as well. I am a daughter and a sister of Canadian army veterans.

This past Sunday, my daughter, my legislative assistant, and I participated in the Canada Army Run here in Ottawa. This is no ordinary race. In the true spirit of strength and country, several of Canada's ill and injured soldiers led over 25,000 participants through the streets of Ottawa. Canadians overwhelmingly and enthusiastically showed their support for our military and veterans all along the route.

This event allows everyday Canadians to join in solidarity with our Canadian army, air force, and navy to walk or run beside the people who protect our families and our homes. Proceeds and fundraising efforts are directed to Soldier On and the Military Families Fund.

This is a remarkable event and I encourage my colleagues to join me next year.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Regina is one of the only Canadian cities to have elected MPs from all three major parties. When the House asked all MPs to host town halls on electoral reform, I invited my Liberal and Conservative colleagues to co-host a city-wide event. Unfortunately, they declined to host town halls. Fortunately, the people of Regina have been more engaged. Over 200 came to the town hall I held on September 7, and many also attended the Minister of Democratic Institutions' consultation on September 11.

As the only local MP to have attended these public meetings, I can report that most people at both events expressed a preference for mixed member proportional representation. When the electoral reform committee kicked off its cross-country tour in Regina on September 19, they heard the same message.

The people of Regina are engaged on electoral reform and they want a proportional system to make every vote count equally.

* * *

2016 OLYMPIANS AND PARALYMPIANS

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Canadians, the Government of Canada would like to extend its congratulations to all members of Team Canada who represented us at the recent Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

●(1105)

[Translation]

From coast to coast to coast, Canadians want to thank all the athletes, the trainers, who in fact are celebrating national trainers week, the medical and support staff, and all the families and friends for their passion and determination in pursuing the highest level in their sport.

All of us, especially our young people, were inspired to become more involved in sports and some were even inspired to pursue their own dream to reach the podium.

[English]

The Government of Canada, as the largest single source of support to the Canadian sports system, is proud to support our high performance athletes.

*Statements by Members***ST. THOMAS FUNDRAISER**

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 16-year-old Haley Angus from St. Thomas has been diagnosed with ITP, a rare blood disorder that destroys her blood platelets, which should clot her blood. A normal count reads between 150 and 400. Haley's platelet count is under 10.

Treatments are very costly and are currently not covered. Haley's soccer team from St. Thomas, the St. Thomas Scorpions, had the idea of hosting a small fundraiser that became much more than they ever expected. This group of awesome 16-year-old girls created "Dream It, Believe It, Achieve It", and they did just that for their friend.

The event called "6K for Number 6" started as a small Facebook invitation but turned into a huge event. More than 400 people packed a small community park to run the 6K for Haley. They raised over \$22,000 that day, which is enough to cover five months of treatment for her. More than that, they raised needed awareness of ITP.

Haley's friends and community are right behind her. Congratulations to the St. Thomas Scorpions for being such amazing friends.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the 25th anniversary of Ukraine's independence. On August 24, Ukraine celebrated this important milestone, and thousands of my constituents in Parkdale—High Park celebrated with it.

Throughout its history, Ukraine has struggled against external threats. In 1991 it was the Soviet Union. Today it is Putin's Russia. I am proud as an MP and the vice-chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group to stand resolutely in support of Ukraine, its territorial integrity, and its sovereignty. I am also proud to stand against the illegal occupation of Crimea and the illegal invasion of the Donbass.

In Canada, we do not just defend Ukraine, we celebrate it. We celebrate the food, the music, and the culture at events like the Bloor West village Ukrainian festival in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. We also celebrate the tremendous contributions of Ukrainian-Canadians to Canada, a history that dates back 125 years to 1891.

For these contributions, I say *Duže diakuju*, and to Ukrainians everywhere I say *Slava Ukraini*.

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AGRIFOOD

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am dedicating my first speech of this sitting to two agrifood companies that are among the most successful in the riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle.

[*Translation*]

First there is Ceresco, which specializes in soybean production and has been based in Saint-Urbain-Premier for the past 30 years. It founded a research centre in Saint-Isidore in order to develop new

varieties and increase its productivity. It exports to Europe and Asia and has a liaison office in Japan and another in China.

Then we have Groupe Vegco, which specializes in root vegetables and is located in Sherrington. The company has invested in efforts to increase storage capacity and to modernize its packaging technology, which will help it maintain its place among the largest distributors in Quebec.

Our region is the largest in Quebec when it comes to horticulture.

[*English*]

Now these two major players have placed the bar even higher.

* * *

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year since I was first elected I have held a summer listening tour. Over the years I have heard important ideas, such as reducing interprovincial trade barriers to help small family wineries, or creating a better gas tax agreement to help municipalities like Kelowna and West Kelowna with infrastructure.

This year, I met with many credit unions and heard a growing concern about the introduction of new common reporting standards. These standards are designed to monitor bank accounts for international tax evasion, but not all financial institutions pose the same risk. If the government continues with the adoption of these new reporting standards next July, all credit unions will be required to implement a time-consuming compliance regime. Alternatively, the government could utilize the 98% test that is currently used with American FACTA standards, which exempts credit unions that have 2% or less of their assets held by non-residents. It is an approach that is already set up and works.

Focusing on the economy is job number one for any government of any stripe. Adding more red tape and costs to small and medium-sized credit unions is not helpful and will not grow the economy. I hope that the Minister of Finance reviews the current approach.

* * *

●(1110)

SCIENCE LITERACY WEEK

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, science is at the heart of innovation and touches every aspect of our lives. In Kitchener Centre, the School of Pharmacy, Communitech, Google, and many other organizations and individuals in the broader community, like the Perimeter Institute and the Quantum-Nano Centre, are working to advance science.

This strong spirit of collaboration in our community is the secret to our many successes. Researchers engage with each other and the public through events, such as Doors Open Waterloo Region held this past weekend, free public lectures, science camps, and school tours that fascinate and inspire.

Statements by Members

It is Science Literacy Week, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank educators and scientists across Canada who are working to light the spark in the next generation of scientific thinkers.

* * *

THE GLOBAL FUND

Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2003, 400,000 people had access to antiretroviral treatment to fight HIV/AIDS. Today, there are 17 million people who have access to this treatment.

This huge increase is thanks to the efforts of The Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB, and malaria.

[*Translation*]

I am incredibly proud that our government is contributing to this effort to the tune of \$804 million and was able to raise nearly \$13 billion, which will help save eight million lives.

[*English*]

Young people, like Ahmed Habré, Loyce Maturu and Ashley Murphy, who are strong activists because they have access to treatment, made it clear that our legacy to future generations has to be the eradication of these diseases by 2030.

HIV and TB disproportionately affect the world's most poor and most vulnerable. As Mark Dybul of The Global Fund said, we can beat these epidemics, we just need to be “better humans”.

[*Translation*]

It was for the sake of the millions of people in the world suffering from HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria that people gathered in Montreal last weekend with the goal of putting an end to these epidemics for good.

* * *

[*English*]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nearly 75% of the world's population is affected by religious persecution. It is the defining issue of our time and deserves a coordinated international response.

Recently, I had the honour of attending the second international conference of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, or IPPFoRB, which is an information network of members of Parliament advancing freedom of religion or belief.

Last week, we hosted nearly 100 parliamentarians from 60 countries. We met in Berlin to address specific countries of concern to foster regional connections, and to resource and equip ourselves to pursue long-term solutions and be effective in our home countries.

Despite having the world's worst acronym, IPPFoRB continues to work to protect and promote the embattled right to believe. As a founding member of IPPFoRB, I invite all members of the House to join this important network.

The right to believe is what shapes our common humanity. If we are not vigilant, we risk losing it.

* * *

EARTHQUAKE IN ITALY

Mr. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on August 24, an earthquake registering 6.2 on the Richter scale hit the central Italian provinces of The Marches, Lazio, and Abruzzo. My family's origins are in The Marches, and my family and friends were all lucky, but others were not. At last count, 297 people had perished, and many more had been injured or had lost their homes.

Italian Canadians across the country have come together with a variety of initiatives, all through S.O.S. Italia and the Canadian Red Cross.

I invite all members to join the Italian Canadian community in my riding and across greater Montreal for lunch to be held Sunday at Cégep André-Laurendeau.

[*Translation*]

The tickets cost \$30 and all proceeds will go to S.O.S. Italia.

Join us for a plate of the famous *pasta all'amatriciana* and support our families and friends in Italy.

[*Member spoke in Italian as follows:*]

Siete tutti benvenuti e grazie per il vostro sostegno.

* * *

[*English*]

POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we mark Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day this Sunday, let us remember today in this chamber. Let us honour the bravery, dedication, and selflessness of all officers across Canada, including those who have suffered injury and those who have paid the ultimate price while protecting us.

It is well known that the concern and welfare of others exemplifies the law enforcement community. This extraordinary commitment is displayed in the very poignant demonstrations of solidarity when large numbers of officers from across the country come together to honour the passing of one of their own.

We have observed this profound gesture far too many times. Four officers have died in the line of duty in Canada this past year.

Let us then acknowledge the crucial role that police officers play in safeguarding our rights and freedoms. Let us pay tribute to the lost lives of officers in this country and beyond and thank their families for their incredible sacrifices on behalf of our safety and welfare.

Oral Questions

•(1115)

SHAMATTAWA FIRST NATION

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was a horrific fire in the Shamattawa First Nation. This is a remote fly-in community in northern Manitoba of over 1,000 people. This devastating fire destroyed the town's only grocery store, the band office, Internet service, the 911 call centre, and the radio station. Thankfully, there has been no report of loss of life or injury.

The chief has declared a state of emergency, and today he and his officials are going door to door to explain how the situation will be handled. I would like to thank the chief for his leadership. Our thoughts are with the community during this difficult time.

We call upon the government to ensure that all required support, including the immediate need for water, baby formula, and general supplies, is met immediately.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September 25 is Franco-Ontarian Day. I would like to acknowledge the francophone community groups in Orléans and its francophone population of nearly 40,000 residents.

I would also like to recognize the vital work being done by the Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans, the Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans, the Rendez-vous des aînés des francophones d'Ottawa, the Arts Council, the Shenkman Arts Centre, the Montfort Hospital, the Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario, the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, and the many groups that work to keep Orléans' Franco-Ontarian heritage alive.

I would also like to invite all of you to visit the Parliament Buildings this Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Thanks to the initiative of my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Parliament will be illuminated in green and white in honour of Franco-Ontarian Day and to commemorate Mauril Bélanger's contributions to the Franco-Ontarian community.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after days of the Prime Minister defending inappropriate expenses, the Liberals have finally admitted that they have been using the taxpayer as their personal ATM. The Prime Minister's friends admitted that they claimed tens of thousands of dollars of inappropriate expenses, which the Prime Minister signed off on. This clearly shows a lack of judgment on behalf of the Prime Minister.

What other expenses is the Prime Minister hiding and defending?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated before, it has been the Government of Canada's policy since the 1970s to reimburse relocation costs of senior officials and their families. This policy was last updated by the previous Conservative government and applied to every Prime Minister's Office since. In fact, the previous Prime Minister's Office approved over \$300,000 in relocation expenses, including one relocation at a cost of \$93,131.

We know that these policies need to be updated. That is why our Prime Minister is taking action and has asked Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it only took the Liberals nine weeks to rack up over \$1 million in moving expenses for their own staffers.

Liberals themselves have admitted that the expenses were inappropriate. They were reimbursed for hotels, meals, and actual moving expenses, but then there was something called "personalized cash payments" that these staffers received.

What is a personalized cash payment? What other Liberal staffers received personalized cash payments? Does the Prime Minister commit to telling us and telling Canadians who received these ambiguous cash payments, and will they be paid back to the taxpayer?

•(1120)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I will reiterate that the policies that are in place for relocation expenses have been in place since the 1970s and were most recently updated by the previous Conservative government.

The difference between the previous government and our government is that our Prime Minister recognizes the need that more can be done and has instructed Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister had a choice, and the very first choice he made was to help himself and his friends at the expense of the Canadian taxpayer.

We know that the Prime Minister signed off on these expenses. Which other ministers, including the House leader, did the House leader sign off on personalized cash payments? What are they, and how many ministers signed off on Liberal insiders getting these ambiguous cash payments?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about this issue this entire week.

We recognize that more needs to be done. Our Prime Minister has instructed Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses. That is the leadership of this Prime Minister. That is the direction of this government.

Oral Questions

We will continue to work hard for Canadians and to answer their questions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we saw yesterday has nothing to do with transparency. This is just another example of the Liberals getting caught with their hands in the cookie jar. Since this government took office, it has been helping itself to taxpayers' money to pay for limousines, vacations with the in-laws, office renovations, a personal photographer, and now the relocation expenses of friends of the Prime Minister.

Will Canadians ever be able to trust the judgment of the Prime Minister, who does not know the value of their money?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that the rules that are currently in place were written by the Conservative government in 2008 and revisited in 2011. In fact, the former prime minister's office approved over \$300,000 in relocation expenses, including \$93,000 given someone for one single move.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only did they help themselves to taxpayers' money, but all week the Prime Minister defended the indefensible in an attempt to downplay the matter. This is a glaring lack of judgment on the part of the Prime Minister, but it is not surprising because we are finding more and more examples of public funds that have been squandered. The party has lasted long enough.

Could they finally stop handing over Canadians' money to the Prime Minister's friends? Where is this Prime Minister's judgment?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to point out that the Government of Canada has had a policy on reimbursing moving expenses for senior public servants and their families since the 1970s. The Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board secretary to draft a new policy for moving expenses. We know that we can do more, and we will do more.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to Amnesty International, China executed the most prisoners in 2015. According to the United Nations, this country resorts to torture routinely. Despite that, the government intends to negotiate an extradition treaty with the Chinese government.

How will the government protect human rights when it is negotiating a treaty with China, a country that violates human rights?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the reality as opposed to conjecture. We have announced a high-level national security and rule of law dialogue as part of comprehensive discussions on expanding our relationship with China. The U.S. and the U.K. are conducting the exact same kind of dialogue.

Canadians officials have met with their Chinese counterparts and this allows us to discuss counterterrorism, law enforcement co-operation, consular matters of huge importance to Canadians, and rule of law. Within the rule of law, discussions, conversations on the issue of extradition have begun.

It is stressed that Canada has very high standards. Of course the promotion and protection of human rights—

• (1125)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sadly, here is the reality and here are the facts. Yesterday, the Chinese premier unequivocally defended his country's use of the death penalty. He said he could not guaranteed the police would not mistreat suspects, and he said anyone questioning the merits of an extradition treaty is disparaging China. He did all this while standing beside a silent Prime Minister of Canada.

How can the government claim to be advancing human rights internationally when it is seriously considering a treaty that would go against human rights?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the importance of Canada's engagement with the world. It was a mistake of the former Conservative government to withdraw from countries, to isolate Canada, just because it disliked the regime.

Under the leadership of our Prime Minister and our government, we are present. We are supporting the United Nations in climate change, Syrian refugees, supporting peace operations, and significantly funding humanitarian initiatives. By being present, we are making progress on our interests and the universal values in which we believe, like human rights.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Isle of Man, Panama, and now the Bahamas are all tax havens that are protecting bank secrecy and where creating a company is really a farce that facilitates tax evasion.

Senator Eaton learned this the hard way. She was a director on the board of a company in the Bahamas for 12 years without even knowing it. Canada is complicit in this situation because it has signed pseudo-treaties that legitimize tax havens.

When will the government finally start taking tax havens seriously?

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Middle-class Canadians are paying their fair share, but a few taxpayers are finding ways to avoid paying what they owe, and that is unacceptable. That is why our government invested \$444 million to give the CRA the best tools to combat tax evasion.

That is what we promised and that is what we will do.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the minister is planning to do about tax havens. She has not yet answered that question.

Switching gears, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, access to our national parks will be free. However, if Canadians think they can make the most of that opportunity in both official languages, they are in for a rude awakening according to the Commissioner of Official Languages. His last audit was four years ago, but only two of the nine recommendations have been implemented. In many cases, activities and programs are available only in English.

What will the Liberal government do to ensure that all Canadians can enjoy our national parks in both French and English for the 150th anniversary of Confederation?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his question.

We welcome the official languages commissioner's report. Our government is committed to ensuring that all federal services are provided in accordance with the Official Languages Act. As the minister responsible for parks, I am working to make that happen.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are asking why the Prime Minister's friends received over \$200,000 in payouts for so-called moving expenses. The reason is the Prime Minister approved it. He could have limited their taxpayer abuse if he wanted to, but he chose not to. When will this Prime Minister stop giving taxpayer money to his Liberal friends?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again these policies have been in place since the 1970s. There were costs that Mr. Butts and Ms. Telford did not feel comfortable with and they will reimburse those amounts.

What is good to know is that our Prime Minister knows more needs to be done, and has asked the secretary of the Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses. It is important to know that the former prime minister Stephen Harper's office

approved over \$300,000 in relocation expenses, including one relocation expense at a cost of \$93,131.

• (1130)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the bottom line. The Prime Minister signed off on these expenses and wrote his best friends six-figure cheques. Yesterday, Gerry and Katie were willing to take the fall for their best friend, the Prime Minister. How can Canadians trust this Prime Minister's judgment when their hard-earned money always seems to end up in personalized cash payouts?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes that more needs to be done, and this government is committed to doing more for Canadians. We can once again remind Canadians that in the spirit of openness and transparency they have both disclosed all costs associated with their moves.

The current rules have been in place since 2008, and were revisited in 2011. Every minister's office has followed those rules since. Let me remind the House that the previous prime minister Stephen Harper's office approved over \$300,000 in relocation expenses, including one relocation expense of \$93,100—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we should not be blinded by the false transparency we witnessed yesterday. If the Prime Minister's friends were not caught red-handed, they would never have repaid the expenses. Now that it is clear that they should never have made these claims, what will happen to the other questionable moving expenses?

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs prove that he has better judgment than the Prime Minister, or will he hide his head in the sand and claim that it is acceptable to spend \$119,000 for a move to Ottawa?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister asked the Treasury Board Secretariat to draft a new policy for moving expenses. It is also very important to mention that our government is restoring Canada's constructive leadership in the world and is advancing our interests internationally.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is some leadership.

This government has not been in office even one year and cabinet has shown a blatant lack of judgment. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, at his own discretion, approved a payment of \$119,000 for a single move. Canadian taxpayers' money is not sent to Ottawa to be abused by its ministers.

Now that we know that the Prime Minister made a mistake when he authorized his friends' expenses, can the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirm that he also showed bad judgment?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the office of the previous prime minister, Stephen Harper, approved more than \$300,000 in moving expenses, including \$93,000 for one person—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There is too much noise in the House.

[*English*]

I know that the hon. members would like to hear the government House leader's response. I cannot even hear what she is saying. I am sure other hon. members may be missing the same response.

The hon. government House leader.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, we know that this policy needs to be reviewed. That is why our Prime Minister has instructed the Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are so out of touch with Canadians. While thousands in Lakeland and across Alberta are losing their jobs, businesses, and homes, Liberal ministers are approving hundreds of thousands of dollars in staff moving expenses. For example, the Minister of Innovation approved \$113,000 for one staffer to move to Ottawa.

We know the Liberals always put themselves before Canadians, but how can the minister's judgment really be this flawed?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we recognize that the relocation policies the opposition is referring to have been in place since the 1970s.

It is important to note that the previous government had an opportunity to revisit and make these policies better. The difference between the previous government and our government is that our Prime Minister has shown leadership, and that is why our Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses.

In reference to innovation, science, and economic development, let us talk about the good work these Canadians are doing. They are helping to create an inclusive innovation agenda that will make Canada a global centre for innovation.

• (1135)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the bad Liberal pattern of entitlement and frivolous spending. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians are out of work and struggling to make ends meet while Liberals are lining their pockets with \$1.1 million in personalized cash payouts and incidentals.

The Minister of Innovation signed off on \$113,000 for one staffer to move to Ottawa. How much of that was a personalized cash payout? Was it delivered in a brown envelope?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been the Government of Canada's policy to reimburse relocation costs of senior officials and their families since the 1970s.

This policy was last updated by the previous government in 2008 and has not been renewed since 2011. That is why our Prime Minister has asked the Treasury Board to create a new policy to govern relocation expenses.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Phoenix pay system was supposed to modernize the federal payrolls. Instead, it has caused far more problems than it has fixed, and it has wasted far more money than it was supposed to save. I am sure Liberal insiders are glad Phoenix was not in place last year, or they might still be waiting for their moving expenses.

I have a simple question. Why did the minister not keep the old payroll system as a backup to make sure everyone could get paid?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problems currently affecting the public service pay system are totally unacceptable. Our priority is to ensure that the employees are paid for the work that they do. During the summer, we set up four temporary pay offices, increased the capacity of our call centre, and provided emergency pay advances to resolve the problems related to the Phoenix pay system.

Our team is working non-stop to help all the employees who are having problems with their pay.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the implementation of the Phoenix pay system was a real failure.

Five months after its launch, tens of thousands of federal employees have still not been paid what they are owed. The government has no problem paying its political staff's relocation expenses. Why can it not pay its public servants?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our priority is to ensure that employees are paid for the work that they do.

Our minister said in committee that we cannot run a parallel system beyond the transition period because the previous government cut 700 jobs. The minister assured the committee that she had all the information she needed to make an informed decision. Now, our team is working tirelessly to make sure that everyone gets paid.

Oral Questions

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister and the Prime Minister have been announcing and reannouncing infrastructure projects across Canada for almost the past year now.

There are thousands of Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure it is not the intent to take away from the hon. member's time.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, let me get to the end before members start clapping.

The minister and the Prime Minister have been announcing and reannouncing infrastructure projects across Canada for the past year. There are thousands of Canadians who want and need jobs.

Will the minister please tell Canadians exactly how many Liberal infrastructure projects have actual shovels in the ground and are under construction?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are delivering on our commitments. Since taking office, we have approved over 900 projects, including more than 700 projects for budget 2016 funding for infrastructure. More than 60% of those projects are currently under way, improving transit systems, ensuring Canadians have safe and clean water to drink.

We will continue to work with our municipal, provincial, and territorial partners to deliver on the commitments we made to Canadians.

• (1140)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the minister can talk about all of the planned projects, but what Canadians really care about is how many jobs have been created in their communities.

On the government's website, Canadians can clearly see that only six projects began construction this summer, six. These six projects are only worth \$8.5 million. Does the minister really think this is good enough when thousands of Canadians are out of work?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to say that even in the hon. member's municipality we are investing money into the design and planning work that is currently under way, along with many other municipalities, to advance public transit, to do the work on waste water, as well as many other projects. Some 60% of the projects that we have approved under our new plan are currently under way.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta is facing record high unemployment rates and families are struggling to get by. Yesterday, Statistics Canada released new EI

numbers, and Alberta saw an astonishing increase in EI claims of 87% since July last year.

I know the Liberals profess to make decisions based on facts, so I ask this. How much more proof do they need before they admit their disastrous policies are failing Albertans?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that is both sensitive and sensible. We are sensitive to the economic situation across Canada, in particular where a number of Canadians are feeling left out of the labour market. We are sensible because we are investing very strongly in our economy to build now and for the future of our nation.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if he listened to my question because that obviously was not an answer.

Families are losing their homes, companies are taking their businesses elsewhere, and skilled workers are being forced to line up at the EI counter. Rehearsed talking points are not the answer. The situation in Alberta is unique and we do not need more job-killing Liberal policies.

When are the Liberals going to stop destroying the Alberta economy and allow Albertans to get back to work?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to be part of a government that is investing both in the quality and the quantity of services delivered to unemployed Canadians across Canada. We have done that very significantly in the budget last year. We are very pleased that we are offering better services and better benefits targeted to both in terms of responding to the needs and to the expectations of Canadians, and with rebuilding our economy based on strong fiscal policy and very good infrastructure programs.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in just 19 days, the extension of the softwood lumber agreement will expire. With no deal, forestry companies on Vancouver Island and across British Columbia will be hit hard by hefty American tariffs. Many of my constituents could lose their jobs. These are our neighbours, our friends, our relatives.

Why is the government being so quiet with the deadline looming so soon? What is the government doing to protect forestry jobs in British Columbia?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government shares the concern that people across Canada have with respect to the lumber industry, in particular the softwood lumber question.

Oral Questions

We are working hard at negotiating. We have worked hard at understanding the differences across the country and the various nuances in the industry, including British Columbia. We are doing our best, yes, quietly in negotiations, but we are working hard at negotiations. The minister has met with her counterpart a number of times. We continue to press. We continue to try to reach an agreement before the end of the period.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised a commitment to first nations to make badly-needed investments both into infrastructure and social services. However, as of today, only 1% of the funding has arrived in first nations communities.

While Liberal insiders seem to have no problem getting funds they do not need, first nation communities are left waiting for the funds they so badly need. Why are almost all of the critical investments for first nations being held back? What is the government waiting for?

• (1145)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the 1% number has already been corrected in the media. We are delivering faster than under the previous government, with nearly half of this year's portion of budget 2016 already allocated.

The new funding supports construction, service or renovation of 2,700 housing units, as well as 195 water projects that include 26 to address the long-term drinking water advisories, 118 schools, and 126 other new infrastructure programs.

Our government is committed to renewing the relationship with indigenous communities, and we are delivering on that commitment.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I spent time in the communities of the beautiful riding of Fundy Royal this summer, I often heard of hardships with respect to finding enough employees in the tourism, transportation and manufacturing industries. Community leaders also expressed concerns about the shrinking numbers in schools and the difficulties supporting local businesses. These are all issues that relate back to Atlantic Canada's shrinking and aging population.

Could the minister update the House on the Atlantic growth strategy and, in particular, any initiatives to increase immigration to Atlantic Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her good question and congratulate her on her motion regarding a study on immigration that is now before the House.

Over the summer, I found that the Atlantic provinces were particularly enthusiastic about increased immigration for demographic reasons and because they know that immigration helps to

create jobs. That is why we created a pilot project to welcome more immigrants to the Atlantic region and to encourage them to stay.

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*[English]***AIR TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in February 2016, the Canada Transportation Act review report was tabled in the House. It recommended that Canada's foreign ownership limit be increased to 49% to allow other carriers to provide improved air transportation for Canadians.

In spite of a strong business case, strong market demand, and the overwhelming support of airports and municipalities, including the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, the minister has chosen not to take action. Why is the minister standing in the way of job growth?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working collaboratively to address the recommendations of the Canada Transportation Act review and develop Canada's future transportation system. We are carefully considering the applications by JetLines and Enerjet in the context of developing a long-term framework for all Canadian air travellers. Any decision will be made in the interests of middle-class Canadian travellers and those working hard to join it.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim to stand up for the middle class, but the recent non-action by the Minister of Transport on foreign ownership rules for air carriers means that middle-class Canadians will continue to have poor airport service and pay higher fees.

The clear recommendation of the Canadian Transport Act review would reduce costs and give better service for middle-class Canadians who use the Waterloo regional airport in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga. Why is the minister ignoring them?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am certain Canadians appreciate that our government is taking an inclusive and evidence-based approach to determining the future of Canada's transportation network. Any travel decisions made will be in the best interests of middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it. We are analyzing the application by JetLines and Enerjet for an exemption to foreign ownership limits in that context.

In the coming months, the Minister of Transport will continue to present initiatives for a safer, cleaner, more secure and more efficient transportation sector in Canada.

*Oral Questions***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals need to ask for a refund from their deliverology expert because they sure cannot get things done. They have also left indigenous Canadians and job-creating industries in the dark about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In May, the justice minister said that they would adopt UNDRIP “without qualification”. Now she has said that it is simplistic, unworkable and cannot be done word for word. Why is the justice minister misleading indigenous Canadians?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which we have endorsed without qualification. We are committed to moving forward to operationalize the United Nations declaration within a section 35 context, our unique constitutional context, and we are committed to doing that with indigenous peoples.

As the declaration states, it will be done by way of legislation, policies, and other constructive arrangements, but it will be done jointly.

• (1150)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *The Globe and Mail* recently published an editorial and called UNDRIP “drip, drip of Liberal native rights policy”. The Minister of Justice has gone from promoting the declaration on the world stage at the UN to saying at home that it is simplistic and unworkable. She is saying one thing on the world stage and saying another thing back in Canada.

Is the confusion being created by the minister deliberate, or does she not know what she is doing?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, our government has committed and endorsed, without qualification, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are committed to moving forward with a nation-to-nation relationship that is based on recognition and how to operationalize the declaration in Canada. It will be done jointly with indigenous peoples as we develop solutions. We will operationalize the United Nations declaration and its articles, its minimum standards here within our section 35 constitutional framework, which is extremely vast. We will ensure that the full box of rights are recognized.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has a crucial role to oversee the safety and security of nuclear facilities, but this summer whistleblowers warned that CNSC staff failed to give critical safety information to commissioners. In spite of the seriousness of the allegation, the minister shrugged his shoulders and the CNSC president laughed it off, but Canadians deserve better.

With new appointments to the nuclear watchdog expected soon, what is the minister's plan to improve oversight of nuclear safety?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government places the highest priority on health and safety related to nuclear activities in Canada. I expect the culture at the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to be safety focused and open to employees by fostering a respectful workplace that encourages people's views on opportunities for improvement.

The CNSC has reviewed the issues raised in the anonymous letter, and commission members discussed this topic at a recent meeting. The independent commission members will advise CNSC staff on actions to be taken.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, new reports about the RCMP and CSIS involvement in torture abroad are horrifying. Not only did Canadian security officials know torture was occurring, but in some cases they even provided the torturers with the specific questions.

Canadians do not accept this human rights abuse under any circumstances. Therefore, why do the Liberals still sanction the use of information obtained through torture?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ministerial directives exist to protect Canadians' rights and freedoms. Our government is doing important work to implement more mechanisms to ensure that our national security organizations are complying with the law. We introduced the parliamentary oversight committee bill precisely to strengthen our oversight of such practices.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians have their mobility rights and livelihoods threatened because of the potential ban from entering the U.S. if they admit to ever having used marijuana, a drug the Liberals are now making legal.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness totally missed the mark. He just concluded a customs pre-clearance agreement with the United States that failed to address this issue. That is a huge mistake.

Will the minister withdraw Bill C-23 and renegotiate an agreement with the U.S. on pre-clearance that actually protects Canadians?

*Oral Questions***TRANSPORT***[Translation]*

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is engaged in productive talks with our partners to the south to make it easier for both Americans and Canadians to cross the border. We have discussed specific issues, such as marijuana, and those issues will be the focus of future talks to improve the situation.

* * *

● (1155)

*[English]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, after much effort to be heard, veteran Claude Lalancette finally resorted to a hunger strike on Parliament Hill to protest the military's use of mefloquine and its effects on our soldiers and sailors.

Instead of giving him a concrete promise to address his concerns, the Liberals instead said they would set up yet another consultative process to study the issue. Why is the minister's reaction yet again a consultation delay tactic instead of action?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member cares a great deal about veterans and only wants the best for them.

The issue around mefloquine has been discussed over the years. We know inside Veterans Affairs, National Defence, and Health Canada that we need to work together to address the issue.

We cannot comment on specific cases, but we now have a working group established that will work together on this issue and make sure that it is properly addressed.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals have no shortage of money when it comes to their friends. Unfortunately, some thalidomide victims who have had a lifetime of suffering have not been treated as well. This summer they were denied compensation without an interview or even a medical evaluation.

This is a disgrace. When will the minister fix this?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting Canadian thalidomide survivors to help them live the rest of their lives with dignity.

There is no definitive medical test for thalidomide exposure. An objective review process was used to assess individuals to determine who was eligible for financial support. Based on this, 25 more individuals have been added to the thalidomide survivors program, bringing the total number of individuals to 122. This demonstrates that the review process is working.

Additional survivors may yet be identified, as some applications remain under review.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Transportation Act review report was tabled by the Minister of Transport earlier this year. This marked the beginning of a new discussion on how we can enhance Canada's transportation system.

Whether by air, rail, road, or marine, this network plays a major role in all ridings across Canada, including Niagara Centre, Canada's canal corridor.

Could the parliamentary secretary please update this House as to the progress the minister has in fact made so far this year in addressing the review and in setting a long-term agenda for transportation in our great nation?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Niagara Centre for his important question and his support on this file.

Our government recognized the need for a collaborative approach in addressing the CTA review and in developing Canada's future transportation system.

Since the report's tabling, the minister has actively engaged with Canadian stakeholders, provinces and territories, and indigenous groups to hear their views and discuss ideas. The feedback heard during these past months has been incredibly valuable, and its rich and diversified input will play a major role in defining his long-term agenda for transportation in Canada.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal implementation of the Phoenix pay system has been a complete and utter disaster. Senior officials and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement knew of the countless risks with the Phoenix launch, but they went ahead with it anyway. This has cost the taxpayers well over \$50 million and has damaged the lives of over 80,000 public servants.

Why will the minister not rule out bonuses for the people responsible for this train wreck?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our priority is ensuring that the people who are not receiving their pay get their pay.

There will be a full investigation. We have asked the Auditor General. But for now, we need to focus on the problem at hand, and that is getting people paid. That is our priority.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, who recently signed bilateral agreements with all of the provinces and territories for phase 1 of our government's historic infrastructure plan, Investing in Canada.

The Gatineau Rapibus extension to Lorrain may be one of the projects funded under this plan. It would help thousands of people get to work faster and spend more time with their families.

Can the minister tell us about how our government will keep investing in and raising Canadians' awareness of public transit?

• (1200)

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Gatineau, for his advocacy on public transit.

As a former bus driver, I know first-hand the importance of public transit in our communities. I was happy to see the Canadian Urban Transit Association members here last week to talk about transit.

Our government is investing \$20 billion in public transit over the next 10 years. This new dedicated funding will help shorten commute times, reduce air pollution, strengthen our communities, and grow our economy.

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HEALTH

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Ottawa Civic Hospital campus is almost 100 years old. It needs to be replaced. The hospital's expert panel chose a spot right across the street in which to do it, but the Minister of Environment interfered to block construction there. Now the NCC may force the hospital to move to another, more expensive, location.

The government has had no problem helping with the millions of dollars in moving costs for the Prime Minister's friends and political staffers. If there are extra costs associated with the environment minister's interference, will the federal government help with the moving costs of the hospital?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to a state-of-the-art hospital in Ottawa, and we understand the need, from the community, to make a decision quickly.

It is because we believe in transparent, rigorous, evidence-based decision-making that the minister has asked the National Capital Commission to lead a site review. That site review will take into consideration 12 federal land sites across the city.

We encourage Canadians to get involved in this process, which was launched September 22. We are confident in the NCC's ability to lead a thorough study in order to provide the government with the best recommendation possible.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois managed to get a stay for the Haitian and Zimbabwean refugees who were facing deportation, most of whom were refugees from the earthquake in Haiti.

Still today, many of those refugees have not received an answer. They are in dire straits. Many of them no longer have work permits, access to health care services, bank services, or even a telephone.

Will the Minister of Immigration commit to adopting a comprehensive solution to give these refugees permanent residence before the beginning of October? This is urgent.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already taken the initiative.

I held a press conference with my Quebec counterpart in the Haitian community a few months ago. We encouraged them to come forward, and we were ready to accept all Haitians who had the proper documents. We did everything we could to welcome those Haitians.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Paris, the government committed to fight climate change, which is great.

Today, the Liberals are backtracking and adopting the same greenhouse gas reduction targets set by the Conservatives, who at one time refused to even acknowledge that climate change exists.

The government will not even come close to achieving its targets, as weak as they are, without killing the energy east pipeline project.

Does the government realize that we cannot reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing them? That seems obvious to Quebeckers.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Our government knows that growing our economy and protecting our environment go hand in hand. The federal government, together with the provinces and territories, recognized in Vancouver that we need to come up with an ambitious plan for meeting our international obligations today and in the future.

I am working very hard with my counterparts, including Quebec's environment minister, to come up with a plan. The previous government had a target, but it did not have a plan and emissions went up.

We are serious—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Repentigny.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, here is a new argument.

Yesterday, first nations in Canada and the United States signed a treaty to fight the tar sands expansion and distribution of tar sands oil. Like Quebeckers, they realized that the fight against climate change is urgent.

The government says it wants to take action, but it has again refused to say no to energy east, a pipeline that will increase production of bitumen by 40%. There is no social licence for the project: first nations and the Quebec nation oppose it.

Will the government finally abandon this toxic project?

•(1205)

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the government is committed to establishing a nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples. She also will know that we have been moving across the country, deliberately and seriously, talking to indigenous leaders about real accommodation, as energy projects are now in front of the regulatory process. In all provinces of Canada, we will be looking very carefully at the impact of these developments on indigenous communities. The conversations and the consultations have been meaningful, and we hope for accommodation.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Convention Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the State of Israel for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income”, signed in New York on September 21, 2016. An explanatory memorandum is included with the treaty.

* * *

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-301, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act and to make a related amendment to another Act (registered retirement income fund).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London for seconding this important piece of legislation.

This bill would remove the mandatory minimum withdrawal requirements from registered retirement income funds, enabling seniors to save their hard-earned money for when they need it most and manage their savings as they see fit. Seniors should not be

Routine Proceedings

penalized for saving their money for retirement. This is why I look forward to the support of all my hon. colleagues for this particular legislation that would help our seniors.

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

* * *

•(1210)

PETITIONS

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present three identical petitions signed by thousands of Canadians from across the country from Vancouver to Halifax.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation to ensure that dog and cat fur is banned from importation and sale in Canada. The signatories note that the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the EU already have legislation in place with regard to cat and dog fur. Specifically, the EU's ban came into effect in 2009 and the U.S. has had a ban since 2000.

I would like to thank Ariel Lang from my riding of Beaches—East York and the Canadians Against Trade of Dog and Cat Fur for preparing this petition and gathering these signatures.

My private member's bill would ban the importation and sale of cat and dog fur.

TAXATION

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to present another petition signed by Canadians who are calling on members of Parliament to support Bill C-241, which seeks to amend the Excise Tax Act to refund 100% of the GST paid by Canadian school authorities.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions on the same subject, the British home children. The citizens who have signed these petitions are asking the House for an unequivocal, sincere, and public apology to the home children and their descendants.

Over 100,000 of these children, orphaned or destitute, were sent from Britain to Canada between 1869 and 1948 to provide indentured labour to Canadian farms and households. The U.K. and Australia have already issued such an apology and last April I tabled a motion in the House for Canada to do the same.

I am happy to present these petitions that support that motion, to issue an apology to these Canadians who were often victimized under the guise of protection.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today in the House to table election petition e-308 on behalf of the residents of my riding of Parkdale—High Park.

Government Orders

When the former Conservative government enacted Bill C-51 in 2015, the outcry across this country was loud and strong. Canadians understand the need to combat terrorism, but they will never allow this fight to trump our fundamental rights and freedoms.

There must be a balance. That is exactly what this petition seeks. Residents in my riding and across the country want a comprehensive review of Bill C-51. They want their privacy protected, and they want Canadian security agencies to always operate within the confines of the Charter of Rights.

This petition gathered 2,607 signatures. None of that would have been possible without the hard work of an important advocate in my riding, Mr. Matt Currie from Stop C-51.

I will continue to work with advocates like Mr. Currie to strengthen the constitutional rights and protections of all Canadians.

JUSTICE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand today and present more petitions on behalf of Cassie and Molly's law.

These petitions are from the NDP riding where Cassie lived prior to her death and prior to the loss of her child while pregnant. These signatures are representative of tens of thousands that have already been presented to this House, and represent Canadians from all walks of life, as affirmed by a Nanos poll, which showed that 97% respondents in that poll were pro-choice and that the majority of those pro-choice individuals agreed that there is a need for this law in Canada.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition today signed by many constituents of Winnipeg North.

This petition deals with Bill C-14. Just to provide assurances to those who have signed this petition, many of the issues raised in the petition were in fact debated through the process. I look forward to having another debate on it in a few years.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are two supplementary responses to Question No. 147, originally tabled on June 14, 2016, which could be made an order for return, and this return would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 147—**Mr. Martin Shields:**

With regard to each Minister's office, including costs paid out of the Minister's office budget or other government funds, from November 3, 2015, to April 22, 2016: what was the total cost spent on (i) wine, spirits, beer and other alcohol, (ii) bottled water, (iii) soft drinks, (iv) potato chips, nuts and other snacks, (v) coffee, cream, non-dairy creamer, sugar and related supplies, (vi) food, other than food included above?

(Return tabled)

•(1215)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today in support of Bill C-4.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the minister as well as the government on following through with one of their election promises.

New Democrats vigorously opposed the former Conservative government's attempt to restrict the rights of unions, and to change the rules governing labour relations under the guise of increased transparency. These bills were designed to weaken unions by forcing redundant and unreasonable financial reporting requirements on them and by making it more difficult for Canadians in federally regulated workplaces to join unions.

Allow me to recap the two bills that Bill C-4 would repeal.

Bill C-377 was an unnecessary and discriminatory law designed to impose onerous and absurdly detailed reporting requirements on unions. It was pushed through Parliament by the Conservatives despite widespread opposition from many groups, including constitutional and privacy experts, the provinces, Conservative and Liberal senators, Canada's Privacy Commissioner, the Canadian Bar Association, the NHL Players' Association, and the insurance and mutual fund industry, among others.

Bill C-525 was a private member's bill supported by the Conservatives. It was designed to make it harder for workers to unionize and easier for unions to be decertified. The labour law changes were made without any evidence of a problem with the previous system of union certification.

It is my hope that the bill before us will receive swift passage so that the restrictions and the risks brought by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 will cease to exist.

Government Orders

I had the privilege of hearing from many stakeholders during the committee hearings, both unions and employers, on the bill, and I am pleased to have opportunity today to quote at length some of the testimony we heard last spring. Much of which we heard at the committee from expert witnesses describes the problems with these two pieces of legislation in a knowledgeable and straightforward way, and in plain language that makes it really easy to see why these bills should be repealed.

Tony Fanelli, representing the construction and contract maintenance industry employers, explained why he opposed these onerous disclosure and reporting requirements of Bill C-377. He said:

If all trust funds, all training funds, and virtually every fund that would be connected to a union are subject to public exposure, our competition would clearly understand over time how those monies go into training and how we do business. In the construction industry, training and development is a key component to the success of projects we build [and bid on]. The staff either make or break an employer. We saw this legislation would open the door for the non-union to come in, just as I mentioned.

On top of that are the reporting requirements, the reporting responsibilities, that would come out of this. When we did some of the preliminary audits on the cost of doing this, it was just prohibitive.

And these are a group of large employers.

He continued:

It would happen not only with employers like us, the people I represent, the bigger employers in Canada, but across every employer association in every jurisdiction in this country. That's the reason we're opposed.

Mr. Fanelli also said:

If the Construction Labour Relations association of Alberta or the Industrial Contractors Association of Canada are held to be a labour trust and have to make the reports and returns required by Bill C-377, then both our confidentiality and our bargaining strategies are laid open.

This cannot be good for labour relations or good for either party in the labour relations continuum. I've been a labour relations practitioner in Canada for nearly 40 years. During that time there have never been any issues arising in respect of this subject. If this hasn't been an issue in the past, what is going to be gained by such significant public disclosure?

He went on to say:

We are also responsible for the privacy of our employees, and the legislation compels us to decide which law we breach: the Income Tax Act or the various provincial and federal privacy laws...it might be different if there were some wrong or right in this area, but there simply isn't. The unionized contractors in Canada see no obvious value in any part of Bill C-377, and therefore support the repeal of that legislation under the bill being considered today....

● (1220)

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities also had the opportunity to hear from some eminent labour relations experts and practitioners. Andrew Sims was the vice-chair of the 1996 task force to review the Canada Labour Code. He gave an enlightening presentation and had this to say about both bills, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525:

It's a fairly strong expression of views, but it is not simply my personal experience. It is founded on the last 30-year—and I think the most significant 30 years—review of the Canada code, and the people whose laws will be affected.

In my view, the two bills that are repealed by Bill C-4...both had the air of one side seeking political intervention for more ideological, economic, or relationship reasons, and they have corroded the view that legislative reform at the federal sector is based on the tripartite model.

To the oft cited but erroneous comparison of a secret ballot forum to form a union to an individual's vote during a democratic election, here is what another expert witness, Sara Slinn, associate professor at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University, had to say about Bill C-525:

...there is a faulty political election analogy at work here. Mandatory vote supporters commonly rely on a political election analogy founded on the view that certification votes are analogous to political campaigns and elections. The attraction of this argument is understandable, appealing as it does to ideas of free speech and informed choice and workplace democracy, but it's a false analogy.

The nature of union representation is not analogous to government power or political representation, and as a result, the nature of decision-making in a union vote is not analogous to that in a political election. First, the nature of the decision is [totally] different. Certification doesn't transform the employment relationship. It simply introduces the union as the employee's agent for the limited purpose of bargaining and administering any collective agreement that the union may be able to negotiate. The employer's overriding economic authority over employees continues in any event.

Secondly, there is no non-representation outcome possible in the political context. In political elections citizens vote between two or more possible representatives. There is no option to be unrepresented, so...if union representation elections were to be analogous to political elections, then it would be a vote among different collective employer representatives with no option for non-representation. That's simply not the system that we have anywhere in Canada.

Professor Slinn also addressed the issue of card check versus secret ballot votes for union certification. She stated:

...in terms of cards being a reliable measure of employee support, it's often contended that votes more accurately indicate employees' desire for union representation than cards, suggesting that card-based certification fosters union misconduct to compel employees to sign cards. Although this is possible, there is no evidence, either in academic studies or in the case law from jurisdictions that use this procedure, that it is a significant or a widespread problem. Anecdote isn't evidence, and certainly it shouldn't be a compelling basis for legislative change in the face of a lot of academic research finding that mandatory vote systems have negative effects on labour relations and that employer interference in certification is indeed a significant and widespread problem.

Another effect of Bill C-525 is the increased difficulty that employees would face when trying to form a union. Despite the Conservatives' denial, it is clear that mandatory voting procedures, as set out in Bill C-525, would allow more opportunity for employers to influence the outcomes of certification drives. I will quote Professor Slinn again, as follows:

In every case, in a vote-based procedure, the employer is notified by the labour board that a certification application has been made.... In most jurisdictions in Canada, in all but two, there is a deadline for that vote. It's between five and 10 working days. Under the Canada Labour Code, there is no deadline for that vote.

This provides ample time for employers to engage in anti-union campaigns.

● (1225)

She goes on to say:

...there's quite a bit of research on delay in the vote process. Representation votes, by requiring a vote in addition to submitting evidence, necessarily result in a longer certification procedure. It has been found that it significantly reduces the likelihood of certification where there's either no time limit—as is currently the case under the Canada Labour Code and other federal legislation....

These studies concluded that a combination of enforced statutory time limits and expedited hearings for unfair labour practices was necessary to satisfactorily offset these negative effects. Neither of these are currently available.

Government Orders

Professor Slinn noted that this delay would be a real concern under the current provisions and that passing Bill C-4 would help in part to address the issue.

In terms of employer interference, Professor Slinn noted that the vote-based procedure gives employers a substantial opportunity to seek to defeat the organizing attempt. There are numerous studies showing this is not only widespread but effective. A large percentage of managers surveyed in some of these studies admit to engaging in what they believe to be illegal, unfair labour practices to avoid union representation.

Survey evidence has also found in Canada that non-union employees expect employer retaliation and expect anti-union conduct by employers. Research at UBC has found that Canadian employers are no less anti-union in their attitudes toward unions than U.S. managers.

Professor Slinn found that Bill C-4 amendments reversing the Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 changes, particularly to the representation procedures, are a change that better protects employees' decision-making about collective representation.

Some of the aforementioned concerns about Bill C-525 were also echoed by Hassan Yussuff from the Canadian Labour Congress. He said:

If the board is uncertain about whether or not there is support for a union, the board itself can order a vote. Of course, on many occasions when there has been a vote, the board has found that employers have truly interfered with the workers' ability to choose the union....

Why would an employer care if the workers want to join the union? If it's their free democratic and constitutional right in this country, why would employers want to interfere in it other than the fact that if you do have a vote, it gives the employer time to use all kinds of tactics during the time the vote has been ordered? I could list some of the companies that clearly said they were going to close the facility, or cut people's salaries, or lay people off. Of course, ultimately it changed the workers' ability to truly exercise their free choice.

It was abundantly clear from the testimony of respected individuals and experts that Bill C-4 is a good first step. However, we are disappointed that some of the major actions were missing from the bill. The government has intimated that it plans to move forward with labour policy reform, which would include hearing from unions, employers, all other levels of government, and Canadians. While this is encouraging, it begs the question, why not immediately repeal the egregious labour law changes found in the previous government's omnibus Bill C-4? Why review bad legislation that is contentious and unconstitutional?

The previous government's omnibus Bill C-4 also decimated health and safety protections for public service workers. When will the government commit to restoring these important safeguards for the people who deliver our essential public services?

As negotiations with the public sector unions resume this fall, public service workers are looking for the respect they were promised during the election, and they are hoping that this government will make good on its promise to restore fair collective bargaining for the public service.

As part of the promised labour policy reform, will the government bring in legislation to update and modernize the Canada Labour Code? As we know, sections of the code that deal with workplace harassment, hours of work, overtime pay, and vacation entitlements

are about 60 years out of date. It is time we modernized the code to reflect the reality of today's labour market.

The most recent review of the Canada Labour Code last happened in 2006, with the final report making several recommendations to help an increasing number of part-time and contractual employees.

● (1230)

In May 2015, a briefing note to the former minister of labour said that the rise in part-time, temporary, and self-employed workers along with the demand for knowledge-based jobs has changed the nature of work and the workplace. Will the government work with unions in ensuring that part-time, temporary, and self-employed workers have the right to the same workplace and labour protections as other Canadian workers?

Given the rise in precarious and involuntary part-time employment, Canadian workers are faced with a host of added challenges such as eligibility for EI benefits. It often results in a diminished ability to save. The erratic hours create challenges in pursuing an education, arranging child care, and qualifying for a mortgage. All these are contributing factors to the greater income inequality, and if the government is truly sincere about helping the middle class, then it must immediately address these issues.

I am sure my esteemed colleagues will agree that in every corner of this great country there is still much we can do to bring a better standard of living to Canadians. As the economy continues to struggle and the cost of living rises steadily while wages stagnate, Canadians are looking to the government to make life more affordable. Affordable child care, pay equity, decent accessible housing, and a living wage are all measures that would really help Canadians from all walks of life.

Will the government commit to reinstating a fair minimum wage for workers in the federally regulated sectors? Some provinces and municipalities are already acknowledging that a living wage will make a huge difference in making life more affordable. Will our government step up and lead the way?

Another sad fact is that a disproportionate number of workers who are affected are women and young people. We cannot afford not to act. It is way past time for the federal government to bring in stand-alone pay equity legislation. We have studied this issue and consulted, and the evidence is clear and undeniable. Two committee reports have called for action, yet we continue to wait.

Government Orders

Through a combination of policy and propaganda, the previous government started to dismantle the system of protections that were put in place by decades of advocacy by labour organizations, community groups, and unions. Their right-wing agenda has generated policies that hurt the environment, social services, and all workers especially persons of colour, indigenous peoples and communities, women, the poor, and other marginalized groups.

Now that we have a new government in place, one that has promised equality for women, fairness for indigenous people, and sunny ways for all, I do look forward to seeing the current government work closely with all members in the House as well as with unions and civil society to bring about better jobs and a more secure future for all Canadians.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her comments today. Certainly she has a great deal of equity in her opinion. I know that her career background before coming to the House was in working on behalf of Canadian workers and ensuring the concerns of those who face day-to-day challenges are being heard. As the member brought forward in her speech, those are numerous, and certainly as a government we will try to work at it. It is a daunting challenge and a daunting task, but hopefully month after month we will be able to address many of the changes that the member talked about today, and some of the improvements that she talked about today.

However, in particular on Bill C-4, because I know the member has been involved in the labour movement, with the past legislation that would be repealed I fail to see where any of that legislation would have improved the life of any Canadian. I do not know how those pieces of legislation would have created a job in this country. It appears to many, and certainly to me, that it was just an affront to organized labour.

Could the member share her thoughts? Obviously, our take on it was that it was just an attack on organized labour.

• (1235)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his comments, and for his offer to allow me to comment on Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 with the lens that they were simply mean-spirited, anti-union legislation that did nothing on a number of levels.

First let me talk about Bill C-377. My comment there is that the previous government would continually say “democracy, transparency, accountability”, and it would repeat that. Conservatives were trying to insinuate that somehow there is no democracy, no accountability, no transparency within the union movement and those associations. That is simply not true. If anyone has been part of a union or an association, they will understand the requirements that are needed to be shared with members and to file a report. It was an onerous reporting that added a lot of work and expense both on employers, as the member heard in my comments, and on the unions.

I have a quick comment around Bill C-525, which was a solution to a problem that did not exist. We heard that over and over at committee. We heard it from employers. We heard it from unions. It became very clear when we heard it from the experts, both from a

previous chair of a commission that reviewed the Canada Labour Code, as well as from professors and experts within labour relations. It was simply there to make it harder to unionize and easier to decertify, and that certainly was the MO of the previous government.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague with great interest, and I also noted her comments that we cannot compare voting for an election to voting for a union. I wonder if she realizes that there are times, in any sort of movement toward unionization, that we perhaps have the employer, but also employees, who have very strong feelings on moving in a particular direction, how torn the people in the workforce can get, and how divided they can be over this issue of whether they are going to unionize. It can be very difficult to not have the ability to have a secret ballot.

I would like the member to stand and tell employees from across this country why they do not deserve a ballot on something that is perhaps a very personal issue to them.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the comments and question and bringing up that conversation we had at committee level. The evidence is clear from the research that it is employers who are intimidating employees; it is not unions intimidating members to sign cards. There will always be people within a workplace, for whatever reason, who are not going to agree with the majority of people who sign cards.

However, some of this is about understanding the actual rules as they are now. If there is any whiff from a labour relations board that something amiss has gone on during that certification drive, the board is there to ensure that a secret vote was taken, to see if that in fact happened. What we know from the research and evidence is that it is more often employers who are the ones who receive unfair labour relations charges, because they are the ones trying to influence union members not to sign a card.

• (1240)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is always interesting in the House to hear Conservatives rise and talk about the importance of voting and democracy in the workplace. Their interest in this topic only starts after workers indicate that they want to join a union by signing cards. The Conservatives are never going to propose a system where all workers and all workplaces in Canada get to vote periodically on whether or not they would like a union. The Conservatives' interest in voting is just an obstacle to workers who want to join unions. I wonder if my colleague from Saskatoon West could maybe speak to the record that the Conservatives had in government and whether she believes their professed concern for workplace democracy is genuine.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to talk about this issue and to reflect on the previous government's attitude toward unions. It certainly was not the champions of unions, and I think most of us in this House would agree, except for perhaps a few.

Part of the agenda of the previous government was to reduce workers' rights as much as possible, and to undermine the collective rights of workers and unions to make workplaces better, to improve health and safety.

Government Orders

If we look at other things that were involved in the previous government's Bill C-4, we will see a list of things it wanted to remove: health and safety, the rights of public sector workers to take things to the labour relations board. It wanted to unilaterally be a part of negotiating things it took off the table that we could no longer do with collective agreements.

When the Conservatives espoused the words “democracy, transparency and accountability”, they were using those to say that working people are somehow not that way, that unions are not that way, that the public is not that way. It was a wedge issue in order for them to bring forward what was very clearly the anti-worker, anti-safety, anti-union agenda of the previous government.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her contribution today. We understand that she comes from a perspective based on experience, and it is great to hear her point of view.

I have a very quick question. In her opinion, which bill put the labour movement back further, Bill C-377 or Bill C-525?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, my brief answer would be that they both set back labour relations, workers' rights, and health and safety. They worked in tandem. They were part of a larger agenda, and I am very proud to stand today to support the government's leadership here and to make those two bills history.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today to talk about Bill C-4.

Its purpose, of course, is to repeal the provisions enacted by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. In other words, Bill C-4 aims to restore fairness and balance to labour relations. Throughout this process, there are some who worried about transparency. In fact, they claim that Bill C-4 attacks the transparency to which our government has committed itself. Nothing could be further from the truth.

All in this House know that our government is a champion for transparency. We are a government that is transparent, honest, and accountable to Canadians. We adhere to the most stringent ethical standards.

If we are talking about transparency, it is because this issue is of particular concern with regard to Bill C-377. Some think that the legislation was necessary to improve the financial transparency of unions. They say that it was required to guarantee public access to information on union expenses.

However, our government strongly believes that they are mistaken. Rather than improving transparency, Bill C-377 created additional privacy issues. Bill C-377 was pushed through Parliament by the previous government despite loud opposition from many different groups, including Conservative and Liberal senators, constitutional experts, and certain organizations, such as the Canadian Bar Association.

The previous government refused to listen to anyone, which is precisely why they are the previous government. We do things differently. We listen, and our efforts to improve labour relations in Canada were applauded by key stakeholders. The Public Service Alliance of Canada was pleased that our government tabled legislation to repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, which this union

believed was designed to weaken unions, was unconstitutional, and was a violation of privacy rights.

Canada's Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien has expressed concerns with Bill C-377. In his view, publicly listing specific individuals' political and lobbying activities, as well as education, training, and conference activities, in accordance with Bill C-377 is overreaching.

Recently, he appeared before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, also known as HUMA.

I will take this opportunity to advise the House that I am splitting my time with the hon. and learned member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

If I may quote Monsieur Therrien from that committee, he said:

My role is to advise parliamentarians on the consequences that legislative measures can have on privacy. I do not have an opinion on the activities of labour organizations, specifically, but, like my predecessor, I have maintained all along that the provisions contained in Bill C-377 and its previous incarnations, went too far by imposing a public disclosure requirement. They were unreasonable and infringed on privacy rights.

Mr. Therrien continued as follows:

...transparency is not an end unto itself; it cannot be an absolute objective to the exclusion of other considerations....Transparency efforts must be carefully balanced with the need to protect the personal information of individuals.

I could not agree more.

Protecting personal information is something that Bill C-377 simply does not do.

To provide my hon. colleagues with more context, this legislation amended the Income Tax Act to require unions to provide the Minister of National Revenue with detailed information on their finances. More specifically, Bill C-377 forces labour organizations and labour trusts, including those under provincial jurisdiction, to provide information returns. These returns would then be made publicly available on the Canada Revenue Agency's website.

Bill C-377 requires this information to include financial statements stating the total of all transactions, including certain transactions over \$5,000 listed separately. These could include statements on their assets, debts, and expenses, and the salaries of certain individuals.

• (1245)

As if this were not enough, unions must also provide details on the time spent by certain individuals on political and lobbying activities and activities not related to labour relations. Worse still is that failure to comply with reporting requirements is considered an offence subject to a fine of \$1,000 for each day of non-compliance, up to \$25,000 per year.

Let me state clearly that Bill C-377 does nothing to add to the transparency of a union's affairs, and the former government knows this well.

Government Orders

To begin with, were this legislation to remain in place, employers would have access to a union's financial information, but the opposite would not be the case. In the collective bargaining process, unions would clearly be put at a disadvantage. For example, in the case of a work stoppage, an employer would know exactly how much money the union had in its strike fund, so it would know how long the union could hold out in the event of a strike. All the employer would have to do is wait until the strike fund was exhausted. That is unfair, unbalanced, and unreasonable. The union would be completely stripped of one of its key bargaining levers.

In addition, the strict disclosure requirements apply only to labour organizations and labour trusts and do not affect other groups that also receive beneficial tax treatment under the Income Tax Act.

This practice discriminates against unions and upsets the balance of labour relations across this country.

Lastly, provisions are already in place requiring unions to fulfill their financial reporting responsibilities. For example, section 110 of the Canada Labour Code requires unions and employer organizations to provide financial statements to their members upon request and free of charge. There are similar provisions in most provincial labour relations legislation. Bill C-377 does nothing to add to this regulatory regime.

The reality is that the vast majority of unions already make their financial statements available to their members. These documents generally contain aggregated financial information and seem to meet the intended objective without it being necessary to name specific names. In other words, it protects privacy. Instead of promoting true transparency, Bill C-377 infringes on the right to privacy.

We should not force unions to provide detailed information on their finances. That is why steps have already been taken by the Minister of National Revenue to remove these obligations. As a result, during the repeal process, unions and other stakeholders affected by the bill are not required to submit detailed tracking of their activities for fiscal year 2016.

Balance is key. We need to be transparent, but we also need to respect privacy. Balance needs to be restored in relations between employees and employers. To that end, I urge all members of this House to support Bill C-4.

• (1250)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member across the way quite correctly expressed concern that these regressive Conservative bills created an imbalance during work stoppages.

Another thing that creates an imbalance during work stoppages is the ability of employers to bring in replacement workers, because it allows the employer to lock out its employees and not incur the consequence of having to operate without the labour.

Therefore, based on the professed concern by the member for Newmarket—Aurora for balance in labour relations, I wonder whether the government would support anti-scab legislation.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for the question. We always have good questions from this hon. member.

Our government is taking a tripartite approach to reviewing labour legislation across the country. Labour relations is an important issue that is fundamental to supporting the middle class in Canada. It is fundamental to making sure that Canadians have family-sustaining jobs. We are working toward that goal. However, the best way to do it is to work in consultation with all stakeholders, including all members of the House. I support our government in that effort. I know the hon. member does too, and we look forward to hearing his input in that process.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, when I listen to the Liberals, I hear the word “transparency” time after time, but when it comes to action, they fail utterly. I want to give the House a couple of examples.

The First Nations Financial Transparency Act allowed band members, for the first time ever, to see how their chiefs and councils were spending their money, in the same sense that my constituents can see my expenses. The Liberals took a good piece of legislation and put the ability to see that information back into the dark.

We really still do not know what that little bag of cash is that apparently is going to be paid back for moving expenses. Again, the Liberals talk about transparency, but we have no idea what the extra bag of cash is.

For union members, it is an issue of transparency. Without having to go begging for the information, union members have the ability to have the audited financial statements of their unions.

Why do the Liberals say the word “transparency” so often, but when they have the opportunity to do something, they fail miserably?

• (1255)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, the member started her question by indicating that she had listened to the speeches, but I find that hard to believe, because if she had listened to my speech, she would realize how transparently unions already operate in this country.

The act was not meant to promote transparency. Let us be real for a minute here. These acts were meant to crush unions. That is the political ideology on that side of the House. Make no bones about it. It was used as a fundraising mechanism as well. It was not an act about transparency.

That being said, I will debate that member and any member across the floor on which government is more transparent. Our Prime Minister is the reason people in your riding can see your expenses and why they are posted online.

Let us not debate transparency. For nine years your government was the most opaque, hidden government in the history of Canada, and you have the audacity to stand in the House today and complain about transparency. Give me a break.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member when he is addressing the House about not using the word “you”.

Government Orders

There is not enough time for another question. Therefore, resuming debate. The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish everyone a good afternoon and a happy Friday.

I am very proud and fortunate to stand here at third reading to support our government in moving forward this important piece of legislation, Bill C-4, which would repeal Bills C-377 and C-525.

I spoke to this bill earlier, but I wanted to share my thoughts on Bill C-4 again, because I believe strongly in working to create a prosperous Canada, one in which the middle class and those looking to join it can grow and succeed. It was something I campaigned on last year and was a key plank in our government's election platform.

The two bills Bill C-4 seeks to repeal undermine labour unions and labour relations in our country, and in so doing, weaken our middle class.

Our government has an unwavering commitment to the middle class through initiatives like the Canada child benefit, which now sees nine out of ten Canadian families receiving higher monthly and tax-free benefits of approximately \$2,300 a year; our middle-class tax cut, which reduced taxes for over nine million Canadians and will provide, over the next five years, approximately \$20 billion in tax relief for Canadians; and recently, an historic agreement the Minister of Finance reached collaboratively with his provincial colleagues to expand and strengthen the Canada pension plan.

Our government is working to strengthen Canada's economy and to ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to succeed.

When I last spoke to Bill C-4, I talked about the importance of the bill in restoring a clear and balanced approach to labour relations in Canada. I also talked about the fact that both my parents were union members. It was through the labour movement and its fight for fair wages and benefits that our family prospered in Canada. Frankly, it is one of the reasons I have the privilege to stand and speak in this House today.

I would like to focus my comments today on my personal connection to labour unions and their importance in helping create and sustain a strong middle class. However, before I do, I should probably provide some context and briefly explain the two bills that are to be repealed.

Bill C-377, which received royal assent in June 2015 and came into force at the end of 2015, created unnecessary red tape for unions and put workers at a disadvantage during the collective bargaining process. Bill C-525, which came into force on June 16, 2016, made it more difficult for employees to unionize and easier for a bargaining agent to be decertified.

Both bills diminish and weaken Canada's labour movement, are counterproductive to a positive working relationship between employees and employers, and negatively impact the growth and prosperity of Canada's middle class.

The two bills Bill C-4 seeks to repeal were ideologically driven, not fact, and were aimed at undermining the effectiveness of labour unions across Canada from coast to coast to coast.

One bill, Bill C-377, places onerous and unfair reporting obligations solely on labour and not on any other organizations, be it professional or otherwise. The other bill, Bill C-525, changes the way unions are certified and decertified, making it harder for workers to organize.

There was no compelling need to make it harder on the labour movement and no sound economic argument for the Conservative changes to the Labour Code. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

Given the essential role unions play in fostering and maintaining a prosperous middle class and in protecting the rights of workers, needlessly upsetting the labour market relations system that has contributed significantly to the overall Canadian economy makes little economic sense.

I said that I would be focusing my comments on a personal connection to the labour movement. Those members who know me know that I am an economist and a former corporate and government debt analyst who worked on Wall Street and Bay Street for nearly 25 years. People might ask themselves why I would be such a strong proponent of Bill C-4. It is because professionally and personally I recognize the importance of balance in Canada's labour system not only in allowing workers to make free and informed decisions but in giving employers a degree of certainty and access to a skilled workforce.

If we want to see an example of the labour system working in balance, we can look no further than the recent negotiations between General Motors and Unifor. Through a transparent collective bargaining process, both sides have come to a tentative agreement that seeks to achieve the best interests of both parties: business and labour.

● (1300)

I will quote Jerry Dias, Unifor's national president, who stated:

“This framework puts into motion what will be a historic agreement to secure a future for our members, for our communities and for the auto industry in Canada,” said Unifor National President Jerry Dias, who led the negotiations.

We must always ensure that labour and business can bargain in an open and balanced process. The bills that are repealed in Bill C-4 tilted that balance and it was wrong.

In my constituency of Vaughan—Woodbridge, I see how a fair and balanced labour system allows LiUNA and the carpenters' union to work with their partners, helping to ensure the availability of an educated and skilled labour force. That collaboration has played a large role in the phenomenal growth in enterprises in the city I call home, Vaughan, throughout the GTA, and, frankly, all of Canada.

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Over the summer, I attended a LiUNA industry awareness event at its training facility in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, where I saw first hand the training programs that LiUNA offers its members. LiUNA and its partners continue to train successive generations of workers who make Ontario a strong province and a beautiful place to call home. We must remember that unions like LiUNA continue to advocate for better health and safety conditions and strengthen pensions, which allow for a strong, prosperous, and growing middle class.

On a personal level, I also appreciate the importance of unions and a fair and balanced labour relations system. I was raised on the northwest coast of Canada in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, one of three boys, and both of my parents were union members. My father was a tradesperson, a carpenter and sheet metal worker. My mother, who, like my father, immigrated from Italy, worked in a fish processing plant. My parents came to Canada to build a better life and they brought with them the only asset they had: a work ethic and desire to build better lives for their family. With their union jobs, with benefits, good wages, and a safe environment, their aspirations for their family came true.

My parents instilled in me a very strong work ethic. Certainly those who know me, know I have carried that ethic with me proudly my entire life. They also instilled in me a very real understanding of the importance of unions and what decent wages and benefits meant to families.

In high school and while studying at university, I was a union member, working at the fish cannery, the Prince Rupert grain elevators and a pulp mill during the summers to help pay for my education. The work was not easy and the pay was not exorbitant, but it was a fair and decent wage. Because of the rules and oversight that unions helped to bring about, dangerous work environments were made safer.

Unions and their members are one of the backbones of the middle class in Canada. Union jobs enabled my immigrant parents to join the middle class. They allowed me the opportunity to pursue a higher education and, ultimately, with much happiness and privilege, it led me here to stand before the House of Commons.

I want to reiterate my full support for Bill C-4, our government's efforts to restore a fair and balanced labour relations system, and reaffirm my commitment to working toward creating and maintaining a prosperous Canada, one in which the middle class and those looking to join it can grow and succeed.

• (1305)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, when I asked whether the government would support anti-scab legislation, the answer was that the government supported a tripartite process, which sounds sensible, unless what it means is that employers would have a veto on anti-scab legislation.

The other response we have heard in previous debates is that the government would only consider anti-scab legislation as part of a comprehensive review of the Canada Labour Code. Could the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge tell us when his government is going to begin that comprehensive review of the Canada Labour Code?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, Bill C-4 seeks to address two real issues that were brought in by the previous government on Bills C-377 and C-525, which tilted the balance that was in place away from unions. That is the first step we have adopted to address within our labour relations area.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member and I are both from the same province. Is he aware that every union certification that happens in the province of Ontario is done by secret ballot, except for the construction industry. Being from Ontario, why should it be any different federally and does he actually support the current practice in the province of Ontario for most unions, with the exception of the construction industry, to require a secret ballot for union certification?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, one of the components in Bill C-4 in repealing Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 is that union financial disclosure is already addressed in Canada's labour code and many provincial labour statutes. Therefore, many of the provisions contained in Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 were actually unnecessary. Also, the bill targeted only unions and not professional organizations.

With regard to the construction industry, there is a very healthy collective bargaining process that takes place in Ontario between the construction unions and their counterparties, and it has allowed the province to grow and prosper.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate my colleague for his excellent speech and his support of this bill.

I agree with him that unions are important partners in our labour relations, which must be based on co-operation, transparency, and respect.

Bill C-4 seeks to restore fairness and balance in order to improve our labour relations with Canadian unions.

My question is quite simple. I would like to give the hon. member the opportunity to provide a few more examples of the benefits of this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, Bill C-4 would restore balance within the labour relations system in Canada, and we need balance. In any type of bargaining process, we need that system in place.

More important, for the broader economy, we need to have a transparent collective bargaining process take place, much like we saw with the recent Unifor negotiations and the recent CUPW Canada Post negotiations.

Frankly, the two bills that the previous government brought into place were unnecessary, basically attacked unions, and tilted the system in a way that upset the balance that was currently in place and was working fine.

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•(1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, today, I rise to speak to Bill C-4. This is a very important debate because, unfortunately, this bill will change union democracy in the coming decades.

Many people will agree that the Liberal values do not represent the values of union members. In fact, they are quite removed from the values of a responsible government, values that were bequeathed by our Conservative government during the last Parliament.

Our Conservative government gave a voice to union members on fundamental values. To do away with transparency and the freedom afforded by a secret ballot shows the lack of respect and judgment of the Liberal government, which is practising the politics of avoidance and patronage for its friends. This government has simply abandoned union members and bowed to pressure from union leaders. I am being polite using the word “pressure”. “Returning the favour” would be a more accurate way of putting it.

Obviously, unions do have a role to play. Union members have chosen to pay dues so that the unions will stand up for their rights and negotiate working conditions that are acceptable to and benefit both parties.

They did not choose to pay dues to be involved in labour relations horror stories, such as the ones we all have heard about from friends who were victims or the ones we were personally involved in. Obviously, we have all heard of people who did not dare go vote because they were told that, if they were voting against the union, they were not voting the right way and to watch out. They were advised not to attend the meeting because the vote would be held by a show of hands. They were advised to stay home. In some cases, not even 10% of workers voted.

That is just one of thousands of similar situations. We are talking about intimidation, harassment, bigotry, exclusion, and abuse of power.

We all know workers who have paid and are still paying the price of these tactics, including sometimes irreversible occupational and mental burnout and other traumatic effects.

Taking away unionized workers' rights is unacceptable and completely inconsistent with our society's values of freedom and transparency. The government says it is transparent, but anyone can see that, for almost a year now, it has had no qualms about doing whatever it pleases.

Imagine telling Canadians they have to vote in a general election by raising their hands. There would be an uproar if people were given appointments to go vote in a community centre with candidates and parties looking on or even staring them down.

That is what the Liberal government is going to make our unionized workers do. It is also going to force its MPs to vote the party line even though this is a moral issue. Shame on them for treating all 308 of us legislators as though we do not matter.

My concerns are the same as those of thousands of Canadians who are angry at the Liberal government, a government whose priority is

letting union leaders amble up to the trough and joining them there. The Liberals have a long history of doing things that way, and they keep doing it until they get caught with their hands in the cookie jar.

•(1315)

Considering how little this government has delivered since taking office, it sure seems to like hopping all around the globe, courtesy of the taxpayers of Canada, giving away Canadians' money, which this Prime Minister seems to think of as his own.

There have been many spending scandals, including many examples this week alone, such as the exorbitant relocation expenses of \$200,000 for the chief of staff and the Prime Minister's best friend, limousine and room rentals for the work of certain ministers at prices that are just as exorbitant, and of course, the billions of dollars in debt that this government is going to leave to future generations, including my unborn granddaughter, whom we are expecting soon.

As we all know, the Liberals seem to be the only ones who can't count. They are going to run out of money, and my fear is that, at this rate, that is going to happen soon.

When will the Prime Minister's soap opera *I got caught with my hand in the cookie jar* finally be cancelled? Not only are the Liberals helping themselves to taxpayers' money, but all week long, the Prime Minister has been defending the indefensible and trying to cover it all up. This shows a flagrant lack of judgment on the Prime Minister's part.

However, this is not surprising, given the endless examples of wasteful spending. The next few weeks are going to be very interesting.

The party has gone on long enough. Will they finally stop handing over Canadians' money to the Prime Minister's friends, doing favours for unions, and wanting to fix what isn't broken? Where is this Prime Minister's judgment?

Something else that makes no sense is the Liberal government's dedication to electoral reform. No one in my riding has spoken to me about this. No one at all. Why complicate something that Canadians have understood for more than 140 years? In my humble opinion, it is the Prime Minister's judgment that needs to be reformed.

I believe, as do Canadians concerned about the politics of avoidance, that centralizing power in the hands of the minority or using scare tactics to serve one's own interests is completely unethical.

I hope that my colleagues opposite will understand what I mean by politics of avoidance. I am referring to how they have backed away from defending democracy, being accountable, being engaged, protecting everyone no matter their status, fulfilling their government responsibilities for the common good in order to benefit the few.

Now they want to break with the tradition in the Constitution Act, 1867, and the Supreme Court Act, both of which govern the Supreme Court appointment process because the Prime Minister feels like giving himself the right not to keep with tradition and appoint a judge from Atlantic Canada. It is unbelievable, but true.

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I am afraid that this Liberal government's anything-goes attitude is just the beginning. So far it has excelled in just one area: social activities that involve selfies and being a bit player on the world stage. The government ought to remember that this is not theatre.

Our Prime Minister is a national joke. Transparent for the smart phone cameras he might be, but stand up for transparency in democratic institutions and organizations he cannot. He is an embarrassment.

● (1320)

He was a leader who promised to stand up for the middle class, but he hoodwinked millions of Canadians with his grand promises. As citizens, workers, retirees, parents, individuals, and a country, we all stand to lose so much in the end.

Bill C-4 serves merely to enhance the image and serve the interests of an egotistical individual who is running away from making real decisions for a strong, prosperous, and safe society and economy like the ones the Conservatives bequeathed to him.

I would like to list just some of the so-called changes introduced by this government: tax hikes, an end to income splitting, cuts for families earning less than \$60,000 a year that use tax-free savings accounts to put money aside, a threat to the child care tax credit, an end to the air strikes against ISIS, along with never-ending deficits that will cripple the economic future of our country, our children and our grandchildren.

As though that were not enough, now the Liberals are coddling union leaders instead of standing up for dues-paying members, our noble workers who have a right to vote according to their convictions and in complete secrecy.

I think it is high time that whoever is pulling the strings within the Liberal government showed some judgment and did something to ensure that its actions reflect the values of a responsible government that promotes transparency and the right to exercise one's right to vote in a respectful manner.

I will end with a word that aptly describes the Liberal Party of Canada: scandal.

The bill before us bolsters the return of Liberal cronyism. It flies in the face of Canada's democracy and the values of the Conservative Party and Canadian society. It violates the rights of union members and all Canadians. I therefore urge the Prime Minister to come to his senses or for one of his advisors to help him to finally see reason.

For all of these reasons, I move, seconded by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent:

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

Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for the purpose of reconsidering clauses 5 to 11 with a view to preserving provisions of the existing law which stipulate that the certification and decertification of a bargaining agent must be achieved by a secret ballot vote-based majority.

● (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment put forward by the member for Lévis—Lotbinière is in order.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my veteran colleague who spoke just now. I appreciate his letting the whole country know that he will soon be a grandfather. I wish my colleague's children and grandchildren all the happiness and success in the world.

There is a reason I called the member a veteran. He was first elected in 2006, so he has been in the House for more than 10 years. Like all Canadians, he probably remembers the first bill the Harper government introduced in 2006, the Federal Accountability Act. His new government had to literally—I was about to say something kind of rude—turn the page on an unfortunate chapter tarnished by the sponsorship scandal.

The first thing the Harper government did was pass a law on accountability. One of the first things this government is doing is passing a law that gets rid of union accountability and attacks democracy, transparency, and accountability.

What does my colleague think of the way this government is using one of its first bills, Bill C-4, to attack the very building blocks of this country: democracy, transparency, and accountability?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for his kind wishes. It is true that in just a few days I will have the good fortune of becoming a grandfather. I hope to leave the future generation of Canadians a country with a healthy democracy and a healthy economy. It is really very important.

To come back to accountability, that was our former Conservative government's battle cry. Unfortunately, when the government has no regard for accountability, as we saw today and all week, then we are faced with the abuses of people who take taxpayers' money with both hands to pay for personal benefits. That is what is happening, unfortunately. That is what we saw and will continue to see for the weeks and months to come. It will not stop until October 2019.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière spoke strongly in favour of a secret ballot vote to determine whether employees wanted to unionize or not, but why stop at employees who have already signed union cards? I want to know if my colleague would support a system where all Canadian employees, at every workplace, would periodically have the opportunity to vote on whether they want a union.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Basically, I believe that all Canadian unionized workers should have the right to cast a secret ballot when voting on whether to strike or voting on a decision. There are many possible reasons someone may not agree with their union leaders' decisions.

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For instance, during a strike vote, one may decide for personal reasons that it is more important to go to work, to feed their children, and pay the mortgage. Not everyone will want to get involved in a strike that could last two or three months and that could bankrupt the company they have worked for 10, 15, or 20 years, or force it to relocate. That is fundamental.

I find it particularly unfortunate when only 122 people show up to vote, when the company employs 2,000 workers. That makes no sense. This kind of thing should not happen in Canada. That should not happen anywhere in the world, but especially not in Canada.

• (1330)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech today.

[English]

As I was travelling in my riding over the summer, I stopped at Tim Horton's, and a resident of Barrie—Innisfil came up to me and asked if I had heard about the new Liberal happy meal at McDonald's. Basically, he said, we could order anything on the menu and the kids behind us would pay for it. I thought it was appropriate.

Given the fact that my colleague is going to be a grandparent soon, how worried is he about the future of the Canadian economy and his children and grandchildren having to pay for the Liberal debt and deficit situation?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for this important question.

Indeed, I am worried about the direction this government is taking and its vision of the future for all Canadians. I am extremely worried about the path it is taking. By giving away money that it does not have, it is going to run out, and once Canada's credit rating is lowered, the Liberals will disappear.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): For the benefit of the House, I will reread the proposed amendment.

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

Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for the purpose of reconsidering clauses 5 to 11 with a view to preserving provisions of the existing law which stipulate that the certification and decertification of a bargaining agent must be achieved by a secret ballot vote-based majority.

[English]

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.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

IMMIGRATION TO ATLANTIC CANADA

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.) moved:

That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration be instructed to undertake a study on immigration to Atlantic Canada, to consider, among other things, (i) the challenges associated with an aging population and shrinking population base, (ii) possible recommendations on how to increase immigration to the region; and that the Committee report its findings to the House within one year of the adoption of this motion.

She said: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to stand in the House of Commons today to speak to the motion requesting the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to undertake a study to explore ways to increase immigration to Atlantic Canada.

I would also like to speak today to the importance of studying the retention of those immigrants to ensure that we are achieving the goals of strengthening Atlantic Canada's workforce communities as well as the long-term economic outlook.

At this time, I would also like to recognize my many colleagues from Atlantic Canada and across the country who see the importance of this issue and who have become joint seconders to the motion. I look forward to hearing their insight on this issue during the debate.

Although immigration is not an issue that I hear about specifically at the doors in Fundy Royal, many of the priorities and issues relating to economic growth and sustainable rural communities lead back to Atlantic Canada's aging and shrinking population. Let me give a few examples.

The Bay of Fundy is a world-renowned tourist destination and a key economic driver in my beautiful riding of Fundy Royal in New Brunswick. In fact, we are now preparing for the completion of the Fundy Trail Parkway and a significant increase in visitors to the area over the next few years. These visitors are drawn to the area to enjoy the coastline, Fundy National Park, and a host of adventures and authentic experiences offered in the communities throughout the riding. This summer, I spoke to many of the tourism operators who told me that they had a difficult time filling the job vacancies they had this year. They are having a hard time planning for future growth because of the limited workforce.

In addition to the impact on businesses, I have also seen the impact of low population growth in communities. Rural schools are struggling to remain open because of dwindling enrolment. Last year in Fundy Royal, both Norton Elementary School and the Riverside Consolidated School were being considered for closure. Both communities lobbied successfully to keep their schools open, but they realize they need sustainable plans that will rely on maintaining and increasing school enrolment.

Communities and employers across the region are feeling the impact of the current demographics. Ultimately, fewer people of working age are supporting more people who require social benefits. Not only is this bad for economic growth, it means fewer services and higher taxes for residents in a weaker fiscal environment. This correlation was articulated well last winter in a *Globe and Mail* article authored by former New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna. In his article, he urged the federal government to look at ways to increase immigration to Atlantic Canada as a means to move the dial in respect to the economy.

Private Members' Business

Since that time, the shrinking population of Atlantic Canada has been identified by all Atlantic premiers as the most pressing concern for the future of the region. The aging population in Atlantic Canada means that right now our workforce is shrinking. We have more people leaving the workforce than we have entering the workforce, and this is compounded by out-migration.

From a business perspective, if people are looking to invest, to grow, and to innovate in Atlantic Canada, one of the things they need to know is that they have the people available to do the work. The other facet to an aging population is that there becomes a need for more and more caregivers. Due to the noted out-migration and new ways of life, many families are not in a position to care for their senior parents and grandparents. This reality will mean a higher demand for home care workers and front-line health care workers at the same time that the workforce is shrinking.

To paint a picture for members who may not be familiar with the realities of the situation in Atlantic Canada, I ask them to consider these facts. Statistics tell us that in New Brunswick, we now sustain more deaths than births. The Atlantic region has the second-lowest fertility rate in Canada, and the population in the Atlantic region has aged twice as fast as Alberta since 1971, meaning that the median age is now eight years older than in Alberta.

The other factor we must consider is that Atlantic Canada has not kept up with the rest of Canada when it comes to immigration. In 2006, Canada received 250,000 immigrants. Although Atlantic Canada makes up roughly 7% of the total Canadian population, less than 2% of immigrants declared Atlantic Canada as their intended destination. Of those, only 40% were expected to stay, and 90% intended to live in urban areas of the region.

We have passed the point where we can repopulate without intervention. We will not naturally become a younger society again. Our workforce will not naturally expand, and investments will not come easily to our region if we stay the course.

• (1335)

The reality is that although the impact of this phenomenon is seen clearly in Atlantic Canada today, the entire country has an aging population, which is only compounded by the ease of out-migration to other provinces. Atlantic Canada is the canary in the coal mine, but we have proven time and again that we are nimble and adaptable and that there is still much room for optimism.

I recognize that the natural inclination to improve the economic outlook in Atlantic Canada may be for governments to remain laser focused on job creation. It clearly is a critical component of any plan for the future. However, the Ivany report states that we cannot sustain economic growth over time unless renewed population growth provides us with more workers, more entrepreneurs, and more consumers.

Over the last several decades, Atlantic Canada has tried to renew economic growth without a focus on immigration, and the result has been a continued loss of skilled workers and educated youth to other regions, and also limited investment.

After reading countless reports and studies on the population and economic issues of Atlantic Canada, the most promising news is that increasing immigration could quite possibly turn the tide. A research

paper funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in December 2008, and written by academics from Saint Mary's University in Halifax and the University of Prince Edward Island, looked at the socio-economic profiles of immigrants in the four Atlantic provinces.

This report shows that immigration has actually already been working in our favour. The report states that immigrant inflows in Atlantic Canada have helped slow population decline. Had there been no immigration between 1996 and 2001, the region's population decline would have been 16.5% higher than the actual decline. From 2001 to 2006, this decline would have been 93.6% higher without immigration. My own research suggests that from 2006 to 2011, immigration contributed to 53% of the total population growth in Atlantic Canada.

I understand people's reservations concerning the need for more immigrants in Atlantic Canada at a time when people are leaving the region because of the lack of meaningful employment. However, studies have shown a direct correlation between economic growth and immigration. In fact, one only needs to look back over the history of Canada to realize that Canada has always experienced growth by welcoming immigrants. We have seen time and time again that those who take the initiative to move to the greatest country in the world not only settle and make their way but often invest, grow businesses, and employ people.

In Fundy Royal, we only need to look as far as the nearest farm, our successful local chain of hotels, popular eating establishments, the arts community, and industrial suppliers to see what healthy, diverse, sustainable immigration can do for the region and how many jobs can be created through increased immigration.

The Ivany commission report also states that one rarely hears serious arguments that higher rates of international immigration have been bad for Canada over the long term. Immigration and economic expansion are mutually reinforcing, and both are necessary if the future outlook is to improve.

We need to start talking about the success stories related to immigration to counter the most common fear of immigration in Atlantic Canada. The President of the Treasury Board has said that this fear is often simply the fear of the unknown.

The recent welcoming of Syrian refugees in Atlantic communities has demonstrated that Atlantic Canadians can be warm and welcoming to newcomers. In many cases, it has given them the opportunity to experience the value newcomers bring to a community.

Private Members' Business

We also must consider that in 2001, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency analyzed the regions of Atlantic Canada where immigrants settled and suggested that immigrants settle in counties with higher unemployment rates, yet they experience a lower unemployment rate relative to the total resident population. This observation points to the possibility that often immigrants are working in jobs that local residents are not willing to take or that in these particular counties, unemployment levels may be of a structural nature and that local labour pools do not possess the qualifications to fill the vacant jobs.

What we are seeing now is that while federal and provincial governments have many policies and programs in place to help workers receive training and education needed for the jobs available, the projected vacancies are far more than can be filled by Atlantic Canadians alone. Immigration can help address the skill shortages holding back economic development and improve the region's prospects.

For example, just last week I visited J.D. Irving, Limited's Maritime Innovation Limited laboratory in Sussex, New Brunswick, where I was advised that the company is looking to hire 7,278 people over the next three years for its diverse operations in Canada.

• (1340)

Achieving this goal for them means a focus on keeping New Brunswickers at home, as in the case of the company's recent hiring of 47 workers who worked at the closed potash mine. As well, they are looking at growing talent at home through partnerships with local universities and community colleges.

Welcoming newcomers to make Canada home is also part of their strategy. A good example is Mr. Mullai Manoharan, a scientist employed at the laboratory. Mullai came to Canada from India to study agriculture at the Truro campus at Dalhousie University. He achieved his Master of Science degree and was hired by the company to contribute to research and innovation here in New Brunswick. He is currently applying for permanent residence status in Canada.

Two of the fastest growing cities in Atlantic Canada are Halifax and Moncton, and both mayors are looking to immigration as a means of growth, because they project that job vacancies in their cities will exceed the current workforce. In the words of Mayor Mike Savage of Halifax, instead of calling people "come from aways", we need to tell them "come from away".

It is also important to note that building more diverse communities in Atlantic Canada will help us in repatriating friends and family who have migrated to other parts of Canada. Those people still come home every chance they get, because they do love the lifestyle of Atlantic Canada. In order to bring them home again permanently, we are going to need outside sources to match the thousands of jobs that have gone unfilled for over a year with existing businesses that have the potential to create new economic opportunities.

As a country, we have an opportunity right now to study the narrative of Atlantic Canada as we develop immigration policy applicable in the region today and other provinces in the future.

I am very pleased to inform the House that since I began work on this motion, a whole-of-government approach, the Atlantic growth

strategy, was announced on July 4, 2016, as a series of evidence-based, collaborative actions to enhance Atlantic Canada's economic performance. I would like to think that my work on this motion, and the work of my team and colleagues, has contributed to the government's decision to include a three-year, employer-driven immigration pilot program to attract and retain newcomers in Atlantic Canada as part of the strategy.

Currently, the federal government and the provinces are working together to identify policies that impact immigration, such as credential recognition and legislation like Bill C-6, which would allow 50% credit for time spent in Canada for international students wishing to continue on their path to citizenship.

The Atlantic Canada immigration pilot is an opportunity to test innovative approaches that will help to enhance retention, and potentially could be replicated in other provinces and territories, depending on results. The pilot project will accept up to 2,000 more applications from immigrants, plus their family members, in 2017, with rising numbers in the following years depending on performance.

In addition to the immigration pilot program, the Atlantic growth strategy focuses on four other important areas: innovation, clean growth and climate change, trade and investment, and infrastructure.

The initiative has been well received by the Atlantic provincial premiers, the Atlantic business community, and think tanks such as the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council. More importantly, it has sparked a conversation that has people in the streets talking about where we need to go to really change our prospects for growth.

In fact, just last week, I hosted a round table with local business, community leaders, and stakeholders, who praised the initiative. After concluding the round table, I was very encouraged by a local business that wanted to continue the dialogue about how it could start thinking outside the box in order to welcome newcomers to the workforce and include immigration as part of its recruitment strategy. The group came up with ideas, such as having clusters of newcomers working together with support from other employees and management to make sure they felt comfortable and had the opportunity to share ideas concerning safety and efficiencies.

Given the government's swift action on this file, I would be open to a friendly amendment to the motion that would focus the committee's work on the examination of retention and settlement, with a view to bringing forward recommendations on best practices. This would include examining experiences flowing from the immigration pilot.

Atlantic Canada has a long history of being resilient, a region settled by a distinct mix of British, Scottish, Gaelic, and French immigrants. The time has come for us to encourage the new visitors to stay and begin a new chapter in the history of the east coast.

• (1345)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. The time is up, but the member will probably be able to finish some of her input in some of the questions and answers.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Fundy Royal for moving a motion that asks for a study on immigration to Atlantic Canada as a possible solution to the demographic challenges facing the people living in the four Atlantic provinces.

However, I noted that, in her speech, she made no mention of the demographics of francophone communities in the four Atlantic provinces. We know there is a serious problem.

We are told that 2% of immigrants outside Quebec, that is to say in provinces other than Quebec, are francophone. The problem was pointed out by New Brunswick's official languages commissioner, who said that the francophone community lags behind the anglophone community in terms of immigration.

According to the member, what place will the issue of the francophone population in these four provinces have in the committee's study on francophone immigration to Atlantic Canada?

[*English*]

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments on this. I believe it is important to focus on both English and French immigration in Atlantic Canada. I know the province of New Brunswick has taken a particular focus on this and is already looking at immigration policies. I would advise the committee to look at this in depth as well to see if there are ways to increase French immigration.

• (1350)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Fundy Royal for being a leader in our Atlantic caucus on this issue of immigration. Anyone in Atlantic Canada can immediately see how our population is aging, that there are fewer young families, and how we need to do something if we want to maintain our economic growth.

I know that not only the member for Fundy Royal but also the member for Central Nova and myself have written articles on this topic in our local papers, and we have reached out and held round tables on this topic. I would also like to thank the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for coming to Newfoundland and Labrador and hosting those with me.

This proposed friendly amendment is a real testament to the work that is being done with respect to the notion of looking at retention of immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador and the other Atlantic

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Canadian provinces as well as on settlement and allowing newcomers to participate in our economy in an appropriate way, and helping the local people learn to appreciate the newcomers.

Therefore, I would ask the member for Fundy Royal how she feels this amendment with respect to settlement and retention services will affect the people of New Brunswick.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Madam Speaker, there is a real opportunity here for the committee to study retention. Let us face the fact. We cannot just attract people. We need to study the ways in which we can retain them in our communities, and the way that the communities need to be involved in this resettlement. We know that immigrants are most likely to stay in the areas where they arrive when they are welcomed and provided support. Sometimes that is as easy as a drop-in visit to see how they are doing, ensuring that the support is there for their families, and that their children are welcomed in the schools.

I have to look back at the refugee project that the country has undertaken as a real success story and how communities have shown that they are very excited to do this for newcomers. There have been many wonderful stories about how they have welcomed refugees into the communities. I look forward to the committee study on that as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

With respect to francophone immigration to regions where francophones are in the minority, what will the government do to help those minorities and help those immigrants integrate? Will francophone economic immigration to western Canada be beneficial?

[*English*]

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Madam Speaker, my colleague asked what the government was going to do. The motion really is not about that. It is about asking the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to look at ways of increasing immigration. I agree that we need to look at the francophone population as well and any specifics with respect to that, but this is about a study by the committee.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is with the combined efforts of every level of government and the welcoming nature of all Canadians that we continue to be a nation known for our warm reception of newcomers, providing the foundation for seamless integration into our society. We recognize that by promoting continued immigration, we stand to benefit both economically and culturally.

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Canada has been built upon the skills, the hard work, and the fresh perspectives of newcomers from around the world, and Canada's future success as a nation will also depend on incorporating the expertise and diversity that new Canadians offer. It is evident that these benefits are not being equally distributed across the nation, with some provinces receiving significantly fewer immigrants than others. Atlantic Canada is an example of this. The Atlantic provinces have had a much lower rate of immigration than the rest of the country, and the negative repercussions of this are very obvious. It is clear that steps must be taken to reverse the population decline in the region.

We support this motion, in that the immigration committee can help work towards finding methods of bringing long-term immigration to the Atlantic provinces. I hope that the committee will include suggestions for robust consultations with the provinces, as we know that this was something lacking when the Liberals announced the immigration levels plan earlier this year.

We are hearing that the provinces would like more say into the immigration policies for their province. One of the best ways to do so is through the provincial nomination program. A part of the solution may include re-evaluating the restrictive cap that the government has placed on the provincial nominee program so that provinces can encourage immigration specific to the needs of the province. Economic growth in the Atlantic provinces will be dependent upon increasing stable long-term immigration. This is why we hope that initiatives like the PNP are increased, as opposed to an increase in the temporary foreign worker program, which would not enable long-term growth. In order to be beneficial to the region, sustainable options should be explored.

Under the current Liberal government, so far we have seen cuts to economic immigration and no increases in the provincial nomination program. We are concerned with the interest that has been expressed by the current government in revamping the temporary foreign worker program, as research has shown that it may result in decreased wages and lower working conditions, particularly in the fish processing industry. Although this may provide short-term relief to the Atlantic seafood processors, it would allow the region to maintain low market wages, further contributing to the unemployment of the residents of the Atlantic provinces. We recognize the hard work of the people of the east coast and the way that the current economic downturn has affected them. We wish to see current obstacles eliminated and the revival of the struggling regional economy.

There are many reasons why the government should abandon the focus on short-term foreign contracts in exchange for long-term population growth. It is the Atlantic provinces of this nation that are in the greatest need of a stable increase in population. We believe there are tangible ways to achieve this goal in a sustainable manner. Nova Scotia is a prime example of a province that would clearly benefit from an increase in immigration, a fact that provincial leaders acknowledge and advocate for. Their population is both declining numerically and rapidly aging, and an influx of newcomers is necessary to reverse this negative trend.

In 2014, Ray Ivany published a comprehensive report detailing the steps necessary to assist in Nova Scotia's economic growth. This commission provided a strong case for increasing immigration to the

province, stating that Nova Scotia must stabilize its population base and increase the number of working-age people if it wishes to sustain current levels of economic well-being. It recommended that the most effective way to do so would be by increasing immigration to the province by 7,000 people per year. However, this goal will be nearly impossible to reach until the Liberal government stops cutting economic immigration and starts consulting with the provinces.

Nova Scotia is advocating for an increased quota in its provincial nominee program, with needs for immigrants above and beyond the current federal cap. Julie Towers, the chief executive officer of the province's office of immigration, recently spoke on this point at the committee on public accounts in Halifax. Ms. Towers highlighted Nova Scotia's success in the provincial nomination program, taking an average of one month to process an application compared to the approximately six months under the federal express entry system. However, Towers admitted that the province was clearly limited by the federal cap.

● (1355)

When the Minister of Immigration was approached regarding this issue last spring, he responded with increasing the provincial cap by a mere 300 nominees, ambiguously but non-completely vowing to look at the quotas for the next three years, while heavily pushing the government's significantly less effective express entry plan.

In his speech to the Halifax Chamber of Commerce on March 15, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship stated, "I... understand your message. You'd have to be an idiot not to understand." While this sentiment may be true, it would seem that the government is content with understanding, but is significantly less interested in action.

Nova Scotia is looking for a federal government that will support it in its time of need, a government that will not only acknowledge its concern, but actively address it.

It is clear that long-term and sustainable immigration will have a positive impact on the Atlantic provinces. These are the types of initiatives that need to be taken in Atlantic Canada, engagement that will truly make a difference in the cultural and economic outlook of Atlantic communities.

If the intent of the federal government is to use this proposed study to find ways to make it easier for immigrants to settle in the communities in question, then it will most certainly be positive. If the study brings awareness to the fact that the provincial nominee program is severely underutilized in provinces such as Nova Scotia, then we are confident that it is well worth the time spent investigating. Our hope is that the government would recognize the initiatives that have already seen success in bringing immigrants to the region, taking advantage of the advice of knowledgeable stakeholders such as Julie Towers, who has nothing but praise for the results of the provincial nominee program.

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Programs such as these provide provinces and territories with the opportunity to nominate individuals who want to live in the region. This is precisely the type of program that a province such as Nova Scotia needs, bringing individuals into the communities who have already expressed interest in making it their place of residence. This also allows for the Atlantic provinces to nominate candidates with the relevant skills and education to fill their workforce deficit.

Programs such as these both allow for the eastern provinces to welcome new community members and grow their stagnating economy at the same time. This is particularly relevant due to the fact that Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island are all among the provinces participating in the provincial nominating program, with each respective province running its own program to find talented individuals that fit their specific workforce needs.

Initiatives like the provincial nominee program do not only benefit the provinces, they also benefit the individual. An immigrant who has specifically chosen the region as a desired place of residence will be much more content with the decision, and due to the selection process, will have a better chance of using his or her specific skill set effectively within the community. This, as a byproduct, improves the nation as a whole, boosting both the economy and public morale.

It is time for the government to recognize that in moments of economic difficulty, as the Atlantic provinces are experiencing, sunny ways will not always do the job and that hard work is necessary not just empty promises and ambiguous talking points.

If this study moves beyond hypothesizing and results in action, relieving the red tape restricting the east from welcoming the immigrants it needs, then the motion has our support.

●(1400)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House.

I am the NDP finance critic as well as my party's critic for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the caucus representative for Atlantic Canada.

These roles gave me the opportunity to visit all four provinces this summer and meet with many different organizations and individuals in each community. It was a wonderful experience that helped me understand the challenges facing the people of Atlantic Canada. We know that they are extremely resilient to these challenges, but the challenges are many.

One of the challenges is demographics. With this motion, the member for Fundy Royal is bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I thank her for doing so.

It would have been relatively simple to ask members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to study the matter, but moving this motion in the House will raise public awareness of the problem, which is a good thing.

[English]

When we talk about the challenges that people in Atlantic Canada face, obviously there is a demographic challenge. The demographic

challenge is not only in terms of the number of Atlantic Canadians who live there year after year; it is also a question of the aging population. When we look at this situation all across the country, the problem in Atlantic Canada is very acute.

Is immigration the solution to that problem? It might or might not be, but that will be up to the committee to study this question. However, one problem we could see in terms of immigration being the lone solution to this aging problem is the fact that for this immigration, we need an economic environment that is conducive to retaining them after they have arrived.

When we look at the situation in Atlantic Canada, the exodus problem comes from the youth population.

●(1405)

[Translation]

One of the main reasons why we are seeing this exodus of young people is because, although it does vary by region, a large part of the Atlantic provinces' economy depends on seasonal work and many of those jobs are precarious. Obviously, if we want people to immigrate to the Atlantic provinces and stay there, we need good quality jobs, jobs that provide a certain amount of stability for those who want to start a family and watch their children grow up in the Atlantic provinces.

I think that that is one of the main questions that the committee will have to examine if this motion is adopted. I want to say right now that I will be voting in favour of this motion.

One of the reasons why I asked the member for Fundy Royal a question about francophone immigration is that this issue is often overlooked. When we look at the situation across the country, not including Quebec, we see that francophone immigration to the nine other provinces of Canada represents only 2% of the immigrant population.

As in other parts of Canada, francophone communities in the Atlantic provinces are at risk of assimilation and their ability to make a significant contribution to their province's economy is threatened. The fact that more immigrants to Canada are anglophone definitely jeopardizes the vitality of francophone communities surrounded by an anglophone majority.

I am not alone in saying so. Others have also sounded the alarm, including Katherine d'Entremont, the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick. In 2014, she indicated that francophone communities, which represent one-third of New Brunswick's population, are not deriving as much benefit from immigration as anglophone communities.

Of course, if there are no major demographic changes, immigration is going to start tipping the balance on the anglophone side, potentially threatening francophone and Acadian communities in New Brunswick.

One of the things the member talked about was the pilot program, the details of which began surfacing in July. We will be paying close attention to this pilot program, whose aim is to enhance immigration in the hopes of better attracting and retaining newcomers.

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Details remain scarce, however. We do not know how much money will be invested, nor do we know anything about the conditions of the program or how its success will be evaluated. What we do know is that 2,000 immigrants will be accepted initially in the Atlantic provinces, with the hopes that they will one day be able to stay there.

One area where I would love to see the government take concrete action is in economic diversification. If we want to retain these newcomers, having a more stable economy will be crucial. I mentioned the precarious and seasonal nature of the jobs in many industries in Atlantic Canada.

At the beginning of the summer, I was extremely disappointed to learn that the Atlantic fish and seafood processing industry had been exempted by the government from the national restrictions on the temporary foreign workers program, which were put in place because of past abuses.

The restrictions imposed on the program forced industries to offer higher wages in order to attract interested local workers and provide training programs to improve employee retention. As a result of pressure by the fish and seafood processing industry, these companies were allowed easier access to temporary foreign workers rather than hiring local workers. I believe this is a step backwards.

Temporary foreign workers are not really the solution, at least not in the current immigration and demographic context, because these workers come here and eventually leave. Therefore, it was disappointing that the government went in that direction.

The member's motion addresses immigration as a whole, and I certainly hope that the issue of temporary foreign workers and the impact of the program on employment and the local success of industry will be thoroughly studied by the committee. I believe that is something that will need to be addressed to ensure the success of this study.

● (1410)

[English]

The NDP will vote in favour of the motion. I do not think we can be opposed to studying the demographic question of Atlantic Canada, not only the question of the population levels but also the question of the aging population. Atlantic Canada has a very specific makeup and has concerns that need to be taken up by the House and the committee.

I certainly hope the committee will take its work in that regard seriously. I look forward to being able to contribute in some manner to its work. We certainly wish the committee success in this work, and we hope the House is able to finally find some solution that will help Atlantic Canada to revitalize their communities. They have done a lot for Canada, and it is time for Canada to give back to them.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to contribute to this debate. Today we are considering a motion that would instruct the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to undertake a study on immigration to Atlantic Canada.

First of all, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Fundy Royal, for introducing this very important motion and for her dedicated service to the people of her riding and Atlantic Canada.

On behalf of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, I would like to affirm what now sounds pretty much unanimous, which is the Government of Canada's full agreement with the hon. member's motion, and I encourage everyone in the House to join me in supporting Motion No. 39.

This motion proposes that a study on immigration to Atlantic Canada consider, among other things, "the challenges associated with an aging population and shrinking population base". Atlantic Canada certainly faces a number of demographic challenges. A number of the speakers have already referred to this. It includes declining fertility rates and the long-standing trend of young residents leaving the region to settle and work elsewhere.

According to the latest figures from Statistics Canada, the Atlantic provinces have the highest proportion of residents aged 65 or older and are among the provinces with the lowest proportion of residents aged 14 and under.

The motion also proposes that the study consider "possible recommendations on how to increase immigration to the region". Indeed, Atlantic Canada faces a number of challenges in both attracting, and importantly, retaining immigrants. This is a theme I am going to return to.

We have heard some of the statistics. In 2014, 6.7% of the population lived in Atlantic Canada, but the region only accepted 3.1% of new immigrants. As well, we had a recent government study that found that about 40% of all new immigrants who arrived in the region between 2006 and 2011 actually moved on to other regions. Given those kinds of demographic and statistical realities, it is entirely appropriate and timely that the standing committee thoroughly study this issue in order to make thoughtful recommendations that will benefit the economic and social development of Atlantic Canada.

[Translation]

We know from recent experience that people in the Maritimes have a keen interest in this issue. In Atlantic Canada, people are acutely aware that immigration plays an important role in economic growth, and they would like more immigrants to settle there.

During our recent national effort to bring thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada in the span of a few months, Atlantic Canadians were particularly enthusiastic in their support.

● (1415)

[English]

Specifically, back in March, at a meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers, Nova Scotia's immigration minister, who herself is the daughter of immigrants, proudly noted that her province is taking in almost five times the number of refugees it normally takes in a single year. Indeed, support for increased immigration has been expressed recently by all provincial governments in the context of the Syrian crisis.

All Atlantic premiers have voiced support for the resettlement of refugees in the region. I should underline here the importance the co-operation between this federal government and the four premiers in Atlantic Canada who have been participating, actively collaborating, and working on the Atlantic growth strategy with our government. The governments specifically of both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have indicated that they would welcome an even higher number of refugees.

However, refugees are only one part of the story. Our immigration system also has programs for reuniting families and recruiting and attracting economic immigrants.

Under one of our economic immigration programs, the provincial nominee program, participating provinces and territories develop economic immigration streams tailored to their regional needs and nominate candidates on the basis of their ability to contribute to their regional economies. This was raised directly by the Conservative member opposite, so I would point out to her and her colleagues that part of the pilot project we are announcing and have already promoted and will commence next year actually specifically deals with speed and space. What I mean by that is that this pilot program would provide provinces, including the Atlantic Canadian provinces, with a significant number of additional nominations outside the current provincial nominee program allocation. That addresses precisely what has been raised by the members opposite.

What is important to underline here is that we are trying to address the statistical reality. For example, in 2005, only 1.5% of new immigrants to Canada were destined for any of the Atlantic provinces. By 2014, thanks in part to the PNP, that percentage had doubled to more than 3.1%. Is there still room for more growth? Absolutely.

Since the introduction of express entry in 2015, the Atlantic provinces have been given the opportunity to bring in even more immigrants than ever before. As we know, Atlantic Canada has a lot to offer potential immigrants: diverse economies, welcoming communities, terrific parliamentary representatives, incredible geographic beauty, and a picturesque lifestyle that is the envy of many. I will add to that, by the by, that I know about this first-hand, having married a townie from the wonderful province of Newfoundland.

The region has also capitalized on its existing learning, research, and innovation advantages through its strong post-secondary institutions, some of which were mentioned by the member for Fundy Royal. That has helped to attract a growing number of international students.

Atlantic Canada's supportive business environment and entrepreneurial culture have also facilitated the arrival of many immigrant entrepreneurs, who have started small businesses and are providing a very necessary solution to business succession needs in the region.

However, in spite of the many positives, there are still issues that warrant further study, as recommended by this motion. For instance, of all the immigrants who landed in the Atlantic provinces between 2006 and 2011, only 60% were still resident in their original province of destination in 2011, compared with 90% who remain in western provinces and 93% who remain in Ontario.

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What explains this phenomenon? As the minister has learned during extensive consultations in the region just this past summer, many newcomers leave Atlantic Canada for economic reasons, because the region has, unfortunately, a higher than average unemployment rate. Others leave for socio-cultural reasons, and are drawn to relatives or larger diaspora communities in bigger, more diverse urban centres, such as Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver.

Clearly, a study on immigration to Atlantic Canada must have a strong focus on fostering strategies to both successfully integrate and successfully retain immigrants in the region. That, again, goes to the point about retention.

The Government of Canada's support for this motion to study increased immigration to Atlantic Canada is consistent with our desire for an open, accepting, and generous immigration system. We would also suggest that for any study of this sort, the committee collaborate with other committees studying related areas, such as temporary foreign workers, as raised by the NDP member opposite.

We would encourage the committee to engage with the provincial governments that I mentioned, the provincial premiers, who have first-hand expertise. We would also suggest, and has been mentioned twice now in the House today, that the committee pay particular attention to the role of official languages in increasing immigration to Atlantic Canada.

[*Translation*]

The vast majority of francophone minority communities in Atlantic Canada are seeing a sharp decline in their population and would benefit greatly from an increase in francophone immigrants.

[*English*]

Before I move for overall support for the motion, I will move a friendly amendment to the motion by the member for Fundy Royal, that the motion be amended by replacing all of the words after (ii) with the following:

retention of current residents and the challenges of retaining new immigrants, (iii) possible recommendations on how to increase immigration to the region, (iv) analysis of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot initiatives associated with the Atlantic growth strategy; and that the committee report its findings to the House within one year of the adoption of this motion.

On that basis, I strongly support Motion No. 39 that we are debating today, as does the government. I encourage all members who are not present and have not heard this debate yet to join all of us in supporting this motion.

● (1420)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), no amendments may be proposed to a private member's motion or to a motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Fundy Royal if she consents to this amendment being moved.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do consent to this amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion is admissible.

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Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say that here in Canada we have the opportunity to provide a welcoming and prosperous environment to new immigrants. We are in that position thanks to the efforts not only of the federal government, but also of the provinces, municipalities, and especially the people welcoming those who come from other countries to build a life with their family here in Canada, but especially to find a job.

Across Canada, immigrants have a positive impact. They encourage both pluralism and economic growth. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has already indicated how beneficial immigration is for our country's economy. The OECD said that immigration improves the workforce and helps meet the needs of certain industries. Let us not forget that immigrants arrive in Canada with the skills and training that contribute not only to their prosperity, but to the economic prosperity of Canada.

However, the economic benefits of immigration are not equally divided between the provinces. The Atlantic provinces still have low immigration rates at a time when economic growth is sorely needed. That is especially troublesome because the Liberal government did not properly consult the provinces before presenting the latest report on immigration levels.

Considering the circumstances and the lack of consultation with the provinces, we support this motion's intention, which is to explore how we can ensure long-term immigration in Atlantic Canada.

We encourage the government to have a closer look at the immigration resulting from initiatives like the provincial nominee program. That program allows the provinces and territories to select immigrants who have the experience and skills required to meet their specific needs.

Immigration can stimulate growth in Atlantic Canada, but it must be long-term and sustainable, unlike immigration that results from initiatives like the temporary foreign worker program.

We believe that short-term solutions will not support long-term changes. While long-term, sustainable immigration can play a crucial role in the growth of the Atlantic economy, relying on the temporary foreign worker program to stimulate the economy will have only short-term benefits. There will be no major demographic shift.

Our reasons for not supporting increases to the temporary foreign worker program go far beyond the fact that this is only a short-term solution.

The fish processing industry is an excellent example of the problems with short-term solutions. Research has shown that the industry's dependence on temporary foreign workers may drive down wages and working conditions. That is bad for Canadians and foreign workers.

With an unemployment rate of 10.1% in Newfoundland and Labrador and 8.8% in New Brunswick, it is vital that Atlantic Canadians be given the tools they need to find work and earn fair wages.

Although fish processing plants are a fairly significant source of jobs in Atlantic Canada, it is important to note the difference between the annual average income of workers in these plants and the annual average income in Canada. According to Service Canada, the annual average income of a fish plant worker is \$26,800. In comparison, the annual average income for all occupations in Canada is \$50,300. That is a difference of over \$23,000. That is a big deal when you consider that the presence of temporary foreign workers in the fish processing industry may be partly responsible for the low wages and the high unemployment rate.

When the previous government indicated that changes were going to be made to the temporary foreign worker program, jobs in the fish processing industry were a major concern.

● (1425)

Taken together, those facts point to just one conclusion: focusing on long-term immigration is the best way to attract new residents and stimulate economic growth in Atlantic Canada.

That is why the government should turn to the provincial nominee program, which lets provinces choose the workers they need, rather than increase the number of workers coming in under the temporary foreign worker program.

Recently, the Ivany commission recommended measures to stimulate economic growth in Nova Scotia. The recommendations touched on everything from growing new businesses to boosting immigration. The Ivany report also recommended that Nova Scotia receive 7,000 new immigrants every year to help stimulate growth in the province.

Maybe the government would be aware of these concerns had the Liberals bothered to consult the provinces before releasing their latest report on immigration levels.

Boosting immigration sustainably for the long term would probably have had a positive effect on the Atlantic provinces. Immigrants become active members of local economies. They find work, start businesses, and participate in community programs. In short, they become citizens of the places and communities they call home.

By encouraging the government to target immigration through the provincial nominee programs, we can build stronger communities and improve economic prosperity in the region.

The provincial nominee programs provide the type of commitment that could have a real, lasting effect in Atlantic Canada and stimulate the economy for the good of all the residents of Atlantic Canada. Unfortunately, the current government chose not to increase the number of nominees for this program when it had the opportunity to do so this year. That is worrisome for the Atlantic provinces because this is a program that could have stimulated economic growth.

I hope this study will provide the necessary guidelines for the federal government to start increasing immigration in the region and listen to the needs of the provinces.

According to the government's website, the provincial nominees are selected according to their skills, education, and their work experience. It should also be noted that the 2010 assessment indicated that most of the provincial governments preferred the provincial nominee programs for such benefits as the increased ability to meet labour force needs and respond to provincial priorities, as well as the ability to attract workers wanting to settle outside of major centres, not to mention the shorter processing times.

The Liberals should bear this assessment in mind, especially, again, since they chose not to consult the provinces before presenting the report on immigration levels.

One of the main advantages of this program is its flexibility, which helps in obtaining the type of immigration required, which varies according to the needs of the provinces. The requirements and results vary as well.

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I could go on at length, but apparently my time is almost up. We will support this motion and we will work very hard on improving the economy in Atlantic Canada.

• (1430)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Mégantic—L'Érable will have two minutes to finish his speech the next time the House examines this issue.

[*English*]

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.

[*Translation*]

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

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

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