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Monday, October 30, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 30, 2017

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ACT

The House resumed from September 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-326, An Act to amend the Department of Health Act (drinking water guidelines), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be speaking today on an act to amend the Department of Health Act drinking water guidelines. Before getting into the sobering debate that is under way, I wish to quickly highlight the village of Zeballos in my riding, as it was voted best tap water in B.C. this year, according to the BC Water & Waste Association.

In principle, the NDP supports the bill's mandated guideline reviews since it has long called for a national water policy to secure the principles of water as a human right and a public trust. We need to have a discussion about more stringent national objectives and standards, in line with the European Union, United States, Australia, and the World Health Organization.

According to a 2014 report commissioned by the environmental litigation organization Ecojustice, drinking water standards in Canada continue to lag behind international benchmarks. With a country as rich as ours, and with so much freshwater resource at our disposal, it is quite shameful to be in this position, having to debate drinking water guidelines in the House in 2017.

There are two-thirds of all first nations communities in Canada that have been under at least one drinking water advisory at some time in the last decade, and people in many municipalities face repeated drinking water advisories. According to the latest figures from Health Canada, 85 first nations communities across Canada are facing a total of 130 drinking water advisories, 98 of them long term, and 32 short term. That does not include communities in B.C. where a separate first nations health authority tracks water quality.

It was a major promise in the last election to end drinking advisories in indigenous communities within five years. However,

according to a recent report from the David Suzuki Foundation, the Liberal government is not on track to fulfill its promise and has no plan to get there. That is completely unacceptable, disappointing, and frustrating.

There is no regulatory framework holding the federal government accountable for safe drinking water in indigenous communities. This is largely because provincial laws and regulations that apply for municipalities do not apply to reserves, which are considered federal lands under federal jurisdiction. Enabling legislation passed in 2013 gave the government the authority to develop water and waste water regulations for first nations communities under the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act, but it does not compel the government to do so. This means that no level of government is currently held accountable to ensure that drinking water is clean and safe on reserves.

Engineers working in the field apply provincial standards as guidance for their operations. However, because of this informal approach, it does not empower communities in their efforts to hold the federal government accountable when underfunding, equipment breakdown, and other issues prevent them from maintaining these standards. Without these standards, there are victims in the path of this neglect.

Dorothy Firstrider of the Blood band said, “A lot of our community members are suffering from stomach infections that are due to unsafe drinking water.... A lot of our infants are constantly being treated for a lot of infections that are due to unhealthy drinking water.” That is not okay in our country. We will never achieve true reconciliation without addressing the inequality, and indeed the injustice, that has existed throughout this country for far too long with respect to drinking water.

It is completely unacceptable that successive federal governments have failed to honour the fundamental human right to clean drinking water in so many indigenous communities. There needs to be an expedited infrastructure development process. There needs to be more indigenous decision-making in the process, and there needs to be greater transparency in how the federal government is working towards upholding its promise to end drinking water advisories within five years.

Private Members' Business

The Liberals will claim they are spending money, but the additional funds allocated for first nations water systems in the 2016 budget represent less than half the amount that engineering firm Neegan Burnside estimated was necessary in 2011. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada's funding pressures will likely worsen as it finances new plants that tend to be more expensive to operate than their predecessors.

• (1110)

In my riding of North Island—Powell River, we have seen some progress in some areas. The clean water and wastewater fund joint initiative between the B.C. provincial government and the Government of Canada has awarded additional infrastructure dollars in the riding over the past few years. However, there are still some important challenges ahead. We still have highly coloured water or “cedar water” in some areas. Saline intrusion is an issue for wells on islands and near the coast, where groundwater is often a reservoir of fresh water on top of the more dense saline water. Kingcome first nation is concerned about its water supply. Comox has had significant problems with turbidity, causing extended boil water advisories fairly regularly over the last few years. It has just settled on a proposal for a new filtration system and is now working on funding, for which it will have a very large federal ask. It is so important that it be addressed. Like Comox, too many municipalities continue to face repeated drinking water advisories. The federal government needs to step up to ensure that every Canadian community has access to clean drinking water.

I see the bill before us today as a conversation starter, because experts have clearly demonstrated that Canada is lagging on many fronts when it comes to drinking water. Here are a few examples that the Liberals need to take in consideration.

Canadian drinking water objectives and standards should incorporate health based, long-term objectives for drinking water quality similar to the maximum contaminant level goals established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These long-term objectives would provide a vision for the future and clarify the distinction between purely health-based objectives and standards based on other considerations.

New Canadian drinking water objectives and standards should establish outcome-based treatment standards to ensure effective protection from microbiological organisms through advanced filtration, or an equally effective treatment process such as UV, for all communities in which drinking water supply is provided by surface water sources or groundwater that is directly influenced by surface water. This step is needed to address the threat to public health posed by microbiological contaminants, particularly protozoa and viruses. The U.S. has already taken this important step.

The last is establishing national standards for maximum allowable concentrations for microbiological, physical, chemical, and radiological contaminants. The U.S. and the EU have legally binding standards for maximum allowable concentrations in drinking water. Canadians should enjoy the same level of protection. One approach would be to create a federal safety net, so that the national standards would only apply on federal lands and in provinces and territories that did not provide the same level of health protection as the national standards.

In principle, the NDP will support this bill's mandated guideline reviews since it has long called for a national water policy to secure the principles of water as a human right and a public trust. I hope the government will respond to our call for more stringent national objectives and standards in line with the European Union, United States, Australia, and the World Health Organization.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to have an opportunity to speak this morning.

I trust that members had a good weekend, perhaps putting their final Halloween preparations together and getting their costumes ready. I hear the Minister of Defence has a good architect costume ready to go, the Minister of Finance is going to dress himself up as a champion of the middle class, and the Prime Minister is going to work as hard as possible to look like a feminist. I am sure we will be seeing good costumes on display this week, and I wish members well in the celebrations. If the costumes do not go well, do not worry, nothing is going to scare our children more than the deficit projections.

Now, Bill C-326 is an act to amend the Department of Health Act, establishing drinking water guidelines. For those who are just joining the debate, the bill would amend the Department of Health Act to require the Minister of Health to conduct a review of drinking water standards in other OECD countries. It is a requirement to conduct that review, if appropriate. It is not required of the minister. It would empower the minister to make recommendations for amendments to the national guidelines respecting drinking water.

I know what members might be thinking, but the bill is not as controversial as it might sound at first. The bill would give the added encouragement to conduct this review and gather this information based on best practices in other countries within the OECD. On that basis, we think it is a reasonable bill. It is something we in the opposition are pleased to support. I think the bill will find support throughout the House as a way of moving forward and bringing more information into the assessment in terms of what we are doing with respect to drinking water.

With that explained in terms of the context of the bill, I will make a few points with respect to it in terms of water quality, the federal role, and the question of ministerial discretion. Then, finally, I will talk about how we incorporate the best science and information into the policy decisions we make.

Private Members' Business

First of all, of course, in the Conservative caucus, we strongly support high-quality drinking water. We think that governments at all levels should do as much as they possibly can to ensure that water is safe to drink. We recognize, especially for indigenous communities, that there is a great deal of work that still needs to be done in that respect. However, it is a basic principle that all people should be able to access this fundamental necessity of life. They should be able to access water in a clean and safe way.

We live in a country that is geographically dispersed. It is very large. That can potentially create some additional challenges, but it is fundamental that people be able to access clean water. I do not think that is a point on which any member would disagree.

One of the things that the bill invites us to consider is the federal role in establishing standards. Certainly under the previous government, we believed in a federal role for establishing clean water standards. At the same time, the practical implementation of those guidelines, for most Canadians, happens through other levels of government, at the provincial and municipal level. Of course, the federal government has more direct involvement with respect to indigenous communities. There is still a role for the federal government to be reviewing this information and working to establish guidelines, even though the implementation happens at other levels. The way we can think about this balance is under the principle of subsidiarity, which is something I believe in, and that we in the Conservative caucus believe in.

Subsidiarity is the idea that services should be delivered at the level closest to the people affected that is practical for the service delivery to happen. It means we should be concerned about legislation or policy that involves the federal government taking over responsibility that can be done more effectively and competently at the community or provincial level. We should trust local communities. However, where there is a certain scale and efficiency, then it makes sense for the federal government to be engaged.

• (1115)

There is not the scale or effectiveness in having every individual community, without the support of overarching guidelines, come up with its own guidelines independent of that federal support.

This case is an example of where the federal government can play to its strength, which is to gather information from different jurisdictions around the world, where it can conduct the legality of information, and make that information available to other levels of government, while at the same time seek to empower them and not take away their ability to make decisions on their own.

Across areas of government, our approach to federal government activity in general is to look for those competencies of it where the scale makes sense for it to play that coordinating role but not to have it take authority away in areas which can be better done at the provincial or the municipal levels.

Unfortunately, right now we have a federal government that does not trust sub-national governments to make decisions in certain policy areas and seeks to dictate in areas outside of its jurisdiction. I could bring up many examples of that, such as its approach to the carbon tax, where it has told provinces that if they do not do exactly

what it wants them to do, it will impose a jurisdiction-specific tax on them. That is very much out of step with the principles of the Constitution and the principles of subsidiarity.

When we see legislation that might seem to involve the federal government interfering in provincial and other sub-national governmental jurisdictions, we are inclined to ask additional questions. Nonetheless, in this case, the bill gets the balance right. The federal government can play a study and coordination role, while still respecting the decision-making role of other levels of government. This is the balance our caucus looks for in legislation, and that is exactly right in the bill.

The next point I want to talk about is the way in which certain legislation fetters the discretion of a minister.

This bill would marginally fetter the minister's discretion but in an appropriate and reasonable way. It is worth noting that the existing framework allows the minister to do these kinds of activities already. Perhaps the government member who has proposed the bill is concerned that the minister will not do these things otherwise and needs legislation to have that direction. Nonetheless, it is legitimate for legislation in this case to identify specific areas where this study is important and beneficial with respect to what happens around the world and drawing that information in.

In general, our caucus takes the view that it is legitimate and important for there to be certain actions of the legislature to limit the discretion of ministers when it sees it as important to do so.

The government is more philosophically inclined to try to give the maximum discretion to ministers and really minimize that tie-in of legislative accountability. There is a balance to be struck there, that when there is something important like studying different systems around the world for maximizing health through drinking water, there is a legitimate role for the legislature to establish those guidelines and to put those things in place.

The final point I want to make is that the bill asks us to incorporate the best science and information possible in the decisions we make, and we in the opposition strongly support that. We hear the terms many times of evidence-based policy, of science-based policy banded back and forth. It is a real slogan that the government likes to use, but there are many examples where we do not see the government actually drawing on the best science at all. The whole debacle over electoral reform showed how the government was willing to completely ignore the science around public opinion research tools when it suited its purpose. However, in this case, the bill incorporates the best scientific knowledge as part of the framework to be established, and we can support that.

• (1120)

With respect to the issues I have raised of subsidiarity, how to fetter ministerial discretion, and the incorporation of science and policy, the bill strikes the right balance. Again, it will hopefully help us take some further steps toward ensuring high quality drinking water in Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I invite the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis for his right of reply. He has up to five minutes to comment.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

• (1125)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the first hour of debate on this bill, members raised the issue of drinking water in indigenous communities, which is a problem we need to solve as quickly as possible.

Although this bill does not address the issue directly, I hope that all communities in Canada, including rural and indigenous communities, will benefit from its expected outcome.

This bill is designed to ensure that Canada's drinking water standards are the best in the world. It calls on the government to regularly assess Canadian standards against those of the highest standards in the most economically and technologically advanced countries, countries like our own.

With respect to the situation in indigenous communities, we recognize how complex this issue is. A number of factors have made it difficult for this problem to be resolved properly so far. For instance, there is some competition between indigenous and non-indigenous communities when it comes to hiring trained operators. We hope that the funds set aside in budget 2017 to resolve the matter will give indigenous communities the resources they need to attract trained operators, or ensure that the operators are not attracted by other jurisdictions.

Investments are certainly needed, and the funding allocated in budget 2017 should help improve the situation as well as help maintain existing systems. Some communities actually have decent systems, but they have not been able to maintain them because there was not enough money.

Some people would have liked to see the bill go even further by creating a rigorous national legal framework to regulate all the emerging contaminants that are becoming increasingly common in our drinking water. However, that is not the approach I wanted to take in drafting this bill. Rather, the bill seeks to trigger a process for the development of standards. Improving the process will lead to standards as high as the highest standards in technologically and economically advanced countries like Canada.

This is somewhat like the Senate reform undertaken by the government. Sometimes, very small actions can have a much larger impact by changing the dynamic of a particular process. That is what is happening with the Senate. The small action we took is changing the character of the Senate.

Why not establish specific, legal standards for all contaminants? We do not want to start a jurisdictional war between the federal and provincial governments. We know that water management is a provincial responsibility. Furthermore, although such an approach sounds good, it could lead to some unintended consequences. The problem right now is not that there are not enough standards regarding bacteria. The problem has to do with management.

Drinking water management across Canada is very decentralized. If we can improve how drinking water is treated, we will be better able to fix the problems in rural regions and indigenous communities.

• (1130)

On the weekend, I saw that indigenous communities in the Atlantic provinces want to create some sort of regional agency to manage drinking water in those provinces. That is a good idea. That is the direction we should go if we want to fix this problem in the long term.

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

Hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the motion carried. The bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Deputy Speaker: It being 11:32 a.m., the sitting is suspended until noon.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:32 a.m.)

• (1200)

[English]

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

TRANSPORTATION MODERNIZATION ACT

BILL C-49—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.) moved:

That in relation to Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and other Acts respecting transportation and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and one sitting day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the said bill; and

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

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. As usual, I ask that all hon. members who wish to participate in it now rise so that I may determine the time permitted for each.

Accordingly, I will ask hon. members to restrict their interventions to approximately one minute in the course of the 30-minute question period. That will apply both to the member posing the question and the minister responding, and we will do our very best to make sure that all of those who wish to participate in the question period will have an opportunity to do so.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time we have seen closure on this particular bill. The last time we had this question and answer period, the minister said that the reason he moved closure is that he did not think the arguments being advanced by the opposition were substantive enough. We were talking too much about the carbon tax to his liking. It is a unique line of reasoning for a minister to say that the government will shut down debate because it does not like the opposition's arguments, that if the opposition members had given better speeches, it would have let the debate continue. I wonder if that is again the minister's reasoning.

I am still opposed to the carbon tax, but I also have lots of other problems with this bill. To name one, for example, in the spirit of the season, the airline passenger bill of rights is extremely skeletal. It is opposed by all sides for not providing anything more than some oblique references to what the minister might like to do in the future. Why is the minister shutting down debate on such a bad bill and why will he not allow opposition members to give the kinds of speeches we want to make, whether or not he agrees with them?

• (1205)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the point that I made at the time of the previous closure motion about the opposition only talking about the carbon tax must have had a profound effect. I am very glad that the committee that studied this matter returned to Parliament four days early this fall and heard a large number of witnesses on all of the issues surrounding this bill. As a result, I think we have ended up with a very good bill at this point, and I can talk more about that as we go along.

With respect to the passenger rights bill, we took the deliberate approach of mandating that that Canadian Transportation Agency produce the regulations that would govern this passenger bill of rights. We feel that a regulatory approach is a superior approach to enshrining it in the legislation of Bill C-49, because it will give us more flexibility to make changes later on.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed to see this happening again today. We are sitting here with Bill C-49, another omnibus bill that would amend 13 acts. We are not being given the time to discuss it. There are many proposals being put forward and still no concrete support for the government to move forward in a way that Canadians expect.

I appreciate my former colleague's comments about the passenger bill of rights. Again, it is very weak and really an example of the government downloading responsibilities again. In my riding of North Island—Powell River, there are a lot of concerns about regional airports and the direct impacts this bill would have on economic development and their keeping connected to the rest of the world. Here we are, not able to have the substantive discussion that we need to have. We are being closed down again.

Why does the minister think this is an appropriate movement forward when so many Canadians expect so much more?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very happy with where this bill is at at this point. My colleague made reference to an omnibus bill. I might have to remind the member, and probably the House for the 10th time, that 90% of what is in the bill deals with

one act, the Canada Transportation Act. This is not an omnibus bill. This is a very responsible transportation bill that addresses a number of issues that come under the Canada Transportation Act.

As for the member's reference to the passenger bill of rights, the opposition members seem to be fixated that the whole bill would contain every measure related to the passenger bill of rights. No, that is not the case. As I have explained many times before, we feel it is a better approach to give that job to the Canadian Transportation Agency, the organization responsible in the past for ensuring that passenger rights are addressed, as it will in the future. The agency will be doing that job, and at that point my hon. colleagues will see the full impact of the passenger bill of rights.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, of course I do have comments on and concerns about Bill C-49, but this is a debate on time allocation. I want to put a proposition to the hon. minister. The more the Liberals use time allocation, the more we normalize a practice that was offensive to this place under the Harper administration. Avoiding time allocation, treating bills thoroughly, and organizing the schedule of this place is the job of the House leaders. My concern is that by having time allocation time and again on many bills that proper management of the House calendar would have avoided means there are now very few opportunities to speak to bills in debate because the speaking rosters are shrunk to accommodate time allocation.

Therefore, time allocation really does limit democratic debate in this place. It really is normalizing what Harper did, which the hon. minister and I railed against when he was with me on this side of the House. I urge the current government not to decide to set the bar no higher than the previous government did, but to go back a few prime ministers to see how often time allocation was used in those administrations and then to shoot at doing better than that.

• (1210)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment as a government to work collaboratively with all parties to ensure that Parliament would work more efficiently, and it is important for us to make every effort to reach consensus about how much time is required for all parties to debate legislation in the House of Commons. In this particular case, I think we really did hit the sweet spot.

Our government wants to work co-operatively with all members of the House of Commons so that we have a Parliament that is productive and accountable and fosters strong debate. Time allocation is the only tool for a government to advance legislation when a stalemate exists, and we have a duty to ensure that the legislation is brought to a vote. We do have an agenda, and after a reasonable amount of time, we do have to move on.

Government Orders

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one correct thing the minister said is that the Liberals have an agenda and they are going to ram it down our throats, as well as the throats of Canadians, regardless of whether they like it or not. We are debating another time allocation motion on a bill that will have far-reaching impacts on trade, on small communities' air services, on our rail industry, and on privacy with respect to our engineers and our rail systems. We have had everyone from unions to passenger rights advocacy groups, to carriers, to airports, to shippers all over Canada asking why we are rushing this bill. They say that we are not getting it right. They have deep concerns. The Privacy Commissioner sent a letter to the committee chair, dated September 12, 2017, raising concerns about Bill C-49 and the handling of data from locomotive voice recognition and recording devices and privacy issues arising from sharing of that information.

Why the rush? If this is such a fundamental piece of legislation, why are the Liberals rushing it through?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of reasons. A lot of measures must be put in place as soon as possible. For example, Canadians are waiting for the passenger bill of rights. I continually get reminded of that. We have modernized freight rail legislation, which is extremely important for the efficient commerce of trade through our railway system across this country, and the economy of the country.

All Canadians have had a chance to voice their side of the issue. I again thank the transportation committee for coming back five days early from the summer recess to meet a very large number of stakeholders, who had a chance to express themselves. May I say that the process by which we adopted amendments at committee was extremely collegial. There were nine amendments as a result of this, including six from my hon. colleague's party. If that was not a demonstration of our openness to making reasonable changes, I do not know what is.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the minister realize that Bill C-49 removes the power of the Commissioner of Competition to challenge mergers of airline operations? Is he aware that by eliminating the commissioner's power, the same minister can approve an arrangement that could quite possibly increase the costs of airline tickets? How on earth is that of any benefit? Why on earth would the Liberals limit the amount of time we have in the House to debate, discuss, and hopefully amend this ill-conceived legislation?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I hate to correct my colleague, but the Commissioner of Competition will be involved at every stage of the process when we talk about a proposed change regarding joint ventures for airlines. It is clear, and perhaps my colleague has not had a chance to read the legislation, that when a joint venture is proposed, whilst the Minister of Transport will now be involved in the process because of the public interest, he or she will be consulting with the Commissioner of Competition, and if the Commissioner of Competition says that it will not be good for competition, the Minister of Transport will have to take that into account. Therefore, the continued co-operation with the Commissioner of Competition is still there with this new bill.

•(1215)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way indicated that the transportation and infrastructure committee met over the summer and early into the fall and did a great job in putting a study together. One of the first recommendations in its unanimous report was that the 160 kilometre interswitching be maintained. The Liberals have ignored this recommendation by the committee. Would the minister like to comment on how time allocation further limits our debate on this and many other significant issues?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak about that.

We have, of course, replaced the 160-kilometre interchange with the long-haul interchange. The reason for that was explained on many occasions, and it has been very favourably received by captive shippers.

Captive shippers are some of our most important companies, whether in the mining, forestry, or farming sector, who have only one choice in terms of what railway they can access to move their goods to port. The long-haul interchange system applies to all commodities over a much greater distance in all of the provinces of Canada. We have arrived at a new system that allows more competition, and this is well viewed by the shippers in this country from all different sectors.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned that this is not an omnibus bill, because 90% of it has to do with one subject. However, there is another 10%.

I call this bill the "trick or treat" bill, because there is some tricking involved and there is supposedly a treat at the end of it. He also mentioned that time allocation is the only option the government has to move forward legislation. There is actually a second option, which is negotiating in good faith with the opposition House leaders in the chamber to move legislation forward.

I do not understand the rush to not have us debate this bill and point out all of its inadequate components. It is incomplete as a bill. There are three things that we should be considering: cost, access, and user experience. Many have said that the only thing this bill really deals with is the user experience component.

Could the minister tell us why he is rushing through an incomplete bill?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, my goodness, this bill is really something that I wish had been done by the previous government about 10 years ago. This is addressing something that is fundamentally important.

There is a part to the air travellers' side of things, which Canadians have been asking for, for a very long time. In fact, the government voted against private members' bills in the past that would have introduced the concept of a passenger rights' bill.

Government Orders

Second, the rail freight legislation modernization is really trying to get something right that has not been addressed or has been improperly addressed for decades. From the feedback that I have received, not only from shippers involved in the grain industry but from others, I think we have finally grappled with something that the previous government never wanted to touch and never did anything to.

I am extremely pleased with the result that we have had after a great deal of consultation. As I have said, my hon. colleague's party made six of the nine amendments in committee stage. If that is not listening to what the opposition has to say, then I do not know what is.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his remarks, the minister pointed to the fact that this legislation, Bill C-49, addresses a number of pieces of transport legislation. It deals with trade, rail, privacy, competition, and passenger rights.

However, he somehow says that that is not an omnibus bill and wants to somehow distinguish the government's performance from that of the Harper government, where time allocation was brought forward over 100 times, with that member and his party standing with us to rail against the improper use of time allocation.

Can the member tell us what has changed?

• (1220)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I am really glad my colleague brought up the fact that time allocation was invoked on over 100 occasions by the previous government. I was there, and I know the Speaker remembers it as well, as he was there at the time.

What we are trying to do as a government is pass sensible but important legislation. It is not an omnibus bill. I will give the House an example of an omnibus bill, and perhaps my colleague will know of it. When there were massive changes to gut the Navigable Waters Protection Act, massive changes to change the Fisheries Act, and massive changes to change the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, all of that was done in the same bill. We were talking about a bunch of things that were vastly far apart, and this was all done under the guise of a budget implementation bill. That is an omnibus bill.

We are committed to not doing that kind of stuff. Ninety percent of this bill is dealing with the Canada Transportation Act, a very important act.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the minister and his department for presenting the legislation that we are talking about today. As he mentioned, it is encouraging when a government ultimately sees a bill pass and go to committee while looking for ways to improve.

The minister made reference to the amendments that were brought forward from opposition members that were accepted. It is very rare that would happen during the Harper era.

My question to the member is on the importance of the air passenger bill of rights. This is a very encouraging step forward. I believe many Canadians in all regions of our country have been waiting for a good period of time. Can the minister provide his

thoughts in terms of how this could ultimately come into being? This is something that is really important to all Canadians.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, although people may have some doubts about this, I want to tell them that in our department we were planning to create a passenger bill of rights before the issue became very visible. Many will recall the passenger who was dragged off the United aircraft flight, which brought this issue to the fore. Then it seemed not a week would go by without some other incident coming forward.

We had planned this for a long time because we felt it was necessary. It had not been passed by the previous government. We decided the best approach to take was to enshrine passenger rights in regulations. It would provide the greatest flexibility. Changing legislation is always a difficult process. The best way to do that would be to give it to the organization most responsible for passenger rights, the Canadian Transportation Agency. This bill mandates the agency to create a passenger bill of rights. Afterwards, it will come to me for approval before it is promulgated in 2018. We feel that is the most sensible approach.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it mind-boggling to hear our colleague from Winnipeg North applaud limiting debate, considering how much he actually talks in this House.

I want to go back to the minister's comments about the committee and how did they do so much great work together, etc. There were 27 amendments proposed, 24 of which the committee voted down. It is obvious the committee had some very serious concerns about this omnibus bill. I wonder why the minister is trying to push it across as a big *Kumbaya* moment. It is clear the committee, including the NDP and our side, had enough of a concern that it put forward well over two dozen amendments that the Liberals then voted down.

If this is such a great omnibus bill why would the Liberals vote down so many amendments, and then say that we collaborated and worked together to put it through?

• (1225)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, having been in opposition for seven years and on many committees, I never saw a single Conservative accept a bill or a proposed amendment at committee. They were never accepted. However, there are amendments that we have accepted.

We accepted Conservative amendment number 23 that requires class I rail carriers to report service and performance information to the CTA within five days. We had proposed 14 and we accepted that.

Government Orders

We accepted amendment number 3 that requires the CTA to publish service and performance information it receives from class I rail carriers within two days of receipt. It used to be seven days, but we accepted this amendment. Combined with the previous amendment, this shortens the reporting period from three weeks to one week.

Amendment number 5 from the Conservatives requires the commissioner of competition to make public his report to the Minister of Transport on a proposed joint venture. That is a good suggestion and we accepted it.

Amendments numbers 6 and 7 require the Minister of Transport to make public a decision that varies or rescinds forms and conditions of a joint venture. These were sensible suggestions that we accepted from the opposition.

Amendment number 24 is to shorten the implementation period for a new freight rail data reporting system to 180 days, rather than the proposed 365 days.

Therefore, six of the nine amendments that went through at committee came from the Conservative Party. That is six more than I have witnessed myself in the seven years that I was in opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps I neglected to say so in the beginning, but members are permitted to intervene more than once in the 30-minute period. We still have about seven and a half minutes remaining.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, if in this place we could make excuses by looking at past governments, every single government could do that. The Liberals have been in power for two years. They raised expectations to a certain level and now they are not meeting them. With the “trick or treat” budget, the “trick or treat” bill, it keeps happening. One thing is promised and another thing is delivered. The bill has been called by editorialists from the *Globe* “a strange beast”, kind of like a Demogorgon from *Stranger Things*.

The bill also contains no provisions about the enforcement of the rights of travellers. The minister called this a regulatory introduction of these passenger rights. I would call it differently. It is more of a punitive approach. Instead of increasing competition and providing for more opportunities for customers of different airlines to choose a different one if they do not get the service they want, the government's solution is more fines and punishment for the air carriers.

Why would we shut down debate now, where there is an opportunity for members of Parliament to deliver further criticism and potential improvements to the bill? If the minister says the committee did such great work, why is he not willing to listen to more members of Parliament as we debate and criticize the bill to offer more solutions?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I will pick up on the last point, which is that we are not helping to create greater competition. It is not brought up very often, because I think all the parties agreed to it, but there are two critically important parts to the bill. One is allowing foreign ownership of Canadian airlines to go from 25% to 49%. That is specifically in order to increase competition. The second part is the joint venture. Subject to the competition

commissioner and myself agreeing that it is not against competition and in the public interest, this would also provide more competition and more choice for Canadians.

On top of that, we are providing a passenger bill of rights. This is all good for the air passenger, and I have heard nothing but positive remarks on it. Therefore, I am not quite sure what my hon. colleague was getting at.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the bill. I know families in my riding of Whitby will appreciate the passenger bill of rights, particularly with recent events that have happened on airlines.

I want to ask the minister how the amendments would increase the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of transportation systems across Canada.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, there is one part of the bill that focuses very specifically on safety, and it has to do with freight rail and rail passenger safety. We would be proceeding with regulations requiring locomotives to carry audio and video recorders in them. This is focused 100% on safety.

As minister of transport, I am unfortunately made aware of derailments on a very regular basis, some carrying dangerous goods. Also, sometimes, unfortunately, there are terrible accidents at grade crossings. I do not need to go back over what happened in the last few years in the area of rail safety. The Transportation Safety Board has been urging the Government of Canada for years, and it started under the Conservatives, to put audio and video recorders in locomotives. We believe this is an important step to improve rail safety.

• (1230)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I have been listening carefully to the debate about whether or not this is an omnibus bill, because omnibus bills are something we should choose to avoid in this place. The bill amends 13 other pieces of legislation. If this is not an omnibus bill, what would he call it?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, again, I have to point out that 90% of what is in Bill C-49 are amendments, changes, to one act, the Canada Transportation Act. If one looks at the legislative agenda, it is virtually impossible, whenever legislation is passed, not to have an effect on certain other pieces of legislation. However, it is a small number of changes, about 10%, that will affect other existing legislation. The vast majority of the changes are focused on one act, the Canada Transportation Act.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, while I am not deeply familiar with all the text of Bill C-49, having been in the aviation industry for a long time, and for economic development purposes for small communities, I know that the aviation industry is very much a user-pay system, so any additional costs are downloaded to the passengers.

While on one hand, the minister is saying that foreign ownership should lower costs because of competition coming into Canada, and I would tend to agree, we know that there are other areas that could be downloaded onto smaller airports, which may or may not be able to compete in terms of some of the costs.

In terms of delays, we know that very often at this time of year we start to see weather delays that extend beyond three hours. I believe, and it is not mentioned here, that this could have a detrimental effect on small communities, more so than others, that are prone to weather IROPs, or irregular operations.

I would like to know whether our hon. colleague addressed weather delays and what types of delays are mentioned in Bill C-49 in terms of air passenger rights.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague that we very clearly will not be holding the airlines accountable for situations that are beyond their control. They cannot control the weather. They cannot control an outage by NavCan, which provides air traffic control. They cannot control a security issue at the airport that closes down the airport. There are a number of situations that are beyond the control of the airline itself. It is definitely not our intent, and I will make sure that this does not happen, because we have already discussed many of these parameters. For events that are within the control of the airlines, passenger rights would have to be respected. We would not hold the airlines accountable for things they cannot control.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

Government Orders

• (1315)

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

(*Division No. 379*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauson (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rudd	Ruimy
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai

Government Orders

Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tan
Tassi	Tootoo
Trudeau	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid — 168

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Arnold	Aubin
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boucher
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brosseau
Brown	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cullen
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dusseau	Duvall
Eglinski	Fast
Finley	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Généreux	Genus
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kusie
Kwan	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MaeKenzie
Maguire	Marcil
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Plamondon
Poillievre	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saganash	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shiple	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 118

PAIRED

Members

Gill	Goldsmith-Jones — 2
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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

● (1320)

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from October 25 consideration of Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and other Acts respecting transportation and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 16, the Minister of Transport introduced Bill C-49, the transportation modernization act, to bring our government's vision of a state-of-the-art national transportation system to fruition.

All Canadians want their transportation system to be safe and secure, green and innovative, while supporting economic growth and the creation of jobs for Canada's middle class. Bill C-49 meets all of these objectives, as well as the government's commitment to develop a fair, accessible, reliable, and efficient transportation system for 2030 and beyond.

One very important element of the bill is the proposal for strengthened air passenger rights, which would be reinforced by regulations. As more Canadians use their air transportation, thanks to increased services and lower fares, recent events at home and abroad have demonstrated the need for strengthened rights for air travellers. Canadian travellers want to know that when they purchase an airline ticket, the air carrier will, in fact, provide the services they have purchased. If the air carrier cannot deliver the purchased services, then the traveller must be provided with a certain standard of treatment and, in some cases, the traveller must receive compensation from the air carrier.

Canadian travellers also expect that they should not have to fight to get the service for which they have paid. As such, air passenger rights must be easy to understand and apply consistently to all airlines, domestic and international. They must apply to all flights from and within Canada and benefit all travellers.

Should Bill C-49 receive royal assent, the Canadian Transportation Agency will be mandated, in collaboration with Transport Canada, to develop a set of clear regulations to ensure a consistent framework for air passenger rights applicable to all carriers. As our government is committed to ensuring this regulatory process moves forward in an open and expeditious manner, further consultations will take place with stakeholders throughout Canada.

Government Orders

The regulations would enshrine standards of care and compensations in a variety of situations faced by air travellers. They would address some of the more frequent irritants, such as providing passengers with clear and concise information about air carriers' obligations and how to seek compensation or file complaints; establishing standards of treatment for passengers in cases of denied boarding, delays, and cancellations, including compensation for inconvenience in situations of overbooking; standardizing compensation levels for lost or damaged baggage on both domestic and international flights; developing clear standards for the treatment of passengers in the case of tarmac delays; ensuring children under 14 years of age are seated in proximity to a parent or guardian at no extra charge; and requiring air carriers to define their policies on the carriage of musical instruments.

Canada is not alone in legislating or regulating specific practices of the airline industry by establishing a framework of passenger rights. Other countries have developed guidelines or regulations to ensure that passengers receive a standard level of treatment for compensation when their flights are delayed or cancelled. This government, however, is committed to establishing air passenger rights that would make our country a world leader in how such irritants would be to be addressed.

For instance, under the regulations that would be developed for air passenger rights, provisions would be included to ensure that no passengers could be involuntarily removed from an aircraft after they boarded as a result of overbooking. If the airline cannot find a volunteer to give up his or her seat, it will need to pay compensation to remedy the inconvenience it has caused. The Minister of Transport has made this commitment and the government intends to fulfill.

Bill C-49 seeks a balanced approach as it relates to air passenger rights, one that would ensure the passenger would be treated fairly, but also one that would allow the air carrier to operate its business in a manner such that it could remain competitive and profitable. For example, the legislation clearly outlines that the requirement for compensation would be utilized only in instances where the air carrier would be directly responsible for the denial of boarding, delay, or cancellation of the flight. While recognizing that overbooking is a standard practice which allows air carriers to keep ticket prices low, passengers who are denied boarding should receive fair compensation when this occurs. This level of compensation would be clearly enshrined in regulations.

• (1325)

This government, however, recognizes that air carriers operate in a complex environment and that there are significant costs associated with safety and security, both in the air and on the ground. Increased competition and pressure from consumers for lower ticket costs have also resulted in a more complex business model for air carriers. There are also factors that are outside an air carrier's control, such as weather and medical emergencies, that may result in a flight being delayed or cancelled. We recognize that these factors must be taken into account when developing an air passengers bill of rights.

In cases where a flight is delayed for reasons beyond an air carrier's control, such as weather delays, passengers have a right to

be provided a standard level of treatment, including ongoing communication by the air carrier.

Further, Bill C-49 also contains provisions to increase data collection from air carriers and others in the air travel sector. This would allow the government to measure air carriers' compliance with the regulations and to take corrective action if needed. Both government and air carriers can learn from these data, allowing for decisions to be based on solid evidence.

Should Bill C-49 receive royal assent, Canadian travellers can look forward to strengthened provisions that will better protect their rights. These passenger rights will ensure that Canadians are entitled to a world-leading standard of treatment and compensation.

For these reasons, I ask my hon. colleagues to support Bill C-49 to ensure air passenger rights for Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe my colleague could provide some additional thoughts on the importance of this legislation.

We went through the committee process. The government, always looking for ways in which it can improve upon legislation, brought forward a number of amendments. Many of those amendments came from the Conservative Party and were successful. Today we have good legislation. Many of the residents who I represent were anxious to see action taken on an air passenger bill of rights. Finally, after years of hearing virtually nothing, we have something tangible and we are moving forward. This is good news for those who travel through our airlines.

Could my colleague provide his thoughts on how important it is that we move forward with the legislation?

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Mr. Speaker, the transportation system is very vast, very complicated, and is of national importance to Canadians. As was suggested, I sit on the transportation committee and I was very pleased that we worked collaboratively and adopted at least six of nine amendments. We also came back a week early. The process was very smooth, it went well, and Canadians will benefit from the collaboration with all sides of the House.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the compensation people will receive when they have some kind of a travel fiasco, as I understand it, the legislation calls for them to sort out whether it is the airline's fault or the fault of another government agency. I am concerned about the administrative burden of this. Those kinds of things will have to be proven for every claim. Does the member have any idea how much additional resources will be needed to address this administrative burden?

Government Orders

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Mr. Speaker, the legislation that comes forward will further stipulate any recourse. With respect to the operations of air carriers in relation to those of the consumer, we cannot burden air carriers for things for which they are not responsible. For example, as mentioned in my speech, we cannot hold an air carrier to account if there is an act of weather or a security risk on the ground. Air carriers will be responsible only for those situations for which they are directly responsible.

• (1330)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I note my colleague's remarks focused primarily on the air passengers bill of rights. I know the member sat through many days of testimony as one of my committee colleagues. I would like to ask about a different portion of the bill.

I know the member is from Ontario. When it came to transportation for freight rail, one of the key features of the bill was long-haul interswitching. Previously, a regime was in place that pertained only to the transportation of western Canadian grain. Bill C-49 would expand to different industries and different parts of the country. Being from a different part of the country, does the member see the value in this extended long-haul interswitching as opposed to the simple regime that was in place simply for western Canadian grain previously?

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Mr. Speaker, as I previously stated, our transportation system is vast and is of national importance. The previous bill did not take all of that into account. What we have put forward now is of the greatest good for the greatest number of people. It certainly creates a lot more competition, which will help everybody in the industry.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to provide some comments on the transportation modernization act, Bill C-49.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities, I want to start by applauding the work of all of my colleagues on the committee. We dedicated a full week in early September to studying the bill, hearing key witnesses, and working through a clause-by-clause analysis that produced well-considered, well-debated and productive amendments.

While Bill C-49 contains important aspects in marine and air travel services, notably, as my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville just commented on, the creation of our air passenger bill of rights, I would like to focus my comments on the freight rail provisions. Modernization in this area was, in my view, an important step forward to creating equity for shippers across Canada, while balancing our national interest in ensuring a healthy rail sector.

Bill C-49 would ensure that service agreements establish, as much as possible, equal performance obligations between rail companies and their customers, better conflict resolution, and mechanisms. Therefore, balance is vital. Our producers, shippers, and others need reliable rail service to meet their obligations to customers at home and around the world. In the case of our international customers, it is critical that Canada, as a trading nation, build and protect a reputation as a reliable trading partner.

At the same time, we have to acknowledge that our class 1 rail services, CN and CP, must have the financial ability to maintain and

modernize their capital assets across this vast and geographically-challenging nation. As we think about the struggles we had as a nation to see our railways built in the first place, we have to recognize that despite those challenges our country presented, our shippers enjoy among the lowest rates in the world.

Bill C-49 seeks to achieve equity and balance in three important areas: first, by creating a more competitive environment for shippers and producers across Canada when it comes to shipping rates, especially for those who were otherwise captive customers of one rail company; second, by creating service level agreements that establish a level playing field; and, third, by creating measures to improve transparency in the business relationship between the railways and their customers through a more transparent sharing of performance data and service capacity forecasts.

Creating a more competitive environment for otherwise captive customers involves a mechanism known as “interswitching”. Therefore, in response to my friend from Central Nova, here are more details on that.

Simply put, Canada has for years allowed customers within 30 kilometres of a transfer point between rail lines to have one company hand off its shipments to another if that other company offers better rates. The government sets the rate a rail company receives for transferring cars to another carrier, a rate that includes an allowance for the capital investments that the rail company requires for the line's state of good repair and improvement.

In 2013-14, we saw a record prairie grain crop, followed by one of the worst winters in Canada's history. Faced with service shortfalls by our railroads, the previous government expanded the interswitching limit to 160 kilometres, clearing the way for more captive grain shippers in the Prairies to access other rail services, including lines in the U.S. While it appears no shipper actually used the full 160 kilometre limit, the ability to shop for better rates led to improved performance by our railways, both in services and rates.

Bill C-49 introduces “long-haul interswitching”, a 1,200 kilometre limit open to all rail customers, except in two corridors where CN and CP both provide services, those being the Quebec City to Windsor corridor and from Kamloops to Vancouver. In our study of Bill C-49, I was pleased to introduce an amendment to the exclusion corridors that opened up long-haul interswitching to producers and shippers in northern Quebec, as well as both north and southeast of Kamloops in British Columbia.

Government Orders

Bill C-49 would take interswitching, a mechanism that in a limited way provides a competitive shipping rate for grain producers in the Prairies, and make it available in a big way to mines, mills, manufacturers, and producers across Canada.

Bill C-49 would also correct a long-standing inequity between the rail lines and their customers. Until now, a rail company has been able to penalize shippers for delays in loading or unloading cars, but there has been no reciprocal penalty against the railway for failing to provide the agreed to number of cars at the agreed to time.

● (1335)

When we think of the costs involved in keeping a ship waiting in Vancouver harbour for a train to arrive, not to mention the reputational damage we suffer when we do not deliver to customers on time, establishing equitable performance obligations between shippers and the railways makes sense. That is what Bill C-49 will do.

Finally, shippers and rail companies will more properly share responsibilities for the efficient and timely movement of goods. They will do this by accepting the consequences of non-performance in service agreements through reciprocal penalties.

Recognizing that issues will arise in negotiating and performing commercial agreements, Bill C-49 amends the Canada Transportation Act, allowing the agency to provide confidential, informal, low-cost, and expedient dispute resolution assistance. This has the potential to spare rail companies and their customers from the need to pursue expensive and time-consuming remedies. Similarly, access will be expanded to a summary, paper-based final offer arbitration process as a way to resolve disputes. Formerly this was available only when the freight charges involved were less than \$750,000. Bill C-49 increases the threshold to \$2 million, making this process available to more small and medium-sized shippers.

In our standing committee's study of Bill C-49, and previous studies, witnesses consistently called for more transparency in the performance data that the railroads release. This is important to ensuring that service standards are kept. This, of course, is of interest to producers and shippers because it allows them to fulfill contracts with customers. It also opens the way for them to collaborate more effectively in the management of the rail-based supply chain. The government is also keenly interested in this data because our reputation as a reliable trading partner is of national importance.

Bill C-49 will require the railroads to provide timely waybill information on the shipments they carry. This is data that shippers can reference in their negotiations for service agreements and rates with the rail companies. The data will also be used by the Canadian Transportation Agency to set the interswitching rates that the rail companies will be paid to move shipments to transfer points. Canada's two national railways have extensive operations in the United States, where they have been required to provide waybill data for some time, so this measure in Bill C-49 will put Canadian shippers on an even playing field.

As well, in the interest of transparency, CN and CP will also see new requirements to report in advance on any plans to close rail sidings or connection points, or to abandon sections of track.

Finally, referring back to the importance to farmers, shippers, and Canada's trade reputation of having reliable grain shipments, Bill C-49 will require the railways to provide a report before the start of a crop year which assesses their ability to meet their grain movement obligations. Then, before October 1, the railways will have to review the state of the year's crop and forecasts for the upcoming winter, and provide the government with its contingency plan to move grain in the event we see another scenario like the one we faced in the winter of 2013-14.

Bill C-49 has been an exercise in listening to some long-standing issues in Canada's freight rail system; considering, debating, and refining long-sought measures to make the system more equitable; and achieving a balance that will preserve the health of our rail sector while improving performance for our producers and shippers. It has sought a win-win result, with the greatest win being for Canada itself as the source of high-quality products and resources, and as a reliable and trusted trading partner in the world.

● (1340)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am looking at Bill C-49 and seeing what essentially looks like some missed opportunities to do more to rationalize the relationship between shipping by rail and shipping by sea.

I have a specific point that I want to raise and get the member's thoughts on, and we can perhaps get back to this with other legislation. We have very poor communication and advance planning. The hon. member mentioned better information from the grain growers to know when they are able to ship. However, when they are able to ship by rail, there is often not sufficient capacity.

We then have large container ships coming into the Port of Vancouver. They have as many as four separate compartments that they need to fill with grain. They will hang out in the Port of Vancouver, come in and fill one hold, and then they have go out and wait again. Where they tend to wait are in legal anchorages, for which the Gulf Islands receives no compensation for the use of the space, or the annoyance and inconvenience of the noise and the lights. They wait in anchorages in my riding and in the riding of the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith until they can go back to the Port of Vancouver.

This is inefficient, costly, and an annoyance. I wonder if Transport Canada could not do more to create better planning, which would be an advantage to the shipper and the grain grower, and certainly an advantage to people living adjacent to those areas where container ships are backed up and waiting. That is due to the inefficiencies of our loading and unloading in the Port of Vancouver and connectivity to the trains that deliver the grain.

I hope the question is not too complex for my hon. colleague. I am sure he is familiar with the problem as well.

Government Orders

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, the efficiency of our systems means dollars, absolutely. Those dollars are quite often passed on to the farmers, because they are price takers. As well, there is the damage to our reputation that we suffer when we cannot deliver our goods and services on time to our international customers. Therefore, it makes all the sense in the world for Bill C-49 to lead toward the more transparent sharing of performance data.

As well, there are provisions I did not talk about that would allow Bill C-49, through the rail companies, to ensure there could be investments in additional capacity. Our rail hopper fleet is wearing out. We need the railways, and perhaps government as well, to contribute to the refurbishment of that fleet with more efficient cars. That is all included in Bill C-49, so that everyone is paying their fair way in order to get an efficient system that would prevent the kinds of issues my hon. friend raises.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague how Bill C-49 contributes to the overall strategic plan, in the broader picture, with respect to the minister's most recent announcement on transportation 2030.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, it is a building block toward a foundation we need in place in the country to ensure that the whole supply chain, from start to finish, is working efficiently and in a synchronized way. Just as our transport committee studied Bill C-49 to ensure it was meeting the goals and objectives we needed for it, the transport committee will be taking on further action to look at the rest of the supply chain, including the efficiency of our ports. This is something I am looking forward to, particularly in the context of Port Metro Vancouver, which, as we know, is the busiest port in the country. They clearly all have to work together, and that is the objective of our studies.

• (1345)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a similar question to my colleague that I did to the previous speaker. During the committee studies, the member put forward an amendment to ensure that parts of British Columbia were not necessarily having their resources tracked because of certain exclusion zones where competition exists. Under the previous iteration of transportation legislation involving freight rail, the extended interswitching only applied for 160 kilometres, and it only applied in the context of the western Canadian grain industry. Knowing that parts of the province the member represents could be unlocked by the bill, I am wondering if he could comment on the importance of long-haul interswitching, which is quite different, and in my opinion more favourable, for the transportation sector in Canada.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, simply put, the measures in Bill C-49 do two things. First, it extends the limit to 1,200 kilometres, which opens up the opportunity for a shipper, who would otherwise be captive, to use the rail line that is there but hand off to another company that would give them a better rate or service.

In addition, while the original Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act focused on the Prairies and the 160-kilometre limit to allow grain to move more effectively, Bill C-49 opens it up to lumber producers and mines. Anyone who needs to ship anything by rail would have more access to competitive rates. The amendment we brought in

specifically opens up areas of northern and southeastern British Columbia, as well as northern Quebec, to these better rates.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to talk about Bill C-49.

First I would like to talk about a topic that has been mentioned a couple of times already, which deals with the locomotive voice and video recording. Many members of the House have met with Unifor and Teamsters members to discuss some of the issues around the video and voice recording.

The genesis of this has been real accidents through the years, particularly one that occurred in 2012, which killed three people, unfortunately. One of the recommendations was video and voice recording to aid in the critical minutes leading up to an accident. There is already a black box in the unit itself, and people at headquarters can track the movement in real time, such as braking and many other moves that the engineer and conductor would do. However, there are questions on this video and voice data. Who will have control of it? Where will it be stored? How will it be used?

If this data is to be strictly used for purposes of the final 15 minutes, or even one hour, leading up to an unfortunate accident, then I have not heard any issues from the workers. However, the issue they have is on whether the large rail companies would have the ability to use this data as a tool for HR monitoring or surveillance. For somebody who may be working an 18-hour shift, that is not what this is meant for and not what it should be used for.

For a lot of it, the minister has said to leave it up to them and it would be dealt through regulation through the safety board, etc. However, the workers doing the job want a little more clarification on that. Anyone who has ever worked knows that when someone is looking over their shoulder, it is never when they perform their best. The employees are trained and they have tests every year, and these are one of the most complex signage and lighting rules and regulations in the world. Therefore, I think the government needs to take another look at this, talk a little more with Unifor and the Teamsters, and make sure it is doing it right.

I would also encourage the people doing these jobs for companies like CN or CP to come forward. Once the bill is implemented, if they start seeing these video and voice recordings being used for disciplinary or worker surveillance purposes, bring that forward to members of Parliament and their union reps. They are not to be used for that purpose. That is not why the legislation is there.

Government Orders

Another point I would like to bring up is that the minister mentioned in his speech or response to a question that he has heard nothing but positive comments. That is obviously not true. There have been consumer groups, air passenger groups, who have expressed “cold comfort”, I think was the quote, for some of the passenger rights on airplanes. Another comment that the minister made, which I think he needs to expand upon, was his reference to the United Airlines incident. There was more than one incident, but specifically he mentioned the one where an individual was dragged off the plane. I do not believe that situation is addressed in the bill. If one is waiting on the tarmac in the airplane for over three hours, I believe it is dealt with, but as far as physically dragging somebody out of an airplane, I do not believe that is dealt with in the bill. He would perhaps like to provide further clarification on that at a later date.

Others also have concerns. I think Air Transat expressed a concern around the joint venture side of things, which is another area that needs to be fleshed out and further examined. With respect to foreign ownership, we always have debates on the proper threshold and amount of capital for a Canadian airline. It is set at 49%, and any individual entity can only own 25%. We will see how that unfolds.

● (1350)

If we are trying to modernize the act, some people would probably think that landing rights should be looked at as well. Over the last nine or 10 years, airlines like Emirates and others have requested more landing spots. Pearson, for example, would be one, and I do not believe that is addressed here either. As far as competition and pricing go for international flights, certainly competition has proven time and time again to bring in the best price and the best service.

The other criticism I have, and I am open to someone else proving me wrong, is the part that deals with the proposed air travellers bill of rights, including with in regard to flight delays, damaged or lost luggage, or passengers being on the tarmac for more than three hours. The bill does not specifically spell out what that compensation would look like. It does mention minimums, but those are left to regulation. I notice this is a recurring theme in some of the bills the government puts forward. Part of this will be gazetted and people will have an opportunity to comment on it, but if the minister feels so strongly about this as one of the key parts of the bill and an election promise, if he has been thinking about and focused on this for a long time, the least he could do is to provide air passengers or flight groups some framework or numbers from which they could work. That is the least he could do.

In addition, we all understand that there will be days like today or a couple of months ago when there were hurricanes in the U.S., and some of that weather came up to Toronto and Ottawa and messed up all the flights. People understand there are going to be adjustments made because of weather and that there is nothing we can do about it. However, from the time they recognize there is an issue, airlines can work with the people. That said, I do know how we could compensate someone who takes a week or eight days off and has two of those days messed up, one because of the weather and one because of the airline. From what the minister said, we are going to leave that up to the department and the agency.

Another issue concerns CATSA. A lot of money collected by the government is not put back into security screening at the airport. Anyone who goes to Pearson airport on a Monday morning will know it is pretty treacherous and that the standard of 95% getting through in 10 minutes is certainly not the standard on a Monday morning. It might be that 95% do not get through in 10 minutes and 100% may get through in an hour. If whatever money came in was put back into security, into CATSA, into further screening, these are the types of simple things that we could do to create a modern system to get people through, and to help Air Canada, WestJet, and other carriers deliver on their promises. We also know that in 2021, there will be 69 million travellers coming through, so we want to make sure we have that ready.

The other thing I would like to talk about before my time is up deals with rail and pipelines. The government set up a regulatory regime that makes it almost impossible for pipelines to be built, which in turns puts further stress on the rail lines. In consequence, rail lines are carrying a tremendous amount of oil when they could be carrying a tremendous amount of crops to ports and to markets. With a crop this year in the west within 10% or 12% of being a record, there will again be a tremendous strain on the railway system.

I would like to talk about the long-haul interchange, as other members have also discussed. Some members purport that it is a great thing. However, with the NAFTA negotiations ongoing right now, I question the logic of why the government would give that up when it could have been negotiated in NAFTA.

● (1355)

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague well knows, as a fellow member of the transportation committee, transportation 2030 would ensure that Canadians benefit from a safe and reliable transportation system. Transportation 2030 would also ensure that the Canadian transportation system supports economic growth and safety, as well as environmental concerns raised on a national basis. That said, it does meet the triple bottom line lens we look through.

With respect to my colleague's emphasis on the passenger bill of rights, would it meet the mandate of a triple bottom lens, so that passengers would be a lot better off with respect to their safety, with respect to the environment, as well as with respect to the economic basis of where and why they are travelling?

Mr. Ben Lobb: To be quite honest, Mr. Speaker, more money would be contributed toward infrastructure.

We heard on the news today the the government is having difficulties delivering on all of its infrastructure promises, whether ports, rail, or airports, throughout Canada. I mentioned CATSA as well. Those dollars would help to get people and products moving.

Statements by Members

I will go back to the pipeline discussion. More trains carrying oil would not be good for the environment and rail safety. It would be better to have a regime in place that provides certainty to pipeline builders and operators so they can move oil to port by pipeline instead of rail. These are a couple of examples of where we could have created a safer transportation system.

The Speaker: There will be three minutes and 15 seconds remaining for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on this topic.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PARLIAMENTARY PROTECTIVE SERVICE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, last week we stood together in a moment of silence in memory of the tragic event of October 22, 2014.

We never had a public inquiry in this country as to the breakdown of security that allowed an armed man into this building. However, without any inquiry we do know that the House of Commons' protective guards performed professionally and courageously, under the leadership of the former Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Vickers.

Without a proper review, the previous government decided that the solution was to put the RCMP in charge of all Parliament Hill security, essentially demoting the very people who protected us. As a result, we now see ongoing labour negotiations and small signs of protest by our protective guards, who are now facing disciplinary action. They are not being treated with respect in labour negotiations by their new bosses. I ask all members of Parliament to stand up for the guards, just as they protected us then.

* * *

•(1400)

HMCS WINNIPEG

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago, I had the privilege of spending three days and nights on the HMCS *Winnipeg*, one of 12 frigate warships of the Canadian navy.

[Translation]

From October 10 to 13, I had the great pleasure of participating in the Royal Canadian Navy's Canadian leaders at sea program. Our government reinstated this excellent program designed to familiarize elected officials and other civilians with the work of sailors and the capabilities of their ships.

[English]

It was an added privilege to be aboard HMCS *Winnipeg*, my home city's namesake. During our time at sea, I was able to learn more about the exceptional work that navy sailors accomplish and their important role within our greater Canadian Armed Forces family. As we lead into Remembrance Day and we honour all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for Canada, let us also recognize all those who currently serve in defence of our rights and freedoms.

GUS BOERSMA

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I attended the memorial service of Mr. Gus Boersma.

Gus, as we all loved to call him, was a remarkable man who truly believed in giving back to his community. Gus was a former mayor and councillor of Fernie, a former chair of the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, a former Penticton city councillor, and a lifetime honorary member of the Penticton Chamber of Commerce. As well, he was active with the Lions Club, stamp club, and far too many other community groups to mention. However, those things are not what mattered the most.

What made Gus so unique was that he was, without a doubt, one of the most positive, happy, and sincere individuals I have had the honour of knowing. He was always kind, caring, and compassionate, a man with a smile that could light up any room.

I am thankful to the Boersma family for sharing such a kind and wonderful person with our community. Gus Boersma was truly a bright light who made Penticton a better place. May we remember him fondly. God bless that we were so fortunate to call Gus Boersma a friend.

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LLOYD CAMERON

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with honour and sadness that I rise in the house today to commemorate the life of Lloyd Cameron, or "Mr. C", as he was known as to his many students.

A lifelong resident of Miramichi, Lloyd taught for more than 33 years and had an immense impact on his students as both an English teacher and director of the drama department. Lloyd was a champion of local theatre and the arts. One of his last roles was playing Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. MacDonald.

Whether it was lending me his family's tartan or giving up his seat on a tall ship for my wife, I have personally experienced the kindness and caring that Lloyd embodied, as have many others. He gave of himself to his community, to his church, to his students, and to his neighbours. He inspired those around him to do better and be better.

My heartfelt condolences go to Lloyd's family, his friends, and the entire Miramichi community. Lloyd was truly one of a kind and he will be missed.

*Statements by Members***WORKPLACE SAFETY**

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 17, there was a terrible tragedy in the town of Fernie in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. Three workers, Wayne Hornquist, Lloyd Smith from Fernie, and Jason Podloski from Turner Valley, Alberta, lost their lives due to an ammonia leak at the municipal arena. Ninety five residents living near the arena were evacuated from their homes for five days. My heart goes out to the families of the workers who died and to the citizens of Fernie.

It is estimated that there are over 3,700 ice arenas and curling rinks in Canada and that 65% of them use ammonia as their refrigerant. Since 2007, there have been over 50 ammonia leaks in Canada, many resulting in injuries and deaths. Carbon dioxide systems offer a safer and more efficient alternative.

Our most important role as members of Parliament is to keep our citizens safe. I call on the federal government to work with the provinces to help municipalities phase out ammonia-based systems to ensure there are no more tragedies like the one suffered by the people of Fernie.

* * *

OXI DAY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 28, Greeks around the world celebrated Oxi Day. On this day in 1940, the Greek prime minister was given an ultimatum by Mussolini: allow Axis forces to enter and occupy strategic locations in Greece or go to war. The prime minister was quick to respond, “Oxi”, which in English means no. The next day the Greeks were forced into the Second World War and fought for their country's freedom.

As Franklin Roosevelt put it, the Hellenes have “taught dignity throughout the centuries.” When the entire world had lost all hope, the Greeks dared to doubt the invincibility of the Axis forces, fighting back with the proud spirit of freedom. The Greeks fought like heroes in that fight, holding the Germans back for six weeks and playing a pivotal role in the outcome of World War II.

[Member spoke in Greek language]

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● (1405)

SALVATION ARMY

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Fort McMurray, the high cost of living means that big government, one-size-fits-all programs often fail. Earlier this month, the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London came to my riding to discuss housing, child care, and the unique challenges of providing solutions that work from coast to coast. After several round tables on housing, we were given a tour of the Salvation Army by Major Stephen Hibbs.

While Fort McMurray is known as a centre of opportunity in Alberta, there are still many who fall through the cracks. The Salvation Army catches those who suffer in the current economy. I am truly amazed by the hard work it does and its ability to stretch its resources. The Salvation Army ensures that everyone who seeks help receives it.

I thank Major Hibbs for his incredible work. The community will be forever grateful for his compassion and dedication. I would also like to thank everyone involved with the Salvation Army, including staff and volunteers, for their life-changing work. I thank them, and God bless.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize 15-year-old Finnegan Pihl from Kelowna, British Columbia. Finn was recently honoured by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health as one of 150 Canadians who are changing the course of mental health.

Since the age of eight, Finn has struggled with anxiety and depression. He has found it frustrating and difficult to access the help he has needed. As a result, Finn decided to speak out about his experience to raise awareness about mental health. Finn also recently received a Community Leader Award for his efforts to raise funds for Foundry Kelowna. The Foundry is a one-stop community resource that makes it easier for youth to find the care, connection, and support they need, something Finn insists will make a real difference.

On behalf of the entire community, I want to congratulate Finnegan Pihl for both awards. His courage and his commitment to raising awareness about mental health will go a long way in helping others.

* * *

MPP FOR LONDON NORTH CENTRE

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a well-established fact that we must ensure that more women become involved in politics and are appointed to positions of influence. This government is committed to ensuring that there are no longer decisions being made without the voices of women at the table leading the conversation. Let me be clear: respect matters, actions matter, and words matter.

One elected representative who has been a champion of female empowerment is Deb Matthews, my provincial colleague in the riding of London North Centre. Deb, the current deputy premier of Ontario, recently announced that she will not be seeking re-election to the Ontario legislature.

Regardless of one's political affiliation, Deb's desire and commitment to make Ontario better is unquestionable. Deb is an outstanding leader who exhibits true humility. She has demonstrated that compassion can and must be at the centre of public policy-making. I thank Deb for always striving to ensure that London is a better place to live.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

PELLERAT FARM

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I wish to pay tribute to the monumental job done by the farmers of my riding. They get up at dawn, day in and day out, to supply food for our grocery stores and pantries, yet they never get any credit. I want to take a moment to congratulate one such hard-working farming family. The brothers Gervais and Jean-Guy Pelletier, who run Pellerat Farm in Saint-Roch-des-Aulnaies with their families, took home top honours in the 128th edition of Quebec's national order of agricultural merit competition, in recognition of the exemplary work they have accomplished as dairy farmers in Quebec.

Pellerat Farm not only won the Promutuel Insurance prize for prevention, it also took first place in the national and regional gold medal categories.

To these valiant individuals, who get up early every morning and worry constantly about supply management in this country, I want to reiterate my unconditional support and my immense pride in representing them.

Congratulations to Gervais, Jean-Guy, Lucie, and Sophie, and hats off to all farmers.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

INDIA

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to mark the 33rd anniversary of the tragic events of November 1984 in New Delhi. Let me be clear. These orchestrated and targeted attacks against the Sikh community were an atrocity that resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent lives, for which justice has not been served. It is 33 years and numerous inquiries later, and those responsible for these brutal massacres have still not been brought to justice. Mothers lost sons, gurdwaras were burned down, and entire Sikh families were wiped out.

Acknowledging the malicious intent underlying the massacre is the first step toward reconciliation. Truth and reconciliation have benefited Canada a great deal. They can benefit India as well. We must always pursue human rights, fairness, and truth at home and abroad.

* * *

PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the President of Colombia, His Excellency Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, to Canada. Canada and Colombia are key commercial partners in the Americas and the Pacific region, with a shared commitment to progressive trade.

[Translation]

At a time when Colombia is engaged in a historic peace process, this visit gives us the opportunity to continue on this path and build on existing relationships in key sectors such as security, trade, and development.

[English]

This morning the President planted a bitternut hickory tree at Rideau Hall to commemorate his state visit to Canada. The durability and strength of the bitternut hickory reflect our countries' important and growing relationship.

[Translation]

On behalf of all Canadians, I welcome President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón.

[Member spoke in Spanish as follows:]

Bienvenido señor presidente. Que viva Colombia, y que viva Canadá!

* * *

[English]

MORTGAGE BROKERS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a warm welcome to members of the mortgage brokerage industry who are on the Hill today. Over my two decades in the mortgage business, I saw first-hand how mortgage brokers have increased choices and decreased costs for consumers. Mortgage brokers have helped make home ownership possible for many Canadians and more affordable for many others.

These brokers are concerned, because the mortgage changes enacted by the government last year have increased costs, reduced choice, and excluded many first-time buyers from the market. Many mortgage brokers are also among the thousands of small business owners insulted by the current finance minister last summer when he accused them of using private corporations to avoid taxes, while he was concealing his own assets and conflicts of interest from Canadians.

I encourage all colleagues from all parties to meet with mortgage professionals this week, and I urge this finance minister to quit making things tougher on Canadian home buyers and on small businesses.

* * *

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have approached the end of Women's History Month, and I would like to take a moment to highlight what this month has meant to me. It is a time to celebrate the achievements of trail-blazing women who have shaped our country and have inspired me in many ways. Without these women before me, I would not be standing here in Parliament today. They include women like Nellie McClung, who fought for women to be recognized as persons under the law, and Sarjit Siddoo, who in 1950 was the first Indo-Canadian woman to graduate from medical school.

Oral Questions

In this month, we recognize women of the past, but we must also encourage women and girls to fight the many barriers they still face, even in 2017. This year I would like to recognize the Pink Ladoo Project and its volunteers, such as Harbir Singh. The organization encourages families to stand up against sexist customs by sharing examples of those who already have. The stories they share are of real South Asian women breaking the mould by fulfilling roles traditionally reserved for men. By doing this, they make it easier for everyone to challenge the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Victoria.

* * *

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Remembrance Day approaches, I rise to thank all branches of the Royal Canadian Legion across this country. In my riding of Victoria, I salute the Britannia branch, Trafalgar/Pro Patria, and Public Service Branch 127, of which I am a proud member.

Organizing commemorative services takes a great deal of effort, so let us thank the volunteers, the veterans, and their families. This year, I will not be able to attend Remembrance Day services with my legion friends. I have the honour to travel to Passchendaele, in Belgium, to pay my respects and remember those who fought and died for our country.

Remembrance Day is also a day to reflect on peace. Let us acknowledge those working to ban nuclear weapons, from local groups like the Vancouver Island Peace and Disarmament Network, to groups like this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Let us honour those who have given so much for our country by renewing our efforts to ensure that future generations never again have to make the enormous sacrifices of current and past generations of Canadians.

* * *

● (1415)

DIABETES

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the beginning of Diabetes Awareness Month, which begins this Wednesday, November 1. Today diabetes is at epidemic levels in Canada, with one in three Canadians living with diabetes or prediabetes, including an estimated 1.5 million with undiagnosed diabetes. Whether it is type 1 or type 2 diabetes, many Canadians know the impact this illness has in day-to-day life, which is why many of them were surprised to learn that under the current Liberal government, type 1 sufferers, who previously received the disability tax credit, are now finding themselves denied for no reason.

I ask my colleagues to join me in calling for the minister responsible for the Canada Revenue Agency to immediately end this unfair, cold-hearted, reinterpretation of the existing disability tax credit policy for those with diabetes and other disabilities.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION WEEK

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week we are celebrating the fifth annual National Francophone Immigration Week. Immigration is crucial to the vitality of francophone communities like mine. I want to acknowledge the exceptional work of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, the Association canadienne française de l'Alberta, and the Réseau de soutien à l'immigration francophone de l'Est de l'Ontario. The work they do is essential.

I am proud to be part of a government that takes this issue seriously. Our government is committed to supporting and enhancing the vitality of francophone minority communities, notably by increasing the number of francophone immigrants in these communities. We have also renewed the mobilité francophone program to encourage highly qualified francophone workers to come to our communities.

We will continue to rely on organizations such as the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario for practical solutions for achieving our objective.

To all francophone newcomers, welcome home.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is against the law for cabinet ministers to own stocks and investments, unless they are in a blind trust.

The Minister of Finance has been caught, and now reports indicate that at least four other cabinet ministers are using the same loophole to maintain control of their investments.

I have a very simple question for the Prime Minister. Who are they?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House refers to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that we are following the rules and putting in place the things that Canadians expect us to follow, and expect of all parliamentarians.

It is interesting to note that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has made recommendations to members of all parties, and in previous governments. The mechanisms that the Minister of Finance currently has in place are very similar to the mechanisms the previous Conservative finance minister had in place. I am assuming he followed the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Oral Questions

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the finance minister was exploiting a loophole to shelter \$5 million he made from his family-owned, publicly traded company. Now we learn that four others, of the Prime Minister's cabinet ministers, are using the exact same loophole.

Again, it is a very simple question. Who are they?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, exactly to avoid situations in which mud is slung, in which personal attacks are made, we have a commissioner who governs and engages with all members of this House to ensure that the rules are followed.

The finance minister, all ministers in this House, and ministers of the previous Conservative government follow the advice and the recommendations of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. That is how Canadians can continue to have confidence in what everyone in this House does.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance found loopholes that allowed him to maintain control over his company. Now, we have learned that other ministers have done the same thing.

I have a very simple question. Will the Prime Minister tell us who those other ministers are?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to personal wealth, assets, and property, all members of the House work with the commissioner to make sure they are following the rules and living up to Canadians' expectations.

We will always follow the commissioner's rules and recommendations, as did the former Conservative finance minister, who did the same thing as the current Minister of Finance.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are going to try again.

Canadians have the right to know the names of the other ministers who did not put their assets in a blind trust, as the law requires.

Once again, who are they?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have confidence in the Ethics Commissioner's work and recommendations. We follow those recommendations, and I expect the members opposite to do the same. Canadians expect all parliamentarians to follow the commissioner's recommendations.

I can assure Canadians that, despite the personal attacks being made by the opposition, everyone follows the commissioner's recommendations and has confidence in her.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly important to know who these cabinet ministers are. Like the finance minister, they could be profiting from investments and stocks while making decisions that could impact the value of their own assets.

If the Prime Minister is so sure and so proud that they are following all the rules, why will he not just tell us who they are?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this place is healthy because of a lot of back and forth, because the opposition has a responsibility to challenge and criticize the government to make sure all of us are doing the right things for Canadians.

However, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is there to ensure that above all the petty personal attacks, Canadians can be confident that people follow the rules and fulfill their responsibilities. That is exactly what happened.

The Conservatives have nothing else to talk about, because Canada is doing so well, because the middle class is growing, because people are—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[*English*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there might be something broken with this device because every time the Prime Minister speaks all I keep hearing is, "We're entitled to our entitlements".

The Ethics Commissioner actually said that other ministers, other than the finance minister, could have benefited from those loopholes in the Conflict of Interest Act. For a Prime Minister who said he would be enforcing the highest standards for his ministers, we are seeing that he cannot even keep the bare minimum.

I have a very simple question, once again, for the Prime Minister. Who are the other ministers identified by the commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only on this side of the House do we follow the advice given by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, as the Minister of Finance has indicated, we are willing to go above and beyond her original advice.

These are the facts of the matter. The issue the Conservatives and the NDP are attacking, on a personal level, is nothing but a distraction because our economy is doing well because Canadians are benefiting from growth, and they have nothing else to talk about than us.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week they threw the Ethics Commissioner under the bus. Today they are hiding behind her.

The fact is, they cannot enforce the bare minimum standard of ethics. Five ministers are benefiting from this loophole in the Conflict of Interest Act, and last week the government voted against the NDP's proposal to close that loophole. Now that we know multiple Liberal cabinet ministers are benefiting from the loophole, maybe the Prime Minister would like to reconsider his position. Will the Prime Minister take the Ethics Commissioner's advice and close the loophole?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only do we support the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner on this side of the House, we follow her advice. That is something the members opposite cannot seem to understand as they constantly criticize the work she has done and the advice she has given to all parliamentarians.

When we arrive in the House we follow the advice of the commissioner because that is what we are expected to do. That is what Canadians expect us to do, and these personal attacks are just happening because they have nothing else to talk about. That is why they are obsessed with us, while we focus on Canadians.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner wrote to us to say that she too had concerns about the fact that the Minister of Finance is sponsoring Bill C-27, a bill that benefits Morneau Shepell. It would be as if the Minister of Natural Resources owned an oil or gas company. That minister would be in a conflict of interest.

My question is this: Could the ministers identified by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner also be in a conflict of interest?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when members are elected and when ministers are appointed, they consult the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to make sure they are following her recommendations and complying with the rules that Canadians expect members of the House to follow. That is exactly what we have done and will continue to do. Our friends opposite have nothing else to talk about or criticize, because things are going very well for the Canadian economy and the middle class.

* * *

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Setsuko Thurlow, survivor of Hiroshima, and a great Canadian, will accept the Nobel peace prize on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. Setsuko played a key role in the UN's adoption of the landmark nuclear ban treaty. She has described the Prime Minister's refusal to sign the treaty as a lack of courage. Will the Prime Minister wake up to the reality of this global threat to humanity, and join the nuclear ban treaty?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to rise in this place and congratulate Mrs. Thurlow for a lifetime of activism on an issue that is not only dear to her heart, and to many Canadians, but to the government as well.

We know we have to continue to move forward to reduce nuclear weapons in the world to make sure our children and grandchildren are safe. That is why we are so proud to show leadership on the fissile material cut-off treaty that engages both non-nuclear and nuclear weapon-owning countries to move forward on disarmament.

That is something we are going to remain focused on, because we know we need to create a world without nuclear weapons.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have now seen the executive chair of the Institute for Governance, Yvan Allaire, express his clear opinion on the Minister of Finance's conflicts of interest. Last week, Yvan Allaire told RDI that for the past two years the finance minister has without a doubt been in conflict of interest.

If the finance minister still claims that he has nothing to hide, can he prove it by telling us what he is holding in his numbered company 2135042 Ontario Inc.?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as is expected of all parliamentarians in the House, as soon as the Minister of Finance assumed office, he met with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure full compliance with the rules that govern us in the House. He followed all of the Ethics Commissioner's recommendations, including setting up a screen to prevent any conflict of interest.

Last week, he announced that he would go even further by divesting himself of his shares and by placing his investments in a blind trust. The finance minister has always worked with the Ethics Commissioner and acted accordingly, and he will continue to do so. I would remind hon. members that it is the Ethics Commissioner who is in charge of upholding the integrity of parliamentarians and Canadians' confidence in our institution.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance keeps telling us he is not in conflict of interest, but his actions prove otherwise. On October 27, Yvan Allaire even said that it would have been wise—and should have been mandatory—for the finance minister to sell all of his shares upon entering politics.

If the Minister of Finance is really being honest, can he tell us about his holdings in another numbered company, 2070689 Ontario Ltd.?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, like all parliamentarians in the House of Commons, worked with the Ethics Commissioner, who recommended that he take certain actions after being elected and confirmed that he was in compliance with the rules and laws that govern us.

The Minister of Finance will continue to work with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that he is fully and transparently complying with the rules that govern us. I think we can all be proud of everything the Minister of Finance has accomplished in the last two years, during which time he has done more for the Canadian economy than the previous Conservative government did in 10 years. He created 450,000 jobs and reduced child poverty by 40%. We are very proud of our finance minister.

Oral Questions

●(1430)

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we know is that the finance minister owns several other numbered companies with secret assets in them. Unfortunately, we cannot trust the minister to do the right thing, especially when he thinks that nobody is watching. That is clear from the way he hid his Morneau Shepell shares over the last two years. Will the finance minister be transparent with Canadians now and disclose what he owns in his numbered company 2254165 Ontario Inc.?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner is responsible for preserving the integrity and the confidence that Canadians have in this Parliament. The finance minister, just like any parliamentarian, has worked with the Ethics Commissioner, has followed her recommendations, and has gone even further, above and beyond what she has recommended. The finance minister will always work with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure that all the rules are followed.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister is mired in an ethical cesspool of his own making, and he seems quite happy to remain there. He got caught misleading Canadians about his Morneau Shepell shares. Now he wants us just to trust him, even though he has millions of dollars worth of other assets hidden secretly in these numbered companies, companies like 1446977 Ontario Inc. What is in that one?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has always worked in a forthcoming and transparent manner with the Ethics Commissioner, and has followed her recommendations, namely what she saw as the best measure of compliance, to put in place a conflict of interest screen, which has been done from the get-go, a measure that was good enough for Denis Lebel when he was the minister, and a measure that was good enough for the member for Milton when she was the minister. That is what the finance minister has always done, he has followed the recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister woke up this morning and saw that blazing headline on the front page of *The Globe and Mail* saying there are four other ministers hiding stocks in numbered companies, he would have been so concerned that he would have called a meeting in that room on the third floor, around that big oval table, and he would have said, “Ministers who have stocks hidden within numbered companies raise your hands.” Which ones did?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is expected of all parliamentarians and all ministers is that they work with the Ethics Commissioner, who has our utmost faith and greatest respect, in order to preserve the integrity of Parliament. That is what all parliamentarians on this side of the House have always done, namely, work in a fully transparent manner with the Ethics Commissioner.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of those who did put up his hand was the Minister of Finance. He said over the weekend, “If there’s something that I can do to make sure that people have absolute confidence, I’ll do it.” He was speaking of his conflicts of interest. One thing would be to reveal what is inside his vast network of numbered companies and trust funds.

Could the minister, for example, tell us what is in numbered company 2070689 Ontario Limited?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Finance has always done, and will continue to do, so he can deliver for Canadians is to work with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure that all rules are followed, to follow her recommendations. He has mentioned that he would go even above and beyond.

If I could just refresh the member’s memory, former finance minister Joe Oliver was the sole owner of a corporation that held publicly traded securities. The member from Nepean was the minister of democratic institutions, had recommendations from the Ethics Commissioner, and never acted upon them.

What I see is a bit of hypocrisy and a lot of amnesia. At the same time, I can understand why those members are trying to forget their decade in power. Millions of Canadians are trying to forget.

* * *

*[Translation]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned last week that Canadian contribution to UN peacekeeping has reached its lowest point since the 1950s. According to the CBC, UN officials believe this government’s actions to be of line with UN peacekeeping priorities. Two weeks from now, Canada will be hosting the world at a peacekeeping summit in Vancouver, and we have nothing to offer. When will this government do what it promised, what the UN has asked for, what the rest of the world expects from Canada and—

●(1435)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe very strongly that Canada has an important role to play on the world stage. We are proud of our record, and Canadians expect us to make this international contribution. That is why we have committed to contributing half a billion dollars and 600 troops for peacekeeping operations. This decision was not made lightly, as Canadians would expect.

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, rather than celebrating the first anniversary of another Liberal promise, I am sure Canadians would rather celebrate a contribution to peacekeeping. However, under both the Liberals and the Conservatives, Canada's contribution has been minimal. Despite this, Canada will be hosting a peacekeeping summit next month, scheduled on the understanding that we will be providing a significant commitment to UN peacekeeping.

It has been more than a year since the Minister of Defence pledged to contribute up to 600 Canadian Armed Forces personnel and 150 police officers, but the government continues to avoid committing to a specific UN mission.

When can Canadians expect to see the Liberals keep their promise on peacekeeping?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, Canada knows we have an important role to play on the international stage. We are proud of our peacekeeping traditions, as are Canadians, and Canadians expect us to make a contribution. That is why we have committed half a billion dollars and 600 troops to return to peacekeeping operations.

We are taking our time to make this important decision, understanding the impact that Canada can best play. That is what Canadians expect of us.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly raised our concerns regarding the Minister of Finance and his sponsorship of Bill C-27. We recently learned that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has the same concerns. She is concerned because the Minister of Finance did not recuse himself from discussions on Bill C-27. My question is simple. Will the Minister of Finance admit that he is in a conflict of interest and what is he hiding from Canadians?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have full confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to make recommendations to parliamentarians, parliamentary secretaries, and ministers, and all parliamentarians should have that same confidence. On this side of the House, we will always work transparently with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We will always follow her recommendations, and that is what the Minister of Finance did. He can now continue to serve Canadians, as he has been successfully doing for two years.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is following up on our concerns and launching an investigation. We hope this investigation will expose all of the Minister of Finance's shady dealings, starting with his offshore company and many numbered companies. After being caught in these conflicts of interest, the minister suddenly acknowledged last week that he was indeed in a

conflict of interest when he announced that he would give the profit he had made off his shares to a company—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to finish the member's sentence, the Minister of Finance announced that he would be donating to charity all of the money earned on his Morneau Shepell shares since he was first elected. I think that is a wonderful gesture that demonstrates the minister's commitment to serving the public, which is the very reason he left the private sector two years ago. He has been serving the public extremely successfully by growing the economy, reducing inequality, and ensuring inclusive prosperity for all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister will have to donate \$300,000 that he has made today, and \$10,000 since question period started to charity.

In fact, the day after Bill C-27 was introduced, shares in Morneau Shepell rose sharply by 5%. By his own admission, the Minister of Finance has made \$5.5 million on his Morneau Shepell stock alone since he was elected. The Ethics Commissioner is concerned enough that she is now investigating the minister's involvement in Bill C-27.

How could the minister betray Canadians like this for his own financial gain and that of his family business?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned, the Minister of Finance has always worked in a forthcoming manner with the Ethics Commissioner and has followed her recommendations, one of which was to set up a conflict of interest screen. This has been put in place and described by the Ethics Commissioner as the best measure of compliance possible. It is a measure that was good enough for the member for Milton and good enough for Denis Lebel back when he was in cabinet.

• (1440)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the minister sought no advice from Ms. Dawson when he was involved and introduced Bill C-27.

The minister would have us believe that everything is all right, that he has followed all the rules, and disclosed everything to the Ethics Commissioner. Well, she would not be investigating the minister if that were the case.

Either the minister failed to disclose all of his assets to the Ethics Commissioner or, what is becoming increasingly clear, he willfully and knowingly ignored her advice. Which is it?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no he did not. He always followed the Ethics Commissioner's recommendations. Back two years ago, when he took office, he met with the Ethics Commissioner to put in place a conflict of interest screen, which has been in place. It was good enough for Conservative ministers back when they were in office.

Oral Questions

The Minister of Finance has announced he will go even further, divesting himself of all shares in Morneau Shepell, placing his assets in a blind trust, and donating to charity, so he can focus on the important work he has been doing for the last two years, serving the public and growing this economy, something the Conservatives have never been able to achieve.

* * *

[Translation]

AVIATION SAFETY

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to internal documents from Transport Canada, pilot proficiency tests will be conducted by the airlines themselves, rather than by Transport Canada inspectors, which is at odds with the recommendations of the aviation safety report. The Liberals, like the Conservatives before them, continue to rely on self-regulation and are cutting inspection budgets. It seems that the Liberals have learned nothing from the Lac-Mégantic tragedy.

Does the minister plan to reverse this dangerous decision?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no, we do not plan to change this rule. To us, passenger safety is always a top priority. I want to correct my colleague. We are not getting rid of the function of checking the check pilots of the airlines. The member misunderstands what we have decided to do. Using a risk-based approach, we periodically conduct an airline safety audit. It is a much more intelligent approach and it is the approach that our government has adopted to ensure passenger safety.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to internal documents, Transport Canada is planning to stop evaluating pilots and will instead transfer the responsibility to private airline companies. Not only are the Liberals considering privatizing our airports, they are also planning to privatize Canadian aviation security.

The Conservatives and Liberals did this with our rail transport security and with our food safety system. In both cases, this private self-regulation has led to major disasters.

Do the Liberals have a limit to what they are willing to privatize?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, to address the issue, I want to correct my colleague. We are not getting rid of the function of checking the check pilots of the airlines, who check their own pilots. We are continuing to use this approach, because it is an intelligent, risk-based approach. It is one that we feel will, in the most economical fashion, address our requirements while not sacrificing in any way safety.

We are a modern transport ministry and we are working in a modern way.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, Albertans received the news that Amazon was making a major investment in Calgary's economy, committing

to opening its seventh facility in Canada. This is great news for Alberta, proof positive that investing in Alberta's talented and skilled workforce is a smart investment.

Could the minister update the House on the state of the economy, as the world takes note of the strength of our economy, and why an investment in Canada is a smart investment?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Edmonton Centre for his hard work and dedication and for being a strong voice for Albertans.

As the member has mentioned, we are very pleased to hear that Amazon is opening a new distribution centre in Calgary, creating 750 jobs. This is good news for Calgary. This is good news for Alberta. This is good news for Canada.

It is because of our innovation and skills plan that we have created these conditions. Since we formed government, over 450,000 jobs have been created. We have a plan and that plan is working. We are going to focus on growth and jobs.

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TAXATION

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, living with type 1 diabetes is hard enough without the Liberals stripping the disability tax credit and the disability retirement savings plan from struggling diabetics.

We have proof the Liberals changed the process in May. What is even worse is we have discovered they are doing the same thing to people with mental health conditions.

Did the Prime Minister direct the Minister of National Revenue to raise money at all costs, or did she come up with this mean-spirited attack on her own?

•(1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians receive the credits and benefits to which they are entitled. Last year, our government granted a record number of people with mental illness access to the disability tax credit. We are making the disability tax credit and mental health care more accessible. Under budget 2017, nurses and clinical nurses are allowed to certify application forms for their patients. We have simplified the forms and in the last budget we invested \$5 billion in mental health support to—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Canadians know that the Liberals have an insatiable appetite for taxpayers' money. The Liberals have gone after business owners and Canadians, and now they are going after people who are sick. Last week, it was people with diabetes, and now it is those with mental illnesses, such as bipolar disorder, autism, and schizophrenia, who are being targeted by the Liberal government. The Liberals have made it much more difficult for these people to get access to tax credits.

I have a very simple question. Does the Liberal Party have no heart? Why is the government going after sick people?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians receive the credits and benefits to which they are entitled. Our government has granted a record number of people with mental illness access to the disability tax credit. We are making the disability tax credit and mental health care more accessible. In budget 2017, our government allocated over \$5 billion to provide 500,000 young Canadians under the age of 25 with mental health support. We are continuing to work with our partners.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in power, our hearts were in the right place. We cared about people who were suffering. That is why we had a tax credit for people who were suffering, people who were sick, people with diabetes, and people with mental illness. The government has now made the criteria so restrictive that few people who are suffering are eligible for this eminently sensible tax credit. On the one hand, the government is spending like it is going out of style and, on the other, it is taking more money away from the least fortunate, from people who are suffering.

Why is the government doing such a poor job when it comes to people who are suffering?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have not changed the eligibility criteria for the tax credit for people with disabilities or diabetes. Groups have raised important concerns, and we have met with them, and we have been working with them. I would like to point out to my colleagues opposite that they spent 10 years cutting funding for scientific research. Our government invested \$41 million in diabetes research. That is the kind of thing we will keep doing.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if there were no changes, then why are 80% being denied now? Another week and it is another tax grab by the Liberals.

It was bad enough that the minister's department started to reject the medical advice of doctors who treat type 1 diabetics, but now there are reports that people who are mentally ill, people who have qualified for years, are suddenly being denied.

With the Liberals raising taxes and threatening benefits on the mentally ill, one can only ask this. Who is next?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to ensuring that everyone receives the tax credits to which they are entitled.

With regard to mental health, our government allocated \$5 billion in budget 2017 to provide 500,000 young Canadians under the age of 25 with better access to mental health support. Our government has also made investments in diabetes, unlike the government opposite, which slashed scientific research.

What people with diabetes want is—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

[English]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us go over this again. Canadians with autism, bipolar disorder and other mental health issues, and those requiring dialysis, are some of the latest to be denied a disability tax credit due to changes in the way that the CRA interprets eligibility. This interpretation changed as a result of direction from the minister's office. The question is, will the minister change it back? Will the minister reverse this directive so that all persons previously eligible for this benefit can continue—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. minister for National Revenue.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure Canadians that no changes have been made to the eligibility criteria for the disability tax credit.

No changes have been made to the act or the way it is interpreted, and we are going to ensure that people continue to receive the tax credits to which they are entitled.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the 2016 census, the first nations population in Canada has increased by 43% since 2006. That is four times more than the non-indigenous population.

Last year, one in five indigenous people lived in crowded homes and homes in need of major repair. That is shameful, and it is a federal responsibility.

Will the minister immediately commit to implementing a targeted housing strategy for indigenous people living on and off reserve?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for raising this very important issue. We know that housing is an absolutely essential criteria for people to have to be able to enjoy a good quality of life. That is why in budget 2016 we committed \$550 million over two years, which has gone to support indigenous housing, first nations housing on reserve. I am pleased to report to the House that today 8,800 units have already been either built or are in the process of being built and renovated. This is good news. There is much more to do.

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ETHICS

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the *Calgary Herald* reported that the Minister of Sport inappropriately used House of Commons resources to support his father's campaign for election as trustee for the school board. In answers to my questions last week, the parliamentary secretary seemed to indicate that the matter had been referred to the Ethics Commissioner, but the answer was anything but clear.

I will give the minister another opportunity to clarify today to the House whether he cleared with the Ethics Commissioner the use of these materials in an effort to get his father elected as a school trustee.

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in last week's municipal election, I was very proud of the fact that my father, at 74 years of age, stepped up to run to be the trustee for wards 8 and 9. I am proud to report that he did win that election. He can take his 40 years of teaching experience to work for people in public education and better the lives of people in their communities. I am very proud of this work. I am very proud to have supported my father. I look forward to following any advice at all that the Ethics Commissioner has to offer.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take that answer as a yes, that he did inappropriately use resources of the House of Commons and no, that he did not clear it with the Ethics Commissioner.

The minister, besides being an MP, is also a minister of the crown and has additional resources. I would ask the minister if he can assure the House that there were no other resources, including that of his riding office or of his minister's office, that were used to further the efforts to get his father elected as a school trustee.

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work that I am doing on behalf of the constituents of Calgary Centre. As was pointed out in this House, we are focused on growing the economy and making sure things are better for people in our community. I can tell the member that I was very proud to be at the Amazon announcement last week where over 750 new jobs are being reported in our community. I hope the member continues to concentrate on better things for his community members and going forward in that fashion.

We will follow all rules that are established by the Ethics Commissioner, and I look forward to working with her going forward.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is getting mixed up in municipal elections. It did not occur to the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie to warn her associates before going door to door on behalf of the candidate on her husband's team.

Does the minister understand that, because of her relationship with the leader of *Renouveau shérbrookoïse* and the authority that she has, she risks putting this municipal campaign in conflict of interest and she herself could end up with an ethics problem?

Did she use her ministerial resources to promote her candidate to the detriment of others?

• (1455)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hon. members know full well that it is common practice for candidates and volunteers who are actively involved in municipal, provincial, and federal campaigns to work together. None of my resources were used when I went door to door on Saturday. By way of example, the campaign manager for my colleague from Sherbrooke is a municipal councillor.

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PENSIONS

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we often hear the official opposition ask for a minister responsible for seniors. It is rather surprising to see them fight so hard for seniors, because when they were in government, they did the complete opposite. They increased the age of eligibility for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, which would have put many people in a vulnerable position. They also ignored all suggestions to improve the Canada Pension Plan.

Could the minister responsible remind the House of what our government has done to ensure our seniors can live in dignity?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking and congratulating my colleague from Brossard—Saint-Lambert for the excellent work she is doing on behalf of her constituents and seniors.

The well-being of seniors is the top priority of our government and my department. Since 2015, we have increased the guaranteed income supplement by up to \$1,000 for 900,000 seniors. We brought the age of eligibility for old age security back down to 65, to ensure that 100,000 vulnerable seniors would not fall into extreme poverty, and we improved the Canada Pension Plan.

We look forward to continuing the important work of improving social and economic inclusion for our seniors.

Oral Questions

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is yet another example of the Hamas terrorist regime in Gaza using a school, run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, to provide cover for a terrorist tunnel to use Palestinian children as human shields, though UNRWA claims it closed the school when the tunnel was discovered.

The Conservative government delivered humanitarian aid to Palestinians around UNRWA, but the Liberals insist on handing UNRWA millions, despite the risk to children, despite the curriculum of hate and terror still taught to children in UNRWA schools. Why?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure the House that we are very concerned about the fact that a tunnel was found under a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. We have taken action and are following this situation very closely.

These kinds of things can happen in this environment, but that is no reason to condemn 30,000 employees and deny a good education to 500,000 children.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, W5 exposed the disastrous impact that open-net Atlantic salmon farms are having on wild Pacific salmon, spreading diseases like PRV and HSMI. First nations along the B.C. coast are calling for the removal of open-net salmon farms from the wild salmon migration route. The Liberal government must remove these farms from the salmon migration route and transition this harmful industry to safe, land-based technology.

Will the minister listen to first nations and his own DFO scientists?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the chance to be in his province of British Columbia where I met with some first nations leaders this past weekend.

We obviously understand and accept the legitimate concern that so many people have about these practices. That is why we have made unprecedented investments in science and the oceans protection plan, and why we are working with the Government of British Columbia. I have had a number of very positive discussions with Minister Popham about how we can work together. Her report will come out next month, and we will work with her government to make sure this is done properly.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Heritage, I made a fantastic announcement in Cape Breton last week. Cape Breton has a vibrant and thriving

heritage and cultural industry. Our start-up companies are taking off, and we made major investments on Friday.

Can the minister tell this House what great investments our government is making, not only in Cape Breton but across the country?

● (1500)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his work for creators in his riding.

Through Creative Canada, we are investing in incubators to give creative entrepreneurs access to the tools they need to nurture their ideas. We are proud to have invested \$5 million in the new Cape Breton centre for the arts, culture and innovation, which will support creators and grow the cultural sector in the Atlantic region.

This is great news. Congratulations to my colleague.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, something as significant as our Holocaust memorial in our nation's capital, which recognizes the catastrophic annihilation of six million Jews along with countless others, should be maintained year-round. The Liberals need to understand that this is necessary to demonstrate our commitment to remembering those whose lives were viciously snuffed out by the Nazis in the Holocaust, as well as our dedication to “never again”.

When will the minister just say yes and keep this hallowed landmark open year-round?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as all colleagues in this House, of course, we stand by the national Holocaust museum and its importance, because it commemorates the six million Jewish people as well as other victims who were murdered during the Holocaust.

Our government is committed to building a more inclusive society. The NCC is responsible for the day-to-day operations and management of the monument. This decision was made by the National Holocaust Monument Development Council, along with the NCC.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Catalonia declared independence, and the Catalan Republic was born. It will be the 194th country to become a member of the United Nations. This declaration came about through a completely peaceful democratic process in which 90% of citizens voted in favour of independence.

Canada has recognized a number of countries that are now members of the UN, namely the Czech Republic, Ukraine, South Sudan, and even Kosovo. However, this government has a double standard.

Why is Canada refusing to recognize the new Catalan state?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada very much values its relationship with Spain.

Routine Proceedings

The situation in Catalonia remains a domestic matter within Spain. A dialogue between Spain and Catalonia within the constitutional framework is still the best course of action. We are asking the two parties to resolve the situation peacefully.

Canada recognizes a united Spain.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is shameful to see the Canadian government lose all sense of democracy when it comes to people's right to self-determination.

Today, Spain put a price on the heads of all the legitimately elected separatist members of the Catalan government by accusing them of sedition and rebellion. It is offering \$100,000 per member for a total of \$6.9 million.

Will Canada condemn Spain for these acts of repression and its illegal attacks under international law?

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, Canada very much values its relationship with Spain.

The situation in Catalonia remains a domestic matter within Spain. A dialogue between Spain and Catalonia within the constitutional framework is still the best course of action. We are asking the two parties to resolve the situation peacefully.

Canada recognizes a united Spain.

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ETHICS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Morneau Shepell has a subsidiary in the Bahamas, and all Liberal members are voting against the Bloc Québécois motion to tackle tax evasion in Barbados. How bizarre.

Morneau Shepell works in the field of pension plans, and all Liberal members are voting in favour of the bill on pension plans that benefits companies like the one owned by the Minister of Finance. How bizarre.

In the interest of transparency, could the Liberal members who have shares in Morneau Shepell please raise their hands?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. The proof is that our government has invested nearly \$1 billion over the past two years to tackle tax evasion.

Our plan is working. We are on track to recover \$25 billion. We are working on four jurisdictions per year. There have been 627 cases transferred to criminal investigation, 268 warrants, and 78 convictions. I want to be very clear; this is a priority for our government—

• (1505)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue on a point of order.

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, in response to a question, the Minister of National Revenue said that clinical nurses are allowed to complete the tax credit application forms, but actually, only nurse

practitioners can do so. I wanted to know, did she use the wrong term, or did she want to—

The Speaker: Order. It seems to me that this is not a point of order, but rather a matter of debate.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

WRECKED, ABANDONED OR HAZARDOUS VESSELS ACT

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-64, An Act respecting wrecks, abandoned, dilapidated or hazardous vessels and salvage operations.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights entitled, "Access to Justice—Part 2: Legal Aid".

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security concerning Bill C-21, An Act to amend the Customs Act.

[English]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with an amendment.

PETITIONS

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk who are concerned about the lack of religious protection for medical professionals in Bill C-14, medical assistance in dying, and Bill C-51, clause 14. As it stands, clause 14 would remove the only provision in the Criminal Code that directly protects the rights of individuals to freely practise their religion, whatever that religion may be.

The petition calls on the government to enact a policy that would provide the review of any legislation, ensuring it does not impinge upon the religious rights of Christians.

• (1510)

EDUCATION OF GIRLS

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today from dozens of residents in the Calgary area. It was presented to me by Jeenan Kaiser, Lorna Ly, Alam Randhawa, and Suzie Lee, all from ONE UCalgary.

The petitioners are asking the government to address the fact there are 130 million girls not in school around the world. They point out that every year of schooling increases their wages by 12% and reduces poverty. They point out that foreign investment in education has a tenfold return. Therefore, they are asking the government to increase Canada's global education funding from \$302 million today to \$592 million by 2020. This would be an investment of just 2¢ per Canadian per day and would make an incredible difference.

ALGOMA PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition to the Minister of Transport. The petitioners remain concerned that the Algoma passenger train is still not operating. They indicate that as a result, this has created and continues to create substantial hardships to the residents, businesses, and others who relied on the train. The petitioners add that alternate ways are not reliable year-round, or are non-existent.

They ask that the Minister of Transport put the Algoma passenger train back in service. The petitioners are from Hornepayne, Hearst, Val Rita, Constance Lake First Nation, Kapuskasing, Thunder Bay, Brampton, Port Sydney, Geraldton, Porcupine, Smiths Falls, Toronto, and Alberta.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to present two petitions from constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The first petition calls on the Government of Canada to work to upgrade the National Building Code in the name of energy efficiency, with the goal of reducing overall energy demand by 15% over the current code.

Mr. Speaker, the second petition, also from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, calls for a permanent ban on crude oil tankers, not just on the north coast of British Columbia but along the whole west

Routine Proceedings

coast of Canada to protect existing British Columbia industries and fishing, tourism, coastal communities, and our natural ecosystems.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions today.

The first one is on gender-based violence. It highlights the fact that discrimination against girls begins even before they are born, that people are using ultrasounds to determine the sex of the preborn child and if it is a girl the pregnancy is often ended. In the world right now there are over 200 million missing girls. The petitioners are calling on Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through the use of sex selection.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on conscience protection. There are physicians and nurses in Canada who are being forced through coercion to be part of assisted suicide and euthanasia against their will. They are calling on Parliament to protect their rights of conscience.

CARBON TAX

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from my constituents that states the following: that a carbon tax on all provinces is not in the best interest of Canada, that this tax will increase the price of everything, and that this tax will drive jobs out of the country. The petition also highlights that this tax will not help the environment because more effective measures to help the environment would involve not exporting Canadian technology to less environmentally friendly jurisdictions and not sending jobs to less environmentally friendly jurisdictions. The petition also draws attention to the negative impacts of this carbon on our energy sector. I commend this to the consideration of the House.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from constituents all over British Columbia. The petition is entitled “Kinder Morgan Trans-Mountain pipeline is not in our 'national interest'”. The petitioners are strongly opposed to the Trans Mountain pipeline, mainly because of the extra tankers that will come through our waters and the fact that bitumen is very difficult to clean up. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to reject the expansion of the proposed pipeline and to have a national energy plan. They also stand in solidarity with those who were arrested this weekend.

Government Orders

TAXATION

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of residents of Huron—Bruce. It is in regard to incorporated small businesses, farms, etc., the way they are taxed, the way capital gains are treated therein, and investment income inside incorporated small businesses.

• (1515)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, I rise today proudly with a very intriguing petition that was organized and put together very rapidly, to answer to the crisis against the people of the Rohingya. The human rights atrocities that are taking place right now are requiring a quick and decisive action and we have people who have signed a petition. Some 46,000 of them want Canada to make sure that the perpetrators of these atrocities do not face impunity, and they want Canada to be part of the safeguarding of resources and peacekeepers to go in. I am tabling this petition in pursuit of this social justice and in its urgent nature, the petition is not in its correct form. However, I would ask for unanimous consent to table this petition.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table the petition that is not in its correct form?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from several hundred members of my constituency of Edmonton West. The petitioners are calling on the government to condemn the illegal arrest of a Canadian citizen for practising Falun Gong and to call for the immediate and unconditional release of the Canadian citizen, Ms. Qian Sun.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and other Acts respecting transportation and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to be here today to debate this extremely important bill. I want to start by thanking the minister for his work and for the vision that he has shared with Canadians regarding this bill. I also want to thank the Canadians who were consulted and who gave us a lot of information about Air Canada.

[English]

The three main topics I want to discuss today are passenger rights, joint ventures and, of course, foreign ownership.

Before I begin speaking on those three points, I want to say that Canadians love to travel. They travel for pleasure, but also for business. When they do travel, they often mention certain areas that they feel we must do better in. One, of course, is the cost. The cost is very high in Canada compared to that in many other countries. It is an area where we need to make some improvements.

Canadian travellers also speak about their rights and ensuring that they are recognized in the many things they face while travelling. If it is simply a matter of delays, knowing the reason behind the delays would be extremely important. If it is overbooking, that is a different story altogether. They are looking for improvement in those areas, and it is obvious that Bill C-49 will answer many of those concerns.

I am the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, and in Nova Scotia we have a fabulous airport in Halifax. It is a very important full-service airport in Atlantic Canada. It is always important to remember the importance of these types of companies that generate over \$2.7 billion to the economy, which is extremely important for Nova Scotia. It is also important to mention that there are over four million travellers taking flights to and from Halifax. That, in itself, is very impressive.

Let us talk about the air passenger bill. This legislation will address very important issues that Canadians face and that we need to deal with, including consistency between our airline carriers, which is extremely important; passengers' rights; industry or carriers' rights as well; and when there are issues, the compensation. We need to bring some standardization to compensation, because it is not obvious if Canadians are being compensated for some of the challenges they face.

As I indicated earlier, we need to consider denial of boarding, delays and cancellations, baggage that is lost or damaged, tarmac delays, seating with family members or delicate cargo, such as musical instruments, etc. Those are major issues that we need to look at as a government. This bill will help us reach that objective.

Government Orders

Let us look at the issue we had last summer when a flight from Belgium to Montreal was diverted to Ottawa. The passengers stayed on the plane. They were told by the carrier there would be a delay of about 30 minutes. The 30 minutes continued on and on, and at the end of the day had become six hours. Throughout those six hours, the passengers were not able disembark from the plane, and the air conditioning stopped or broke down. They were running out of food and water. These are all critical things that passengers should be able to access at all times. Not being able to do so showed disregard for the passengers and their rights. We need to do something about that.

Not so long ago, we also saw on television a United Airlines flight on which a doctor, again because of a mistake by the carrier, was removed because of overbooking. Who did the overbooking? Again, it was the carrier that was at fault, yet the passenger was the one who was denied his rights. We need to make improvements in that area.

• (1520)

As far as adding to the bill of rights is concerned, we could also look at the question of official languages for Air Canada.

[Translation]

We need to ensure that people who want to use French or English have equal opportunities to do so. This is essential.

[English]

That is the important piece with respect to the bill of rights that I wanted to talk about.

We have to keep in mind that the air transportation sector is a challenging one today. There have been many changes. Many people choose to travel by air. It takes a huge capital investment by companies, yet results in a small profit margin. Therefore, we need to find ways to maximize efficiencies. It is already happening to some extent, as there are all kinds of different agreements. However, we need to do more. One approach that would really work well is the joint venture, with two or more companies working together to give better service to Canadians here in Canada and abroad. If a company or various companies want to have a joint venture today in Canada and to amalgamate to offer a better service, they normally have to verify this with the Commissioner of Competition. That was the main analysis required. However, we need to look at the wider benefits for Canadians. With Bill C-49, these companies can now make an application to the minister, who would consult with the Commissioner of Competition, but who would also look at the other benefits that Canadians could take advantage of. To some extent, that would be the measurement we would use to make that happen. This process will be much better than what we now have and allow Canadian companies to benefit from global trends and to realize efficiencies. It will also allow Canadian travellers access to a wider range of destinations, provide for easier in-bound travel, increased tourism, and increased flight options. That is another big piece of Bill C-49 that will be very helpful.

With respect to foreign ownership, previously foreign investors were only allowed to own up to 25% of the voting rights. Now they will be able to own up to 49%, putting us in line with many other countries in the world. However, no single investor would be able to own more than 25%, which is crucial, as well as no more than 25% for other carriers as well, which is essential.

We are paying way too much. Many people are travelling across the border to take flights with JetBlue, allowing them to travel from Boston to Florida for \$99. We need to do better, because last year five million people crossed the border to take flights in the United States. We need to do better in this area, and we are well on our way with this new bill.

In conclusion, Canadian travellers are a priority for our government, and this transparent new process will allow us to see many changes. We will see smaller airports, such as in Atlantic Canada, Fredericton, P.E.I., Cape Breton, etc., become more important because there will be more choices. With the new provisions for joint venture we will see more flights in smaller rural communities, lower fares, more choices, and improved services and connectivity. This bill is well in line with that. I wonder why it has been so long in coming, because this is extremely important to making us more competitive and ensuring that Canadians have better access to better transportation.

• (1525)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's enthusiasm for this bill. He referred to changes with respect to the air passengers' bill of rights. I wonder what rights he thinks passengers would have on a plane. The bill sets up a policy that discusses events and how someone else would establish the reasons for the events and the compensation to be paid. In the bills of rights in the United States and Europe, there are set standards, and when certain things happen the passengers know what they will receive compensation for. However, Bill C-49 is silent on that, especially as it talks about defining the causes of the problem after they have taken place. I wonder if the hon. member would respond to that particular issue with this piece of legislation.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the bill of rights is extremely important, but we must take one step at a time, one block at a time.

Right now we are creating some implementation regulations. We are going to look at standardizing and finding out exactly what compensation to give. That is the next step. I am glad you are asking that, because that next step should have been done years ago but was not. It is about time and our government will move forward to get it done.

The Speaker: I would remind my hon. colleague to address his comments to the chair, because when a member says "you" or "your", it sounds like the member is referring to the Speaker. I do not think the member meant the Speaker in this case.

Government Orders

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like the member I also represent many small regional airports and have serious concerns about this legislation. I am concerned about the fact that the bill would pass passenger security screening to small regional airports rather than increasing funding for CATSA. The imposition of the cost recovery principle on these small airports will mean they will simply not be able to offer international flights. These are serious concerns.

Could the member please tell us a bit more about these concerns and what impacts there will be on small airports?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, right now many of these small airports are not being used and are not very efficient. Air Canada just changed some flights from here to Halifax and passengers will have to stay overnight because there are no available flights before the next morning.

We need to find ways to make these small airports viable, and the only way to do that is by creating funding through foreign investment or joint ventures. That would create more prosperity and investment and make things better in small rural communities.

• (1530)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also have a really important airport in my riding, the Victoria International Airport. It is a superbly run airport. It is smaller than the Halifax Stanfield International Airport.

I discovered that the airport authority handles some things and Transport Canada regulates, but in-between there is this entity called Nav Canada. I was distressed to discover that it has been several years since Nav Canada removed air traffic controller supervisors. Nav Canada does not have a single air traffic control inspector who has ever worked in civilian air traffic control, and there are significant issues of concern to air traffic controllers in my riding.

Has the hon. member heard any similar concerns from air traffic controllers in the Halifax area?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear of any specifics in my region concerning air traffic controllers, but I have heard them before. It is an issue that we need to keep in mind as we move forward with this legislation.

As I said, this is a first step and there are other steps to follow. We will be able to capture some of those issues as we move forward.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak at the report stage of Bill C-49. This bill covers a range of amendments on the transportation sectors.

During my campaign, I heard loud and clear from many of my constituents that people were tired of omnibus bills from the previous government. There was an increased desire for accountability and transparency, yet here we are again discussing an omnibus bill that is moving through this House, with amendments to 13 acts, without giving parliamentarians adequate time for debate.

Because of the broad range of topics in this bill, I will keep my comments to air transportation, CATSA, and will quickly touch on marine transportation.

As many do in this House, I fly often. Over the last several months, we have seen stories of people being dragged off planes, stalled on the tarmac, and having to call emergency services. Too often, settlements are swept under the rug, and the industry continues with business as usual. I think Canadians are fed up. They are tired of waiting on the tarmac endlessly and are tired of overbooking.

The NDP introduced a bill that clearly set out the steps needed to establish a passenger bill of rights. The transport minister supported our bill and could have followed our example by introducing concrete measures to protect airline passengers. For example, when a flight is cancelled, the airline would have to offer passengers a choice between a full refund and re-routing under comparable conditions. Air carriers that failed to comply with this rule would have to pay \$1,000 in compensation to every passenger, in addition to the refund. If an aircraft was held on the ground for more than one hour, the airline would have to provide passengers with adequate food, drinking water, and other refreshments. For each additional hour during which the airline failed to comply with that rule, it would have to pay each passenger \$100 in compensation.

We also asked the government to implement protection measures immediately instead of delaying them until 2018. However, the minister chose not to propose concrete measures. Instead, he included provisions in the bill. The government sold it to the media and to Canadians as a passenger bill of rights, but that is simply misleading. The minister is delaying what needs to be done by handing over the responsibility for regulations to the Canadian Transportation Agency. When the CTA enacts inadequate regulations, it will give the minister a way out. That is not the political leadership Canadians expect.

What is disappointing is that the Liberals rejected our amendments without studying them, folding under pressure from the airlines.

The facts are clear that flights subject to the European regulations have a cancellation rate of 0.4%, which is four times lower than flights subject to the current Canadian regulations.

We have seen this government continuously abdicate its responsibility for airports. While the federal government does not manage them directly, it is up to the government to ensure a strategic vision, especially in a country as large as Canada. This vision must include every single size of airport, from Pearson to the local airports in my riding.

Government Orders

The communities of Campbell River, Comox, Port Hardy, and Powell River have expressed serious concerns about this continued pursuit of the for-profit privatization of our airports. These airports are essential elements of the social and economic infrastructure in our region. Representing many medium-sized and rural communities, air transportation provides a vital link that connects families and communities and promotes economic growth.

As a representative of the third largest riding in British Columbia, I have landed and taken off from several airports in my region, going to or returning from Ottawa. This is how I get to community events across the riding when travelling to and from this place.

These communities need these services, and as the government continues this privatization creep, they are connecting with me about their concerns. Campbell River recently shared with me that these privatization plans delay much-needed effective action on other issues, such as the burden of federal rents and fees on airlines and air travellers. These stand in the way of more competitive and economical air transportation in Canada.

There is still worse news in this bill regarding remote and rural airports. I think members can understand why I will not be supporting this bill as it stands. Bill C-49 would amend the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Act. Instead of supporting the growth of regional airports, the government would use Bill C-49 to pass the buck for security screening to regional airports or the municipalities that own them. This policy would hurt rural economies, as the cost of security screening is so high that almost no small airport would be competitive if it had to pay the bill. The government is clearly stepping back from funding and developing regional airports.

• (1535)

Currently, the commissioner of competition has the power to determine whether a joint venture arrangement between airlines is anti-competitive and can subsequently apply to the Competition Tribunal to prohibit the joint venture. However, Bill C-49 would strip this power from the commissioner of competition. If Bill C-49 is adopted, the Minister of Transport would have the final word on proposed joint ventures between airlines. Once an arrangement was approved, the Competition Tribunal would no longer be able to prohibit it.

If Air Canada proposed an arrangement to merge its operations with those of an American company, even if the commissioner found that the agreement would lessen competition among airlines and increase ticket prices for passengers, the minister could approve the arrangement if the minister was satisfied that it was within the public interest. This is why the NDP proposed deleting clause 14 of Bill C-49, as it would expose consumers to unfair increases in airline ticket prices.

A decision by the minister to ignore the commissioner's advice could be influenced by political considerations to favour an airline at the expense of consumers. In addition, the bill does not spell out what is meant by the "public interest" as a basis for a decision by the minister to approve a merger of two airline operations. The concept of public interest is so broad that the minister could consider factors that are not in the interest of Canadians but rather in the interest of the shareholders of major airlines.

Bill C-49 would impact two elements in the marine industry. First, the bill would allow foreign-registered vessels to compete unfairly with Canadian shipowners. We are requesting that Canadian-registered vessels continue to have preferential access to government contracts, carriage of goods by container, and repositioning of empty containers. In addition, the government did not consult with stakeholders who would be affected by this measure.

Second, the Canada infrastructure bank would be permitted to provide loans to port authorities. Instead of assuming responsibility for directly funding the development of port facilities, the federal government would transfer that responsibility to private investors. Investors would charge high rates of interest on their loans, and once again, the consumer would foot the bill. The cost of the required return on investment could affect consumers, since many goods transit through ports.

If private investors such as Morgan Stanley acquire port facilities, Canadians would lose control of their port infrastructure. In fact, the government has asked Morgan Stanley to study a port privatization scenario, even though a subsidiary of Morgan Stanley is earning millions by buying and reselling parts of Canadian ports.

The concerns I have raised today were also brought up by our transport critic in committee and in the House. The bill is simply not good for Canadians, and for that reason, I cannot support it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate many of the member's comments. I think it is worth noting that we have a substantial piece of legislation. A great deal of effort over the last couple of years has gone into it, and it went to committee. As many members know, in committee there were a series of amendments, the majority of them opposition amendments, to improve the legislation. I think that speaks volumes in terms of the willingness to try to improve the legislation.

The member, as I did, sat in opposition when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, when we didn't have any opposition amendments. However, we had six opposition amendments pass. I can see that my Conservative friends do not necessarily like that, but it is true.

• (1540)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That is not true.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I would challenge the member across the way to demonstrate a piece of legislation that Harper ever passed when there were six opposition amendments while he was in a majority government situation.

An hon. member: I was on the industry committee, and we passed tons of amendments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I invite the member to share with the House—

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We have some other debate going on here that is not necessarily directed to the Chair. I encourage hon. members to listen while other members have been recognized and are arguing their points here in the House. They will have an opportunity to respond perhaps in another segment of questions and comments.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, that was an interesting discussion on the floor. I am not sure what the question actually was.

I am happy to point out the fact that there were many amendments added in this conversation at committee, and many of those amendments were absolutely ignored. Where we have to look specifically is at the passengers' bill of rights.

What we wanted to see in this legislation was something concrete that would set a direction, and we did not see that. Again, this is wishy-washy legislation that does not really give direction. It certainly does not assure Canadians that their rights are going to be honoured and that we are going to move forward in this country and actually have a bill of rights for passengers. Sadly, we do not see that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with the price of an airline ticket. I am a little concerned when I see some of the provisions in the bill that would allow the airport authorities to basically buy screening services. I worry. In my riding, for example, there is only Air Canada. It is a monopoly situation. The price of a ticket there is nearly \$1,000 to get to Ottawa, compared to being able to go to Florida for \$200, if I wanted to.

Is the member concerned about the increase in airline ticket prices?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I think we have to be very concerned about what we are seeing, which is the downloading of services and increasing privatization, which will specifically hinder regional, small airports across this country.

I think of my riding of North Island—Powell River. Many people come to the beautiful region for tourism. It is a huge part of our economy. We love to see people visit and appreciate the beauty of the surroundings. However, if our regional airports cannot be competitive, that is going to create a huge barrier to economic development.

Again, we have to make sure that we see a slowing down of the government's fast-tracking towards privatization. We have to make sure that we look at being competitive and make sure that those airports are successful so that our communities can be successful.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today about rail safety in the context of Bill C-49, the transportation modernization act, which proposes to amend the Railway Safety Act. This is an important step in strengthening Canada's comprehensive approach to rail safety.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedication that the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has demonstrated in its thorough analysis of the

components of Bill C-49. Improving transportation safety and, in particular, enhancing the safety of the rail transportation system, is a priority for this government.

To this end, the government is proposing to amend the Railway Safety Act to mandate voice and video recorders in the locomotive cabs of federally regulated freight and passenger railways in Canada.

The approach proposed in Bill C-49 builds on the 2016 report from the Transportation Safety Board of Canada which confirmed that data from combined voice-and-video recording systems would help investigators understand the sequence of events leading to an accident and in identifying operational human factor issues, including those that may have been a factor in the accident.

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada also stated in its safety study that, when used proactively as part of a safety management system, the information from voice and video recorders can provide significant benefits to help identify and mitigate risks before accidents occur.

The proposed changes to the Railway Safety Act reflect careful consideration of the best way to maximize safety benefits while safeguarding the privacy rights of railway employees.

In essence, the amendments would require companies to install and maintain voice and video recorders in locomotives but would also establish specific limits on how the recordings can be used.

The result of the proposed legislative requirements would be, first, objective data that would allow Transport Canada, companies, and safety investigators to better understand events leading up to, and during, an accident or incident.

Secondly, the information could also be used in a proactive way, but within very clear limits, to identify safety risks before accidents occur. For example, data would allow Transport Canada to perform trend analysis to inform future safety rules and regulations. Companies could use the data to develop new or improved training programs, to strengthen existing operating procedures, or to establish new ones to address identified safety gaps.

This government understands that the proposed amendments have privacy implications, in particular for operating crews. These implications have been recognized throughout the study of this bill.

I can assure the House that safeguarding the privacy rights of railway employees has been a key consideration in the development of the proposed amendments. This is why Bill C-49 imposes strict and clear limits on the use of the information from video and voice recorders, as well as strict and clear provisions on how information must be handled, all to safeguard the privacy rights of employees.

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For instance, any recording used for safety management must be selected through random sampling. Regulations that would follow royal assent will outline objective parameters for random sampling. They will also outline requirements for data protection that companies would be required to comply with, such as standards for encryption, data storage, and retention periods. Companies would also be required to develop and implement policies and procedures to respond to record-keeping requirements and managing access to the information, in particular how they will safeguard against unauthorized access.

• (1545)

During the committee's study of the bill, one other issue we heard about is the issue of discipline. We heard from parliamentarians and some stakeholders concerns that data from locomotive voice and video recorders might be used for disciplinary purposes. I can assure this House that the fundamental purpose behind the proposed regime is safety. It is not about, nor does it allow for, the monitoring of day-to-day performance of employees. In this context, it is not meant to facilitate disciplinary measures.

However, it is possible that, in certain egregious circumstances shown by the recordings, disciplinary measures might be the most appropriate means to address a serious safety concern. The regulations will define what is meant by egregious circumstances so that this is not left to the discretion of railway companies.

Consultations with stakeholders, including individuals, companies, unions and other interested parties will be an integral part of building the regulations to ensure we get this right. The proposed regime clearly provides that no company shall use or communicate the information that is recorded, collected and preserved unless the use and communication is done in accordance with the law.

As is the current practice, Transport Canada would conduct inspections and audits to monitor compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements. In the event of non-compliance, Transport Canada would have the authority to take appropriate enforcement action, including imposing administrative monetary penalties.

I would like to reiterate that mandating on-board recording devices has one purpose and one purpose only: to strengthen the safety of Canada's rail industry for all Canadians, including railway employees. The recordings will help explain what happened after an accident, but, more importantly, they will have the real potential to allow us to identify and address safety concerns in order to prevent accidents from happening.

• (1550)

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I had the opportunity to work on the committee together. The member said that he could assure the House that the information collected through the video and voice recordings would absolutely not be used for disciplinary purposes. Previous to that comment, he said that the details of how the legislation would be monitored would be articulated in regulations. I am not sure how he can assure the House of something that is not written in the bill.

The committee received a letter from the Privacy Commissioner, outlining a number of serious concerns he had with the bill and how

the bill might be interpreted. Would the member like to comment on that as well?

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Let me reiterate that the installation of voice and video recorders on locomotives is something the Transportation Safety Board of Canada has been calling for for a long time. TSB officials appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to reaffirm their support for this measure and remind us of the critical role that recorders can play not only in helping investigators understand an incident, but also in preventing future incidents.

The TSB has added locomotive voice and video recorders to its Watchlist of key safety issues the transportation system needs to address.

As for the privacy issue, as I mentioned in my speech, Bill C-49 imposes strict limits on how the recordings could be used, and the regulations to be developed will have to take into account the important issue of privacy rights.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very telling of the Liberal government when it says that it will make it safer for the public by going after engineers. Year after year, there has been underfunding of site inspections. After the Lac-Mégantic disaster, CP got rid of 500 safety and maintenance workers. Past derailments have been the result of poor track maintenance, poor on-site inspections, and problems with maintenance and oversight. However, the government is telling Canadians not to worry because it will be recording the work of the engineers. These engineers are running massive trains, without backup, because the government made a change, allowing a single driver on a train that could be carrying all manner of volatile combustibles through major cities.

I would like to know this. If public safety is such an important issue and the use of video recorders, which will contravene the Privacy Act, is important, why has the government not added video recorders for senior management at CP and CN? Following cut after cut in jobs, why is the government targeting the people who are doing the front-line work?

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Our government is committed to rail transportation safety. That is why we are moving forward with this measure that takes a reasonable and balanced approach to strengthening rail safety.

I would also like to remind my colleague that representatives of the Transportation Safety Board appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to reiterate their support for this measure and to talk about how important recorders can be in understanding how an incident occurred and preventing future incidents.

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[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today on Bill C-49, the transportation modernization bill.

First I would point out that this is another omnibus bill. There are things in here about rail and air traffic safety, and all kinds of different things. This was the government that said it was not going to do omnibus bills. I want to point out that this is another broken promise.

I will spend some of my time talking about rail, and then I will move on to air traffic. As members may know, I am the co-chair for the parliamentary rail caucus. In that role, I interface with associations that work in the railway industry, and I had had an opportunity last week to meet. Of course, rail safety is always a topic of conversation.

The conversation went like this. In terms of rail safety, I asked about their biggest concerns right now. Their biggest concern was not any of the things in this bill. They asked how the government could be talking about transportation modernization when it is legalizing marijuana. It recognizes that it is dangerous for people to drive a vehicle when they are impaired by drugs, so the government has allowed a bill that brings forward mandatory and random testing for car driving. However, people are driving trains, and that is an even bigger hazard, but workplace employers are not allowed to do that kind of mandatory and random testing. That was the concern that they brought forward as being a big deal in rail safety. I would encourage the government to address that concern.

I will speak to some of the things in this bill that are concerning. First, we have heard some conversation today about locomotive voice and video recorders. I know that the Teamsters and Unifor are quite concerned. I am concerned myself. I heard the last member who delivered a speech say that these things would not be used for disciplinary action, and then went on to say that if it were an egregious enough thing, then perhaps that would be the right thing to do. Obviously there is potential for it to be used in that way. I know that the Privacy Commissioner has raised a number of concerns. None of those things appears to be addressed in the bill.

We keep hearing that it will be in the regulations. We have not seen the regulations. It seems that there are a lot of vague, unclear, undefined parts to this bill, which we are supposed to trust that the regulation will address. I am not sure that will happen.

In my own riding of Sarnia—Lambton, we have a number of rail safety concerns that I do not see addressed in this bill. The Minister of Transport had decided that people needed to upgrade the rail crossings, for example. That takes a lot of money. I have one rural part of my riding that has eight rail crossings and 2,300 people. To fix those eight rail crossings to the new standard would be upwards of \$5 million, and the 2,300 people are not going to be able to come up with that money.

With the Liberals being so far behind on their infrastructure spending, if they really wanted to modernize and cared about rail safety, I would have imagined they would be spending a lot of money updating the rail crossings across the country. We know that is a place where huge money needs to be spent. Another opportunity

that was missed would be to do the high performance rail we have been talking about between Quebec and Windsor. There is zero money in the budget for that. While there is a lot of ideology in this bill, there is no follow-up action in terms of the infrastructure spending.

I would like to talk about one other thing. I have CF Industries in my riding. This is a company that makes fertilizer. I am aware that Fertilizer Canada appeared at committee to testify about this bill and to express their concerns. There is a long-standing principle in the rail business called the “common carrier principle”. It is a principle that shipping companies cannot discriminate or refuse service on the basis of the type of good. One of the things that is used to make fertilizer is ammonia. In the history of the rail industry, they have not had any incidents with ammonia. However, because this bill is bringing exclusions that would impact the fertilizer industry, that will drive them to change to a different mode of transportation, such as trucks, which would mean four times as many vehicles travelling, with a higher incident rate of collision. That actually increases the risk to the public rather than reducing the risk to the public. Again, although the bill is supposed to be about bringing more rail safety, in fact it is doing the opposite.

• (1600)

Fertilizer Canada has asked specially for proposed subsection 129 (3) and section 136.9 to be altered so that it is not discriminating against the fertilizer industry, which is 12% of the supply that we use here in Canada and also 80% exported to other countries. It is a big contributor to the trade surplus, \$4.5 billion. We ship our fertilizer to 70 countries around the world, and this update to the rail rules will negatively impact that business and increase costs to farmers in Canada. That would be a concern for me as well.

In terms of some of the air traffic changes in the bill, the air passenger rights regime, I have spent about 30 or 35 years travelling around the world, so I have certainly experienced all the outrageous things that can happen to passengers, including delays, cancellations, lost or damaged baggage. I had a flight recently on an airline that was not Canadian, I am happy to say, but my bag arrived with the corner torn right off and I had to replace the luggage myself. There was no compensation for me on that one.

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I am not sure that this, although well intentioned, will be able to be easily implemented. For every claim for compensation, it has to be determined whether it was the airline's fault, the government agency's fault, the fault of the weather. That is a huge administrative burden, and that usually means increased costs. Those increased costs typically get passed on to the people who are buying the airline ticket. I have a concern that some of the provisions, although well intentioned, will result in higher airplane ticket fares. We already have some of the highest fares in the world. If I think about flying to Ottawa from Sarnia, it is nearly \$1,000. I can fly to Florida out of Detroit for about \$200 or \$300 Canadian. We are already paying huge fees, and I do not see that the bill is going to address that in any way. I am concerned that the prices will go up.

I have a concern about the foreign ownership increase to 49%. I am concerned with all the changes that the government has introduced, the infrastructure bank, for example, where Liberals want to sell the eight major airports to foreign investors. There is something to be said for national security, for owning and controlling our own assets like airports that are so critical to the country, so I am not a fan of that at all.

The consumer groups and passengers who have been looking for a passenger bill of rights are not happy. The feedback is that they do not think the bill addresses their concerns. It fell short on that as well. In addition, I am a little concerned about the joint ventures phraseology in the bill. Basically, it is taking the authority away from the competition bureaus and giving that authority to approve joint ventures to the Minister of Transport. We have seen the government time and again go without parliamentary oversight, so, for that reason, I am not a fan of that section.

The bill falls short in many different ways. The Liberals need to take their time and go back to the drawing board on this one.

• (1605)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the themes I keep trying to hit on, being from the eastern part of our country, is that Bill C-49 has changed the rules around transportation on freight rail in a fairly dramatic way. Under a different iteration of legislation that dealt with the transportation on freight, Bill C-30 previously, it dealt only with the ability for shippers of western Canadian grain to move product up to 160 kilometres. That was in response to some unique circumstances that arose in 2013. One of the things we see in Bill C-49, by contrast, is a shift towards long-haul interswitching. This would see the ability of shippers in different industries in different parts of the country take advantage of a new regime that stimulates competition around the negotiating table and gives a remedy to captive shippers to make sure they can get a market price.

Does the hon. member support the expansion toward long-haul interswitching, which serves different provinces and different industries, including Ontario?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, the ideology of the long haul is one thing, and I would not be against that, but the number of exclusions in this bill are such that no one can take advantage of them. It used to be, under a previous bill of the Conservative government, that the concerns of western grain farmers were addressed; I believe it was Bill C-30 at the time. That was allowed to sunset by the current government. Then, inadequate measures are put

in this bill that are vague and, as I said, include so many exclusions that people cannot take advantage of them. The execution was not acceptable.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a comment that is of interest to me. She mentioned the sunset clause or reviewability. One thing a lot of the witnesses talked about was the time frame for reviewing this after having been implemented for two or three years, and a sunset clause, neither one of which are in the bill. This is critically important when making such a massive change.

I wonder what the member's opinion might be on the idea of reviewability and a sunset clause.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, certainly it is more important to get the bill right in the beginning. I do not want a flawed bill being put in place and then reviewing it three or four years down the road. I am not opposed to reviewing bills. I want to make sure that the one put in place to begin with is not flawed, or is not so vague that all of the details are left to the regulations that will be under the direction of the Minister of Transport, with no parliamentary oversight. That is what I would be opposed to.

• (1610)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned a small town in her riding that has five rail crossings. Like her riding, there are six railway crossings in my riding of Nepean. For them to have grade separation, the total budget required is in the range of \$500 million.

She mentioned that the budget requirement in her riding is about \$5 million. Is the member aware of the rail safety improvement program that is currently available for improving rail crossings?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the fund and had recommended that we get some money out of it, but was refused. The problem for this part of my riding is that if the rail crossings are not upgraded, the roads will be closed, which would isolate the community totally. This is a case where 2,300 people cannot possibly afford it, and the government has refused to provide the money. I do not understand why the government has refused to provide the money when the member opposite and his party are so far behind in their infrastructure spending. I would be happy to help them out. We are very good in Sarnia—Lambton in executing projects. I spent 32 years in engineering and construction and can say that the riding could help the Liberal government spend infrastructure money, which I believe was the whole point of going into deficit in the first place.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow my esteemed colleague. I think many of us in the House look forward to putting great projects forward for infrastructure funding consideration as we move forward.

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It is a privilege for me to address the House today on Bill C-49, the transportation modernization act. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the key measures the bill that propose to ensure Canada's freight rail system remains among the most efficient in the world.

As the chair of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, I want to thank all committee members for their diligent work in reviewing this important legislation. The co-operation we had at committee from all parties at the table in reviewing Bill C-49 and ensuring it was the best it could be was a real tribute to the members who were there. Everyone's co-operation was very much appreciated.

As a result of that spirit of collaboration, the amendments to the bill will strengthen Canada's freight rail policy framework and maintain the delicate balance that Bill C-49 is meant to achieve.

Our freight rail system is a critical component of the Canadian economy. It directly creates and sustains thousands of Canadian jobs, while connecting Canadian businesses to international and domestic markets. Over \$280 billion worth of goods move through our rail system every year, underscoring its major contribution to our economic well-being, something that is very much taken for granted by others.

Canadians are dependent on a reliable rail system to move their products to market across this vast land. A guiding principle for our legislation has been to sustain the commercial orientation that has allowed our system to rank among the most efficient and Canadian rates to be among the lowest in the world. Canada's economic growth and future prosperity is dependent on preserving our national advantage.

For this reason, in May 2017, the government introduced Bill C-49 to support a transparent, fair, and efficient freight rail system that would meet the long-term needs of Canadian shippers and facilitate trade and economic growth for the benefit of all Canadians. The bill aims to deliver outcomes aligned with the government's long-term transportation vision, including fair access for shippers, a more efficient, competitive rail system, greater transparency, and sustainable investments.

The bill would introduce a number of fair access measures to help balance the playing field between shippers and railways. While we support the commercial orientation of our rail system, we recognize that the remedies are required when commercial agreements cannot be reached. These are not easy things to accomplish.

In our consultations, we heard that remedies could be too complex, lengthy, or costly for all shippers to pursue. For this reason, the bill would improve access to and shorten the timelines of the Canadian Transportation Agency processes to settle service and rate disputes. This would result in more balanced outcomes for stakeholders and more timely and accessible remedies, something we heard from many people who came before the committee. Governments continue to have a very extensive process of forms to be filled out and applications to be submitted here and there, which makes it very difficult for a lot of people when they try to achieve their goals.

This legislation would also provide clarity to shippers and railways by defining what "adequate and suitable" rail service meant. In our consultations with freight rail stakeholders, we often heard about uncertainty regarding a railway's service obligations. Bill C-49 would clarify that a railway would have to provide shippers with the highest level of service that could reasonably be provided in the circumstances, taking into consideration various factors, including the railway's obligations under the Canada Transportation Act. This would be a major help to all shippers.

The bill would strengthen competition to help create a more balanced and also efficient freight rail sector by introducing a new competitive access measure called "long-haul interswitching". Long-haul interswitching will give captive shippers across regions and sectors of Canada access to a competing railway at a rate set based on comparable traffic. The committee has proposed adjustments to long-haul interswitching that will provide captive shippers across sectors in British Columbia, Alberta, and Northern Quebec with access to a remedy. These changes would maintain the long-haul interswitching's important balance between giving shippers competitive options and preserving network investment and efficiency for the benefit of all shippers.

●(1615)

During consultations leading up to Bill C-49, we also heard that shippers did not have enough information from railways on the location of functional interchanges. To address this concern, Bill C-49 would require railways to list their interchanges. Railways would also be required to provide advance notice of their plans to remove an interchange from this list, something that could have a tremendous impact on shippers and on local communities.

The committee has proposed to extend the notice period from 60 days to 120 days to allow shippers sufficient time to file and obtain a level of service ruling against the removal of an interchange, if necessary. As well, the committee has proposed an amendment that would require railways to notify the agency of an interchange removal to ensure shipper concerns would be adequately considered and reviewed.

Furthermore, Bill C-49 would greatly improve transparency throughout Canada's freight rail system. The availability of accurate and timely information is necessary to ensure the effective operation of a commercially oriented rail system. The bill would require railways to provide service and performance information on a weekly basis in line with what they provide in the United States about their American operations. This information would be made publicly available to all freight rail stakeholders on the Canadian Transportation Agency's website.

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As well, railways would be required to provide rate data to Transport Canada, which could be shared in aggregate form with shippers. This rate data would also be used by the Canadian Transportation Agency to help calculate long-haul interswitching rates.

The committee has also proposed amendments that would ensure this data is provided in a more timely way to all rail stakeholders. The changes would require railways to begin reporting on service and performance metrics in 180 days rather than a year, and would require railways to submit metrics five days after each reporting period rather than two weeks. Furthermore, the committee has proposed that the Canadian Transportation Agency publish the data on its website within two days of receiving it.

Finally, Bill C-49 would help encourage investment in the freight rail system, which is critical to encouraging its long-term growth. For example, the bill would modernize the maximum revenue entitlement regime by making adjustments to incentivize hopper car investments and reforming its methodology to better reflect individual railway contributions.

As well, the bill would relax Canadian National Railway's majority shareholder ownership limit to facilitate investment in a network that is critical to Canada's economic performance. The committee has introduced a minor technical amendment that would make this change effective upon royal assent, allowing CN to more easily attract capital from its majority shareholders.

The measures in Bill C-49 would position Canada's freight rail system to compete globally for years to come. The proposed amendments that the committee has made will advance our government's goal of strengthening fair access, efficiency, transparency, and, very important, investment in Canada's freight rail system.

•(1620)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member she said that the government spoke with freight stakeholders. That raises a concern for me. It did not speak with stakeholders from the agriculture sector.

Producers I have spoken with over the last few months are concerned with Bill C-49 and the fact that it does not entrench the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act, which our Conservative government enacted in 2015. This policy would ensure that grain growers had access to rail transportation when they had a real glut from huge harvests such as the one 2013-14. We are seeing this again in a lot of the western Canada provinces, with a very strong harvest this year. The concerns I hear from grain producers is that the access to grain act is not part of this legislation. It sounds like the government did not have any conversations with agriculture stakeholders, but simply listened to what the rail companies wanted to see in Bill C-49.

My question to my esteemed colleague is this. What conversations has the government had with agricultural producers and why did it not entrench the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act as part of this legislation?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that through our committee hearings, everyone on the committee was especially sensitive to the issue of the shippers, the agricultural community, and what needed to be done.

Once Bill C-49 is passed, moves forward, and hopefully gets royal assent, people in the agriculture area will have certainty about getting their grain to market when they need to do that. That is an important part. It was important for every member who sat on the committee. We heard more from the agricultural side than we heard from the railway side. Clearly, the committee wanted to ensure we did this right and ensure that the farmers had the ability to get their grain to market as quickly as possible, without any additional problems.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the transportation modernization act would represent a first step to provide Canadians with a safer, more reliable, and efficient transportation system to better facilitate trade and travel across our great nation. It would respond to the needs of Canadians and their expectations for services to allow Canada to take advantage of international opportunities and contribute to a highly productive economy.

I thank the member for her leadership as chair of the committee. As a member of that committee, one of the concerns I heard was with respect to LVVR. Could she explain what LVVR is, and what the conclusions contained upon bringing the bill back to the floor of the House of Commons?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, LVVR refers to cameras that would be put into the front part of the train, exclusively from a safety perspective. In the event of an accident, people could go back to the camera and see exactly what went on in the front of the locomotive prior to the accident. It would not go into the hands of the human resources branch for any kind of disciplinary action. This would strictly go to the Canadian transportation department when it required it or if it needed to check on something. It cannot be used in any way, shape, or form for discipline among the members. The clear intent is to protect the safety of the passengers and to ensure they are well aware of what goes on at all times. Ensuring the safety of our railways is extremely important.

•(1625)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and offer some comment on Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act.

I had the pleasure of sitting through an inordinate amount of witness testimony as we went through this important bill, which really is the first step in implementing the minister's transportation 2030 strategy to make transportation more efficient in Canada.

I will start by offering a few comments on the importance of transportation to our country.

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In the 21st century, we know that Canada is a trading nation. We know that in order to maximize our economic output, we depend heavily on global markets. When we are trying to maximize the economy in Canada, it does not take long to realize, with our skilled workforce and natural resources, that we have the capacity to produce more than we have the ability to consume domestically. As such, getting our goods to the world market is of extraordinary importance if we are going to succeed and thrive in a 21st century global economy. This is where Bill C-49 comes in. We recognize that to get our products to market in a timely way, we depend on the efficiency of the transportation system. We know that customers around the world are waiting anxiously for their products, and if they cannot find a reliable supplier, then they are going to go elsewhere.

The Canadian transportation system has a number of different important links along the way, and Bill C-49 addresses a few of them. Specifically, it deals with certain measures in the rail sector, air sector, and the marine sector, which has been the subject of little debate thus far, but it really does enhance efficiency of getting products to market or improve the experience of Canadian or international travel for Canadian travellers.

I will start first with the rail transportation in Bill C-49.

The importance of the rail sector in Canada cannot be overstated. Of course, before Confederation, north-south trade was of extraordinary importance, but as I mentioned at the outset of my remarks, getting products to global markets is becoming increasingly important. Of course, the rail corridor from east to west is of extraordinary importance as well.

The key part of the measures dealing with rail transport really has to do with the concept of long-haul interswitching. When I looked at the rules we had embedded in law before Bill C-49, they were not sufficient to deal with getting products from different industries and different regions to market in Canada. What we did have, and we heard this in a number of questions from members opposite, was Bill C-30, which dealt with the transportation of western Canadian grain to market.

Bill C-30 came in 2013, when there was a unique set of circumstances. We dealt with one of the worst winters in modern memory, and at the same time dealt with an unimaginable grain overproduction at the time, which really put our producers and shippers in a bind. If something were not done to get the product to market in a timely way, the economic output would have been significantly lessened. To the credit of the government at the time, it took some action to deal with that and implemented a system that simulated competition where there was none.

In Canada, it does not take long to realize that when we are dealing with rail transport, we are dealing with many captive shippers. There is essentially a duopoly in Canada with two major class I railways. However, for many shippers, there is only one option. If one is living in the northern prairie provinces, one does not always have access to competition, which can drive rates up. Therefore, measures in the previous legislation stated that within 160 kilometres of an interchange point, one would be allowed to essentially treat the monopoly holder as though it were competing, and one could create a bargaining circumstance around the table when there was none. It was not used all that frequently, but we did

hear testimony from witnesses that it had made a difference at the time.

However, there is a key problem with that short-term fix, which was needed at the time. It did not consider that the Canadian economy depends on more than western Canadian grain. Bill C-30 did some good things for that industry in that region, but it did nothing for forestry or mining, and it did nothing for provinces such as Ontario and Quebec. Of course, the province I am from, Nova Scotia, does not necessarily have the same problem, with not having the class I railways present.

● (1630)

My point is that long-haul interswitching has come in to solve this problem because it provides opportunities for captive shippers who might not be within 160 kilometres of an interchange who might be in the industry of producing natural resources outside of grain in western Canada. This would provide an opportunity to simulate a competition around the table for so many different producers and this is a very important thing.

In addition to this significant change in the way that products can be transported on Canadian railways, we see a number of measures that were implemented in Bill C-49 to recognize that shippers sometimes have a tough time getting their products to market. We see reciprocal penalties. Previously, there was no remedy necessarily for a shipper whose service obligations were not being met by the railway. In this instance, we can imagine the brand recognition that it does and the cost of having goods waiting to get to market and having no way to transport them. Now the penalty is cut both ways and it encourages everyone to meet his or her obligations to ensure that goods get to market.

We also see a definition of adequate and suitable service. We are seeing enhanced data disclosure. We are seeing that the maximum revenue entitlement has been retained. We are seeing efficiencies embedded into the arbitration process, which creates the equivalent of a small claims process for disputes of less than \$2 million. We are seeing agency authority to regulate service-level agreements going forward.

Quite a big focus of our testimony over the course of our committee study on this issue went to the rail sector. However, I do not want to ignore the other important sectors that really do make a difference in the communities that I represent as well.

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When we look at marine transport, some of the nonsensical features that we had embedded into Canadian law previously included that international shippers did not have the ability to move empty containers within the Canadian ports system. This might put people who are shipping from Europe to a port in Montreal, for example, in a place where they are not able to take that container from Montreal and move it to the port of Halifax to help local exporters in the province I represent get their products to Europe. When we put it to them to say, "Is this a big Canadian industry right now? Are we going to be interfering with local jobs?", we heard that in fact this is not being done right now. However, to protect the economic interests of Canadian workers, Bill C-49 would only allow this kind of practice to go forward on a non-revenue basis. Essentially, if I am a European shipper, for example, and I want to move my own empty containers between Canadian ports to make the transportation system for Canadian exporters more efficient, I would be able to do that under Bill C-49.

Of course, one of the key parts of Bill C-49 was the air passenger bill of rights. There are a number of substantive rights that were built into the framework, although a lot more of the details and specifics are going to be embedded in regulation that follows. One of the reasons that this has gotten a bit of uptake in the media is that so many of us, when we see those viral videos of passengers being hauled off planes, become frustrated because we have experienced the ordinary frustrations of air travel ourselves. I have personally experienced having my luggage be damaged and come off one size-16 shoe at a time on the carousel. We know what it is like to see that someone is going to be charged more to sit next to his or her infant. When people are travelling with a musical instrument, if it is not handled properly there can be severe damage and that damages some musicians' livelihoods. A number of these problems are being addressed in Bill C-49 and we are going to require that airlines make it known to the public how they can seek recourse when an airline falls below the standard expected for travellers who paid for quality service on their flight.

In addition, there is a key part of air travel that I wanted to hit on as well. We have changed the foreign ownership limits from 25% to 49%. This is going to encourage more investment by international companies in the Canadian air sector and potentially drive the cost of air travel down. We have already seen two discount airlines, when they qualified for this kind of an exemption under the previous rules, announce that they were going to be making investments in Canada to service secondary markets and offer cheaper service.

To wrap up in the little time that I have left, Bill C-49 is the foundation of the minister's strategy to enhance the efficiency of the Canadian transportation sector. It would see products move in different industries in different regions of our country to get to global markets more effectively. It would protect the rights of passengers who are travelling in the air sector. It would, important from my perspective, make shipping a more efficient part of the international transportation system. It would help exporters in places like Nova Scotia get their goods to market in a cost-effective and efficient way. This is a good bill and I hope the entire House supports it.

• (1635)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this bill has very important changes that have been made, for example, allowing

foreign vessels to reposition the empty containers between various locations in Canada. This would make Canadian trade more attractive to global logistics companies.

As well, enabling Canadian port authorities to have access to the new Canada infrastructure bank would help critical investment that is absolutely required.

More importantly, the liberalization of international investments in air carriers from 25% to 49% is quite significant. However, I understand that the bill does not provide for any single foreign entity to monopolize the entire 49%.

I ask the hon. member to explain the restrictions that would continue on any single foreign entity from owning 49% of the Canadian air carriers.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member touched on a few different items and, first, I will deal with the marine portion of his question.

Importantly, he touched on one piece I did not mention in my remarks. It is with respect to changes in eligibility for different kinds of financing that have been made available to Canadian ports, and specifically the Canada infrastructure bank. Right now there are hundreds of millions, I think we are deep into the trillions, of foreign capital that is currently invested in negative yield bonds.

The Canada infrastructure bank is going to open the market that will see global capital come into interest-bearing investments. They are usually for profit-generating infrastructure, such as Canadian ports. By expanding the financing eligibility to Canadian ports for the Canada infrastructure bank, we can see significant port expansion. When we are engaging in deals like CETA, or dealing with new international trade agreements around the world, we will see investments that will grow our ports and expand our ability to get our goods to market.

Also, the hon. member mentioned the foreign ownership restriction that has been moved from 25% to 49%. We are already seeing discount airlines come into Canada. This is bringing the price down and increasing service to secondary markets that are not very well served or not served by discount airlines today.

The final question that he referenced was the need to prevent one person from monopolizing that 49%, which would give them close to an individual majority control. This is an important limit on power.

We see similar kinds of limits in the rail sector with CN, for example, to prevent one foreign interest from snapping up a large enough portion that they could control the decisions of a company. This is important when dealing with competitors south of the border that might try to drive traffic from Canadian airports south of the border, as it could defeat the purpose of an efficient transportation system in Canada.

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With these limits in place, I am very comfortable we will improve service for Canadians.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act, the government allowed this agreement that is critical to grain farmers in western Canada. It ensures they have an opportunity to get their product to market.

The hon. member is right that this issue arose in 2013 when we had a harsh winter and a great harvest. That is why we brought in the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act to ensure that interswitching abilities were there and that they had the opportunity to get their product to market.

However, what concerns me and ag producers across Canada is that this government allowed that agreement or that act to sunset in August, despite much feedback from the Conservative opposition and stakeholders across Canada to try and extend that act before coming forward with Bill C-49. Right now, that option is not there for a grain farmer, should some of these issues come up again this fall now that harvest is complete.

I ask my colleague from Central Nova, if we start hearing from grain producers about issues in terms of access and the lack of grain cars, will the Liberal government and the minister of agriculture step in to address this prior to Bill C-49 being given royal assent?

• (1640)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that this is an urgent issue. I met with agricultural producers and shippers who said we need to do this. Their top recommendation during the course of the study was this could be a little better, that could be a little better. All sides have different things that they would like to see improved. That is a good sign to signal that we have achieved a balance. The number one recommendation that I heard was to get it done quickly.

We have revisited Bill C-30 prior to sunset at the transportation committee and extended it initially. The status quo is that there are no rules in place. What we need to do is step on the gas with every member of this House, I hope, to signal clearly to the other house that we need to move this legislation through quickly. I anticipate that we will be voting on this issue before too long and I hope we have the support of the entire House to ensure that shippers from across Canada have remedies to get their product to market, indeed before winter sets in.

The Deputy Speaker: That will finish this five-minute period for questions and comments.

Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver East, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Canadian Coast Guard; the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Veterans Affairs.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to discuss Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and other Acts respecting transportation and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts. Bill C-49 is an omnibus bill that creates an air passengers' bill of rights, and introduces a new regime for railways and rail shippers.

This bill would establish a new air passengers' bill of rights and liberalize the international ownership restrictions on Canadian air carriers. As well, it would allow the Minister of Transport to consider and approve applications for joint ventures between two or more air carriers providing air services.

Further, it would amend regulations governing Canada's freight rail system, and mandate the installation of locomotive voice and video recorders in locomotive cabs.

Bill C-49 would expand the Governor in Council's power to require major railway companies to provide information relating to rates, service, and performance, and amend Canada's Marine Act so that port authorities are eligible for loans through the infrastructure bank.

In total, this bill substantially amends 13 different acts and would have enormous consequences for all three modes of transport.

My first concern with Bill C-49 is that this legislation drastically weakens legislative protections for western Canadian shippers and farmers.

Instead of making travel more expensive and unattainable for many Canadians, we need to focus on proactive measures to make travel less expensive and more convenient for all travellers. Maybe we should start by repealing the carbon tax, instead of legislating reactive compensation that only a small portion of passengers will benefit from.

Further, this bill provides few specifics on the proposed air passengers' bill of rights, and is not supported in its current form by many airline passenger advocates, including Gabor Lukacs and Jeremy Cooperstock from the Consumers' Association of Canada. They oppose this bill, as they consider its measures of little value to support passengers. If advocates for an air passengers' bill of rights do not support this, it speaks volumes to this legislation.

Port authorities and their wholly-owned subsidiaries will be able to receive loans and loan guarantees from the Canada infrastructure bank. My Conservative colleagues and I strongly oppose the creation of an infrastructure bank.

A further concern that is raised by this bill is that of staffing. The Canadian Transportation Agency and Transport Canada will require significant new staffing to handle all the additional data collection and regulatory powers this legislation introduces.

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This bill would lead to drastic changes in every means of transportation. With respect to air transportation, in particular, I have a few concerns. This bill does not specify the compensation levels for passengers under the proposed bill of rights. Voting for this bill would give the Minister of Transport and the Canadian Transportation Agency a blank cheque to set monetary compensation for passengers in the future with no oversight. That is wrong.

The bill also raises a concern that the Minister of Transport will have significant new powers to approve or overrule proposed joint ventures between airlines. This will lessen the role of the independent and non-partisan Competition Bureau.

● (1645)

Further, the bill would allow airport authorities to charge airlines and passengers for extra security lanes. This has the potential to lead to new airport security changes on top of the air traveller security changes presently levied by the Government of Canada.

There are also going to be major changes to rail transportation and safety, which the government cannot ignore. Unfortunately, the rail portion of Bill C-49 is a major reversal of the policies introduced by former ministers of agriculture and transportation in our Conservative government in 2014.

The first issue I would like to draw attention to is interswitching, an operation performed by railway companies whereby one carrier picks up cars from a customer or shipper and hands them off to another carrier that performs the line haul or transports them the majority of the linear distance of the overall railway movement.

The new long-haul interswitching remedy created by Bill C-49 is a renamed copy of competitive line rates, which are hardly ever used. The new long-haul interswitching rate will be more difficult to use for shippers and will not serve as a useful tool in negotiations with the railroad. This will be a problem. The entire long-haul interswitching program can be waived by the Minister of Transport if the minister believes that the railroad is in financial distress. I cannot support this.

Further, the 30 kilometre interswitching rate will be set each year. It will take into consideration the railroads' infrastructure needs across the entire network. I want to highlight that this will likely increase the regulated rate paid by shippers for interswitching and discourage the practice.

For toxic inhalation hazard material, shippers will not be able to apply for the long-haul interswitching remedy. This will negatively impact hundreds of shippers.

While long-haul interswitching will extend to 1,200 kilometres or 50% of the total haul distance, the first interswitching location for many captive shippers in northern Alberta and northern B.C. would be located within the Kamloops—Vancouver corridor where interswitching is not allowed beyond 30 kilometres, therefore removing their ability to utilize this remedy to increase railway competition. We should not be stifling competition in this country. It is this sort of legislation that is making it more expensive and less attractive to do business in Canada.

It is clear that Bill C-49 would create surrounding air and rail transport, but it does not stop there. Marine transport will also be

impacted if the bill is passed. My concerns here are twofold. First, the Canada Marine Act will be amended to permit port authorities and their wholly-owned subsidiaries to receive loans and loan guarantees from the Canada infrastructure bank. Second, the Coasting Trade Act will be amended to allow ships that are not registered in Canada to move empty containers between Halifax and Montreal. This is simply illogical.

It is for these reasons that I will not be able to support the legislation.

● (1650)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the important things the bill has brought forward. One is allowing foreign vessels to reposition their empty containers within Canada. This will make Canadian trade corridors very attractive to foreign logistics companies.

Second, the bill would enable the port authorities to have access to Canada's infrastructure bank, will result in very critical investments being made in port infrastructure.

Third, the bill liberalizes the ownership of Canadian air carriers by increasing the foreign ownership limits from 25% to 49%, at the same time as ensuring that no single foreign entity will have the control at 49%.

Finally, the bill would provide the much needed air passengers' bill of rights.

Why does my colleague not support these excellent measures?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, there is very little to the airline passengers' bill of rights. If someone is stuck in Toronto international airport or somewhere else, what will the compensation be? Nothing clear-cut is said in the bill on what the compensation would be. The Minister of Transport and the transportation company would set it.

The point is that the infrastructure bank was created for small and medium-sized companies. It is a Liberal creation, and if the stuff is not moving, they are pushing it onto these things. There will be a huge infrastructure bill to pay to fix these railway lines and all of these things. If the \$100 billion in infrastructure money is used or scooped up by the railway lines or rails, what will happen to the small and medium-sized businesses? These are the reasons we will not support the bill.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague referred to infrastructure and the infrastructure bank, but we also heard at committee about infrastructure for short-lines. Short-lines are a critical piece in our country, given where they exist, and hopefully the infrastructure would be supported by the infrastructure bank. However, it is not apparent in the bill.

I would like the member to further comment on what he was suggesting.

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Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure bank was created for small and medium-sized businesses. That money should be given to them. Furthermore, Bill C-49 is not supported by the stakeholders, neither the customers nor the railway lines. There are 50 flaws in the bill. I am strongly suggesting that we go back to look into the questions from the railway lines, the airlines, and the people who are questioning the bill. We should go back and re-evaluate the bill.

• (1655)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member across the way would agree with me that in virtually all regions people who fly have expressed great concerns about some of the discomfort and problems they have faced with the airlines. Now we have a piece of legislation that would enable us to address many of the problems our constituents are raising with us. How does the member across the way reconcile his opposition to this bill with the fact that many of the constituents we represent would like to see this air passengers' bill pass so that we at least have a process in place to protect them?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend makes it look so good, but my question once again is what is the compensation? We are looking for crystal clear stuff. This all depends on the minister or his staff, or the airlines. We are doing this now. Why would we want to go back again tomorrow? Let us finish the job once and for all and make it crystal clear what is in the bill, instead of the dance here, the dance there.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to a couple of aspects of Bill C-49. I have had the opportunity to express a number of thoughts, a few of which I will go over, but I want to look at a very important issue. Even though the legislation deals with transportation in general, I want to focus my opening remarks on something that I think is really important.

It was not that long ago when we talked about the important role that standing committees play in Parliament. The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities did a great job of listening to the different stakeholders that made representations with respect to this legislation. Ultimately, through those hearings, I understand the committee reported to the House early in order for the bill to pass clause by clause. The encouraging thing to recognize is that this is yet another piece of legislation that went through the process with a number of amendments. We often hear about government amendments on a bill that passes, but in my years in opposition in the House, it was very rare. I could not recall one occasion where opposition amendments were accepted and ultimately passed. I was quite pleased that out of nine amendments, there may have been six from the opposition, though I do not want to be quoted on that. That demonstrates a great deal of goodwill on the part of the government, and in particular the minister.

The minister has done an incredible job in bringing forward legislation that deals with tangible issues, and I want to focus on two of them specifically. One deals with the situation that many farmers have found themselves in over the years. When I was in opposition, I recall hearing from farmers first-hand about the piles and piles of wheat being stored outside because their containers were full. They could not get the rail service they required in order to get that

commodity to port. I understand that there were empty ships outside of ports that wanted to transport that commodity, but unfortunately the disconnect was through the railways.

The member for Wascana at the time, along with myself and many others, was exceptionally frustrated. We felt that the farmers were not being listened to by the government of the day. We did not know why there was not more action, and why the producers, the ones putting so much of their sweat equity, finances, and resources into producing the world's best commodities, were not able to get their commodities to port in a more timely fashion. When I was briefed on this legislation, it was one of the issues that stood out. It is important to have mechanisms that enable service agreements to be arbitrated in a fairer fashion, so that there is a better quality of service for the producers.

As an MP from the Prairies, I am quite pleased that we as a government are able to do something that the former government, which claimed to have a significant representation in the Prairies, was unable to do. It speaks volumes about the sense of commitment that the Prime Minister in particular has, and that the government as a whole has in building rural communities. This is one of the ways that I think it is fairly well received. This legislation covers a number of areas, but that one really came to mind for me.

• (1700)

The other area is airlines and the idea of having an airline passenger bill of rights in place. This legislation contains a mechanism that would enable that bill of rights to happen. I see that as a strong and encouraging aspect of the legislation.

Most MPs do a considerable amount of flying, some more than others, depending on their proximity to Ottawa. I do not know how many stories I have heard over the years in regard to issues that have arisen between airlines and passengers. Passengers are quite upset because of the lack of recourse. Airlines have some restrictions in place that often lead to complications. Things are beyond one's control when it comes to nature. However, in many cases, airlines need to be held more accountable. That is why it is encouraging to see within this legislation things that will protect the interests of consumers and ultimately producers.

My colleague raised the issue of the Canada infrastructure bank and the opportunities there for our ports and others. He also talked about how this legislation would enable future investments. These things are critically important.

If we take the time to do this right and we invest in things such as infrastructure, or offer opportunities for investment in infrastructure through things such as the Canada infrastructure bank, then we will be creating all sorts of opportunities. We can talk about those opportunities in terms of the jobs directly affiliated with the construction of a particular project; they are tangible and easily seen. However, the jobs that can be created as an indirect result are equal to or quite often greater than that, especially if we are talking about issues surrounding our ports.

Government Orders

There is a huge demand for modernizing and improving our ports, and it would be at a substantial cost. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. Bringing in legislation that could potentially enhance that development opportunity, the flow of goods both into and out of our country, is a positive thing. That would assist us in creating good, solid middle-class jobs that are necessary to drive our economy.

I am pleased with the policies that this government has put in place over the last couple of years, and their impact on Canada, on our middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, and on those who are finding it more challenging. At the end of the day, literally hundreds of thousands of jobs are being created. We are seeing many benefits in terms of full-time jobs that are being created.

Bill C-49 would do many things, and I could list some of them, but I will not have time because I know the Speaker wants me to sit down. The point is that the bill caters to our airlines, our ports, and our railways, and members opposite would be best advised to get behind this solid legislation.

• (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: I would never want the hon. parliamentary secretary to sit down, but at the end of his time perhaps we will signal for that purpose.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while you may not want my colleague to sit down, many on this side are very happy to have him sit down.

One of the campaign promises that the Liberals made was to champion the so-called passenger bill of rights for air travel. There is some movement in that direction with this bill, but it is clear that they are short on details in the legislation as it relates to preserving the rights of air passengers.

Currently I serve as the co-chair of the scrutiny of regulations committee, and I am very much aware that a lot of regulations developed subsequent to legislation often end up creating some issues to be dealt with. It certainly prolongs the process of getting the bill and its regulatory framework into practice.

My question for my colleague is, why would the Liberal government, after championing this idea in their campaign, be so weak on details as it relates to preserving the rights of air passengers?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would argue that it is quite the opposite.

The member is right. We agree on one point. The Liberal Party, prior to the election, made a commitment to work towards getting an air passenger bill of rights. In a relatively short period of time, we are now debating and ultimately passing legislation that is going to assist in enacting that protection for our airline passengers.

We recognize that in good part it will be done through regulations. There is nothing wrong with doing that, and working with the many different stakeholders and individuals who have a lot of good ideas in terms of how it could best be done. The member is right, in one sense. We are not saying that fines are going to be x amount of dollars and so forth, incorporating that into the legislation. However, we are enabling it to take place.

That is what Canadians want. I would suggest that with the passage of this legislation, we will see yet another election platform issue being acted on, committed to, and ultimately passed.

• (1710)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, there is much that we need to do in national transportation policy.

The minister has been holding consultations with members of Parliament. There is a lot to be legislated that is still missing in this bill. As we touch on rail service in this piece of legislation, Bill C-49, I wonder if my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North, the parliamentary secretary, has any comments on the critical importance of maintaining passenger rail service through VIA Rail? We have not legislated VIA Rail, ever, in this place.

There are some changes to that legislation contained in Bill C-49, but it is a missed opportunity not to legislate for VIA Rail in the same way that in the U.S., Amtrak has a legislated mandate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that if the member were to talk to the minister responsible for the legislation, he could probably come up with a half dozen or more other things it would have been wonderful to incorporate in some capacity in other pieces of legislation.

I look forward, in the months and years ahead, to seeing what other initiatives will come out of the department. I would like to think that all members of this House see the great value of the idea and the principle behind VIA Rail. It is something I would love to see expanded in some areas of our country. There is really no threat. Passenger rail is exceptionally popular and well utilized. In some of the other more remote areas, there are some legitimate concerns. It would be a wonderful thing. I do not know if the transport committee has even considered having that discussion, or if it has had that discussion in recent years.

Canadians as a whole support VIA Rail. If there are things that the government could do, as has been demonstrated in the committee on this particular piece of legislation, we are open to ideas and thoughts. Let us have a discussion about it.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again this Parliament has been presented with a poorly and hastily crafted omnibus bill that would undermine workers' fundamental rights to privacy and protect the rights of investors.

It is hard to see any difference in policy between the current government and the one that went before. The disparity between Liberal election promises and Liberal actions in government is painful. Where is the promise to end the use of undemocratic omnibus legislation, so decried by the Liberals in opposition? Like the Conservatives before them, the Liberals are subjecting Canadians and members of this House to unworkable and flawed, now Liberal, omnibus bills.

Government Orders

Bill C-49, for all its omnibus bulk, contains only two measures New Democrats can support. We believe in the measures that would improve the rights of air travellers and the protections for grain shippers. These ideas are positive improvements to the status quo. For that reason, we are calling on the government to sever these two initiatives from the pointless and ineffective remainder of Bill C-49 so they can be studied at committee and passed into law.

As for the rest of Bill C-49, we will vote against it, and I will tell members why. Bill C-49 would amend the Canada Transportation Act, giving the minister of transport the power to approve joint-venture arrangements between airlines. This is worrisome, because that type of arrangement could proceed with the minister's approval even if the commissioner of competition found that it was anti-competitive, and it could increase the price of airline tickets. Let me repeat: it would give the minister of transport the final word on proposed joint ventures between airlines, and once an arrangement was approved, the Competition Tribunal could no longer prohibit it.

The NDP proposed deleting clause 14 of Bill C-49, because it would expose consumers to unfair increases in airline ticket prices, yet that clause remains. The bill would also increase the limit on foreign ownership of Canadian airlines from 25% to 49%, despite a University of Manitoba study, published on Transport Canada's own website, that demonstrated that this measure would have no positive impact on competition.

Most concerning, Bill C-49 would amend the Railway Safety Act to allow railway companies to use video and voice recorders, and despite the fact that the bill would risk violating section 8 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by authorizing the government or employers to collect private information without instituting adequate protections, the Liberals rejected NDP amendments to limit the use of these recorders.

Locomotive voice and video recordings should be accessible only to the Transportation Safety Board. There is nothing to stop individual railway companies from using them to attack workers' rights. In fact, there are a number of precedents in which CN and CP have attempted to attack workers' rights and privileges. New Democrats object to clause 14 for this reason.

If the government were truly serious about improving railway safety, it would revise the standards regarding train operator fatigue. Train operators are under pressure from employers to work unreasonable hours, and as such, this demand by employers represents a real danger to the safety of workers and the public.

There is a better way. Canada needs and deserves an affordable, accessible, reliable, and sustainable system of public rail transit, and Canadians have the right to the highest levels of service, protection, and accessibility of travel that can be provided. Instead, we see the erosion of infrastructure due to the neglect and corporate offloading of maintenance responsibilities, and passengers are subjected to the cancellation of rail services across the country.

Canada has a growing population, families with children, disabled Canadians, and senior citizens who need to travel. At the same time, Canadians are conscious of the environmental legacy we are creating for future generations. With proper stewardship and a visionary plan, we have the very real potential to revive our once thriving rail-travel

industry. However, that kind of vision requires a federal government focused on national stewardship, rather than what both Liberal and Conservative governments did when they sold off national interests and pandered to those who bankrolled their campaigns.

• (1715)

It is because we need reliable rail service that I have drafted and tabled Bill C-370, which would create a clear mandate for VIA Rail Canada. Canadians are weary of the refusal by the current government, as well as Conservative and Liberal governments in the past, to acknowledge the economic and environmental benefits of a truly enhanced, integrated, accessible, and sustainable rail transit system that would far outweigh and outlive short-term political gain. Past governments have failed to understand that everyone, from the youngest Canadian to the seasoned commuter, benefits if rail travel is part of our future. I can tell members that this reality is not lost on the citizens of London and southwestern Ontario. They are the people who suffer from what is described, in the network southwest action plan, as the "mobility gap".

Bill C-370 would provide the opportunity for Canadians and the current Parliament to evaluate cases where VIA Rail planned to eliminate a required router station. In addition, my bill would provide a legislative framework for VIA Rail's mandate as a crown corporation to make services mandatory, set minimum frequencies for certain itineraries, and increase levels of service with regard to punctuality. It would provide a transparent and democratic means to evaluate any proposed cancellation of service routes and a framework for managing and funding VIA Rail. It would help prioritize passenger trains where and when there were conflicts with freight trains and would create efficiencies. I encourage members on all sides of this House to support Bill C-370 when it comes to the floor for second reading.

In a previous parliament, the NDP introduced a bill setting out clear steps to establish a passenger bill of rights. The current Minister of Transport supported our bill. He could have followed our lead and introduced concrete measures to protect airline passengers but instead handed off responsibility for making regulations to the Canadian Transportation Agency.

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The NDP proposal for a passenger bill of rights included measures to ensure that airlines would have to offer passengers the choice between a full refund and re-routing under comparable conditions when flights were cancelled. Air carriers that failed to comply would have to pay \$1,000 in compensation to every passenger affected, in addition to the refund. Also, when an aircraft was held on the ground for more than one hour, the airline would have to provide passengers with adequate food, drinking water, and other refreshments, as well as compensation of \$100 for each additional hour the flight was held on the ground.

Witness testimony tells us that such measures could result in flight cancellation rates four times lower than those experienced in Canada. The Liberals heard this testimony in committee, yet they rejected amendments from the NDP based on this solid evidence. It leads me to wonder what their motivation was and where their loyalties lie.

It is unacceptable for the government to shift the responsibility of protecting passenger rights to the Canadian Transportation Agency. Passengers and airlines need clear measures to discourage over-booking, and we need those measures now. The minister promised them for sometime in 2018. That is not good enough.

While our objections to Bill C-49 are many, I want to focus on one final point. Omnibus Bill C-49 would amend the Canada Marine Act to permit 18 port authorities to obtain financing from the Canada Infrastructure Bank. My New Democrat colleagues and I have spoken on the dangers of the Infrastructure Bank and will continue to do so as long as it exists as a loophole for selling off publicly funded infrastructure projects and public services to private corporations. We know that this transfer of public assets will allow private corporations to impose user fees and tolls on Canadians who have already paid hard-earned tax dollars for their public services.

Bill C-49 would allow private investors to provide loans to port authorities using the Infrastructure Bank. It would allow those private investors to charge high rates of interest on those loans, with the consumer footing the bill. In addition, ports whose building projects were valued at less than \$100 million may not be eligible for Infrastructure Bank loans and so would be left without any resources. The cost of the required return on investment by these lenders could affect consumers, since many goods are transported through our ports.

New Democrats are wary of any legislation that shrouds the poisoned pill of selling off our valuable public assets and services to private corporations. Governments do not exist to serve private profits. At best, it appears that Liberals do not seem to understand that. At its cynical worst, they do understand and hope Canadians will not notice as they sell this country off to their corporate friends without any consideration for the public good. Either way, Bill C-49 is a flawed and poorly crafted piece of legislation that New Democrats cannot and will not support.

• (1720)

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member and I quite often come to the nation's capital on the plane together, so we quite often talk about transportation between London and Ottawa. We both are very interested in the future of transportation in our country.

I want to make sure that I understand that she would at least agree that the bill represents a first step. That is really what we are talking about here. Is it to provide Canadians with a safer, more reliable transportation system, whether it be air, rail, or whatever. This is the beginning of a longer process that we know is necessary for our country.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I have been around this place for 12 years, and I am tired of tiny steps. I want something substantive and meaningful that is going to work for the travelling public of our country. In terms of the passenger bill of rights in the airline industry, it needs to be better and stronger. First steps are fine, but we do not get many chances. It is important to do it right the first time.

In regard to rail passenger service, we have an opportunity, with the Minister of Transport, to make real and definitive changes. We need a mandate for VIA Rail. We need it to serve the people of the country. In the last 25 or 30 years, all we have heard about are cuts in service, the closing of routes, and the elimination of the kind of service people would use and would enjoy using and would feel good about, because it would help our environment.

• (1725)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things covered in the bill is the joint ventures. Perhaps she addressed this and I did not catch that part. I was wondering if she could give her thoughts on the changes to the legislation in terms of joint ventures.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I am very leery and concerned about joint ventures. If he is talking about the infrastructure bank, I have profound concerns in that direction. We have experienced P3s in Ontario. They are more expensive, they are slow, and they do not provide the kinds of services that are intended.

In the case of the infrastructure bank, we would be partnering up with corporate entities that are designed to invest to make profits. Public services are for the public, and they are financed by taxpayers, the working men and women in our country. They should never be subject to extra tolls or extra costs to use their own services. Public services must remain public.

It is like Ontario Hydro. Who in their wildest dreams would have believed that any government would sell off a public entity like Ontario Hydro? This is all part and parcel of that selling out the public for private corporate good.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to discuss Bill C-49.

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However, before I get to the meat of the bill, I want to quote from liberal.ca/realchange, which says, “We will not resort to legislative tricks to avoid scrutiny. Stephen Harper has also used omnibus bills to prevent Parliament from properly reviewing and debating his proposals.” It goes on to say, “We will change the House of Commons Standing Orders to bring an end to this undemocratic practice.” However, what do we have before us? Like budget bills and others before it, the Liberals have introduced an omnibus bill.

In the bill, there are air passenger rights, with subsections on liberalized international ownership rules; joint ventures between air carriers; increased access to security screening services; rail initiatives with subsections under locomotive voice and video recorders; freight rail policy framework; and another area under marine initiatives that includes items such as would amend the Coasting Trade Act and the Canada Marine Act to permit Canada port authorities to access Canada Infrastructure Bank loans and loan guarantees to support investments in key enabling infrastructure.

We also know the infrastructure bank was introduced in a different omnibus bill. Ironies of ironies, the Liberals put time allocation on this omnibus bill after promising to never do either. The Liberals said that they would never be so cynical as to introduce omnibus bills and they were so sure they would never use them that they made it a campaign promise to show Canadians they were so different from Stephen Harper. With this broken promise, it once again shows that the student has become the master.

While I am on broken promises, I will review some of the other broken promises of the government, such as a revenue-neutral middle-class tax cut. The Liberals said this tax cut would pay for itself by increasing taxes on the wealthiest. Unfortunately, it has not. The tax cut is costing all Canadians \$1.2 billion annually from the federal treasury. It is like borrowing against a line of credit and saying we just got wealthier, but it is not.

The Liberals promised modest deficits. They said that annual deficits would be just \$10 billion a year, but they blew that out of the water pretty fast. Even with the economy doing well, the Liberal deficit will still be almost 100% higher than they had promised. They promised balance budgets. They said the budget would be balanced, probably balancing itself, with a \$1-billion surplus in 2019-20. Now we know they will not commit to a balanced budget ever.

The Liberals promised revenue-neutral carbon pricing. They said the plan would be revenue neutral for the federal government, but we know that is not true because they are charging GST on the provincial carbon taxes, which is expected to cost Albertans and British Columbians almost a quarter of a billion dollars over two years.

On electoral reform, we were famously told that the 2015 election would be the very last using the first past the post balloting system. On this side, we have always said that if the government is going to fundamentally change the way citizens elect their government, there should be a referendum. Therefore, I am not that sad to see this promise broken, but it still shows a pattern.

The Liberals make promises to get elected and then throw the promises under the bus faster than, say, the revenue minister threw

Revenue Canada employees under the bus over her mess-up with taxing minor employee benefits.

The government promised an open and transparent government. This one is an omnibus of broken promises.

I will read from the mandate letters to ministers, which state, “You are expected to do your part to fulfill our government’s commitment to transparent, merit-based appointments”. Here are some of the merit-based appointments. The former chair of the Liberal election campaign in Ontario was appointed to an ambassador role. A failed Liberal nomination candidate was appointed to the VIA Rail board. Another failed Liberal candidate, who already said she would run again, was appointed as the director of the Hamilton Port Authority. A Liberal described as a friend of Gerry Butts, who ran twice for the Liberals unsuccessfully, was given a plum government position in San Francisco at double—yes, double—the official pay scale.

The finance minister’s mandate letter includes this doozy, “your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.” Here we have the finance minister, who, before entering politics, lobbied for a change in the pension system that would benefit his company, Morneau Shepell. What did he do after he was elected and became the country’s top financial regulator? He sponsored the very bill he lobbied for before entering politics, but excuses it by saying he was following the letter of the law.

● (1730)

There is also the failed Access to Information Act we debated just recently. The Information Commissioner herself said that she was very disappointed with the act, that it was being used as a shield against transparency, and that it was failing to meet its policy objectives to foster accountability and trust in our government.

I will now move on to Bill C-49. It is unfortunate the government has once again chosen to break its promise and presented yet another omnibus bill to the House.

Bill C-49 is like a game of three card monte. That is where the dealer shows that one of the cards is the target card and then rearranges the cards quickly to confuse the player about which card is which. Except in the case of Bill C-49, instead of the queen of hearts, the minister is presenting the passenger bill of rights as the target. He hides the flaws and omissions of the bill under the guise of passenger protection, referring constantly to the much-reported United Airlines incident where someone was dragged from the plane, as if something like that had happened here.

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He also tries to pretend that government regulation is what is needed to prevent those situations in Canada. We all have our own horror stories of airline travel. What would address this issue is not half-hearted regulations, but more competition.

Changing the foreign ownership limit to 49%, up from 25%, is a good start, but why limit it at all? If we want improved service and other issues, then open up the market to more competition. We saw how this worked when WestJet entered the market. Nothing has done more to force better pricing and service from airlines across the country than having WestJet expand across Canada.

Why not focus on this, instead of measures that are rolled out populist-style to take advantage of consumer sentiment influenced by a viral video.

A University of Toronto report has found that relative to Americans, we often pay between 50% and 100% more for comparable travel between Canadian cities. Various expert reviews of the airline industry, including by the Competition Bureau, have recommended allowing a right of establishment for foreign carriers on domestic routes to put pressure on our airlines to improve.

The airlines might argue that foreign carriers would only operate on lucrative routes. However, Canadian carriers are under no obligation to fly to money-losing destinations currently, and there is no proof that the airlines are presently cross-subsidized to operate otherwise unprofitable routes.

One of the problems of this part of the bill is that it amends the Canada Transportation Act with regard to joint ventures, taking away decision-making authority from the Commissioner of Competition, and places the power in the hands of the minister. Yes, giving the minister the power to interfere for political reasons is just what is needed to improve airline service and lower rates—said no one ever.

The CAA, the Canadian Automobile Association, notes that the Bill C-49 relies on a complaint from a passenger in order to trigger action. The Canadian Transportation Agency cannot initiate domestic investigations on its own. Advocates and organizations can not intervene and each complaint is handled as a one-off, adding time and delays.

It is worth noting that the CTA was able to initiate hearings into the recent infamous Air Transat situation only because it concerned an international flight. The CTA would not have the authority, even under Bill C-49, to decide itself to hold a hearing into a similar situation if the flight occurred within Canada. Nor would the CTA be able to examine any broader systemic issues the CTA might note that did not come from a specific complaint and would have to ask the minister for permission to investigate them.

Noted passenger rights advocate, Gabor Lukacs, says the bill is “smoke, mirrors and has no teeth”, and contains no provisions about the enforcement of rights of the passengers. He says, “This strikes me as an attempt to shield airlines from complaints and further prevent the public from ensuring their right.”:

He says that Bill C-49 contains no provisions about the enforcement and that it passes the buck to the Canadian Transportation Agency to establish standards at some point in the future. What

we need is more competition, not relatively toothless regulations basically responding to a United Airlines' video that went viral.

We do not need regulations that will increase airport costs and thus ticket costs, which will happen as airports expand screening services and are permitted to independently decide how to cover costs. We all know how that will end: with consumers paying more.

There is quite a few other issues on this bill. We would have preferred that it be broken up into several bills to address.

It is unfortunate that once again the government is hiding poor legislation in an omnibus bus, and Canadians will be the poorer for it.

● (1735)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, why can my hon. colleague not support the excellent measures proposed in the bill?

The bill would allow foreign vessels to reposition their containers between locations in Canada. This would make Canadian trade corridors more attractive to global logistical companies. It would also allow Canadian port authorities to have access to the Canadian Infrastructure Bank. That would enable them to make critical investments in port infrastructure.

The bill would liberalize the ownership of air carriers, from 35% to 49%, while ensuring that no single foreign entity or group of airlines could own more than 25% of the airline stake. At the same time, it would ensure that speciality air carriers, like firefighting air carriers or aerial photography air carriers, would have no change in foreign ownership. It would still be limited to 25%.

Why can the member not support these excellent measures?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I outlined a lot of reasons why I could not support the bill. It is an omnibus bill that should have been broken up and presented separately in the House for review. There are quite a few reasons. There are privacy issues with the locomotive voice and video recorder. The Privacy Commissioner said that it could potentially encompass employee output measurement or other performance-related objectives. The bill could open the door to potential misuse of the data or function creep.

The problem with the bill is that it would not do enough to increase competition. Rather than allow more competition, the government seems to think more regulation, more government interference will make Air Canada or WestJet deliver better service. It strikes me as odd. If Liberal members went to a Tim Hortons and saw a lineup, I wonder if they would decide they needed to regulate that as well instead of allowing more competition.

The bill is flawed. It would do nothing to service Canadians better.

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Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things the legislation addresses in clause 14 is joint ventures and the putting in place of a ministerial component or a political lens.

Does my colleague have any comments on that section?

• (1740)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Peace River—Westlock asked an important question about taking away a non-partisan oversight and handing it to the minister. The government interfered with energy east and killed it. It has interfered in a lot of other things for political reasons.

It would be a disaster if we allowed the government and a minister to decide, for political reasons, what should be decided by the market.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, a brief question, please.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member across the way gives the impression that there is nothing in the bill for which he could vote. I would think his constituents would be pleased to know the bill would enable the department to work toward having a passenger bill of rights. I would think his constituents would want the member to at least say some encouraging words about the importance of those regulations.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, you recognized my colleague and said “a brief question”. The two really are oxymoronic, but I would like to thank him for the quick question.

Some things are in this omnibus legislation that I am sure a lot of us could get behind. The problem is that they are all wrapped up into one large bill. There are issues with the interchange with the rail. There are problems with the infrastructure bank and port authorities. There are problems with the bill. By throwing it all together, it is difficult to get behind it without getting a lot of real bad legislation and regulations rolled into it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, as it often happens, the Liberal government's bills first and foremost protect big businesses, at the expense of the rights of workers and consumers. By amending 13 acts, the omnibus Bill C-49 is no exception. There is certainly no doubt that the Liberal members are going to support this bill, but I would still like to remind the House why the New Democrats want to oppose it.

After two years of waiting, the minister wants us to rush through a bill that is deeply flawed and primarily favours the interests of foreign investors, while violating the rights of workers and consumers. I will explain all the reasons why the New Democrats oppose Bill C-49.

First, in 2012, the NDP tabled Bill C-459, which clearly outlined the measures to be taken to create a proper passengers' bill of rights. This bill set out concrete measures, for example, providing for appropriate compensation for passengers who were denied boarding. That could have amounted to \$600 for flights of 3,500 km or more.

However, the Liberals voted against the amendment that proposed to include this bill of rights in Bill C-49, without even trying to study it.

Why did the Minister of Transport reject our amendment? He could have taken a page from our proposal, which included concrete measures to protect air travellers. It is even harder to understand when we consider the findings of a study showing that 0.4% of EU-regulated flights are cancelled, which is four times lower than the cancellation rate of flights under current Canadian regulations. It seems clear that the Liberals are giving in to pressure from the airlines and turning a blind eye to the studies on the issue.

Bill C-49 would also require railway companies to install voice and video recorders in the locomotive cabs. This seems to make sense for dealing with accidents, but it must not prompt the railways to use this information for surveillance or disciplinary purposes. That is why we are calling for the use of these voice and video recordings to be reserved exclusively for the Transportation Safety Board.

The provisions of Bill C-49 are not clear enough and do not spell out how the train conductors' private information will be used by the railways. For example, the minister could decide by regulation that a train conductor's hourly productivity is something to take in consideration in a safety review. Following that reasoning, Via Rail Canada could use this data to manage employee performance, for example, during a stop at the Saint-Hyacinthe station.

The employees are refusing to give up their right to privacy. The government is not listening to the testimony of people like Roland Hackl, vice-president of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference. According to him, the bill, as currently drafted, goes against the employees' rights as Canadians, and he is right. Bill C-49 might be in contravention of section 8 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it would authorize the government or employers to gather private information without providing adequate protections. What is more, according to the findings of a Transport Canada working group, voice and video recordings are not part of proactive safety management.

The NDP therefore proposed a series of amendments to ensure that only the Transportation Safety Board could have access to the recordings in the event of an accident. Our amendments would also guarantee that the minister and the railways would not be able to use the voice and video recordings. Obviously, the Liberals in committee once again summarily dismissed these proposals.

I would like to talk about the change in the agreement between the airlines included in Bill C-49. Currently, the competition commissioner may make an application to the Competition Tribunal to propose the rejection of a merger of airline companies that stifles competition. The Competition Tribunal therefore has the authority to cancel a merger or a part thereof. However, under Bill C-49, the Minister of Transport will now have the final say in the matter.

• (1745)

As soon as the minister approves the agreement, the Competition Tribunal can do nothing to stop it. The NDP is opposed to clause 14 of the bill because it gives the minister the power to supervise and authorize joint ventures between airlines.

Imagine if Air Canada submitted a proposal to merge with United Airlines. Even if the commissioner found that the agreement would reduce competition among airlines and could raise ticket prices, the minister could still approve the merger if he or she deemed it to be in the “public interest”. I challenge the minister to provide a precise definition of that term. In Bill C-49, it is so vague that the minister could include reasons that are not in Canadians' interest but in the interest of shareholders of major airlines. The Liberal government is trying to erode our consumer watchdog's authority.

Bill C-49 would also amend the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Act, the CATSA act.

Instead of designating new airports and helping regional airports grow, the government is passing the cost of security screening on to them.

Why did the government not propose a fairer model in which CATSA is responsible for funding screening and security services?

The government has been withdrawing funding from this area for a long time. Statistics Canada data shows that the former government collected \$636 million from the public but that it allocated only \$550 million of that amount to air security. The Liberal government is no better, since it has continued to underfund CATSA. Clause 69 of the bill provides for the addition of subsection 30.1(1) to the act, under which any airport can enter into an agreement with CATSA to provide new screening and security services.

Everything is fine up to that point. However, it is up to the airport to pay for these new services, which means that passengers will be the ones to foot the bill. In contrast, the NDP proposed that public funding be put in place for the development of regional airports. Our amendment would have also prevented designated airports, such as those in Montreal and Toronto, from being forced to absorb the cost of enhancing security services.

Indirectly, our amendment also sought to ensure that the cost of enhancing security is not passed on to passengers via ticket prices. All of our proposals in that regard were also rejected. Unfortunately, that is not surprising. That is how the government has been withdrawing funding from regional airports and screening and security services in large airports.

The government wants users to cover the cost of its own policy of underfunding. Bill C-49 also creates a loophole in the Coasting Trade Act in clauses 70 to 72. We are asking that these clauses be deleted from the bill. Canadian shipowners and sailors' jobs—and I

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should point out that my son is a sailor—must be protected from unfair competition from ships registered in the European Union.

Why would that competition be unfair?

Simply because labour on EU-registered ships is not subject to the same requirements as labour on Canadian ships. Under the provisions of Bill C-49, crew costs for European ships authorized to navigate in Canadian waters are 30% of Canadian crew costs. What is even more appalling is that there is no reciprocity whatsoever. In fact, the minister could decide to allow the repositioning of empty containers by ships registered abroad, while Canadian ships will not have reciprocal access to the EU market.

We would also like to see clauses 73 and 74 deleted from Bill C-49, as those clauses authorize the Canada Infrastructure Bank to provide loans to port authorities.

Lastly, with regard to Bill C-49, I want to point out that we fully support improving the rights of air travellers and protections for grain shippers. Many grain farmers have acknowledged that Bill C-49 is a step in the right direction.

• (1750)

Grain farmers have, however, proposed measures that go even further.

I will close by saying that we strongly oppose Bill C-49.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very excited to see that small airports will have a chance to attract smaller new air carriers to their facilities. I was on the advisory board of the Waterloo airport for many years. One of the issues we had was trying to attract smaller carriers to our regional airport. The new act would allow international carriers to now own up to 49% of a Canadian air carrier versus 25% as it currently stands. Does the hon. member not see this as a great way to attract international investment into the Canadian marketplace to get better coverage for small facilities and small communities?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Yes, the whole issue of regional airport development is crucial. It is of concern to me, as well, as there is a small airport in my riding that would like to expand. However, as I said, these small airports cannot be asked to bear the burden of security costs. It is important that we have very clear public funding mechanisms in place to support the work these airports do.

We are living in an age when transportation is vital. In Acton Vale, a town in my riding, there is a transport logistics company that is demonstrating how companies must increasingly embrace multi-modal transportation, the idea of transporting goods by a combination of truck, ship, and plane.

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Transportation is too big an issue to cram into an omnibus bill that seeks to amend 13 vastly different acts at once. We need to focus on these elements. We need a true bill of rights for air passengers. The bill contains some important provisions about grain transportation, but they are eclipsed by the many provisions that put far too much power in the hands of the transport minister.

This bill needs to be split up so we can study all of its aspects in depth, because the transportation issue is far too big.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my colleague gave a very good speech. I have many concerns about this bill. I have only one question to ask my colleague. What does the NDP think is the worst part of this bill?

I personally think there are some parts that are perfectly acceptable, but there are also some serious problems.

•(1755)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

What worries me the most about Bill C-49 is that it does not make Canadians' interests a priority, whether it is customers, consumers, or even the people who work for these companies.

It seems as though this bill is going to serve the interests of large corporations and foreign investors. The government is ignoring the fact that some of the measures, such as the one calling for audio-video recorders in locomotives, will be in violation of workers' rights. The government is ignoring the fact that consumers will be the ones to suffer the consequences of this bill.

Our role in the House of Commons is to vote in favour of legislation that contributes to the common good and that serves the interests of our constituents. We need to pass legislation that respects charters of rights and freedoms.

When we were debating this bill, all of the members of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities were telling us that the experts were unanimous on some issues but that the amendments put forward to address those experts' concerns were still not adopted by the committee at report stage. We must ensure that the bill that we pass respects the rights of workers and consumers.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to talk about what I term the “treat and trick” bill. It is in keeping with the season that is upon us. I call it that as it is being brought through as a bill of rights for passengers. It has been a topic of debate beyond this place, around the coffee tables and coffee shops in northern Alberta, particularly after some events in the media.

Here we are debating a bill of rights for passengers. One of the things that is beautiful about Canada is that we live in what we think of as a free trading country and no one is under any obligation to provide or buy services. Free trade and active competition allow us to travel fairly cheaply.

However, the bill of rights that would result from this bill may impede our free will or ability to choose a plane to fly on. As we impose a bill of rights upon airline carriers, it may be difficult for

them to provide the same level of services they currently do at the same rates. We already have some of the most expensive air traffic rates in the world. With an increased burden upon them, the air carriers may increase the price.

That is definitely the main reason why I call it the “treat and trick” bill. While everyone likes the idea of a bill of rights, we do not really know what it will look like. The bill only lays out the framework to write it, not the actual details. There are many other things that slid underneath the first page of the bill, such as rail safety and interswitching.

Up in northern Alberta, rail is a big part of our transportation system. A lot of grains, cereal crops, and canola are grown in my riding. I heard from the Canola Growers Association of Canada that my riding might be the largest canola producing riding in the country and we utilize the rail system.

The interswitching that was brought in before, of 160 kilometres, worked very well for the grain farmers. However, given that my riding is 700 kilometres from top to bottom, people felt that it should have been increased much beyond 160 kilometres. Some of the grain that is grown in my riding is 700 kilometres from Edmonton or the nearest terminal in Westlock. Increasing the competition may bring the rail up north more effectively, perhaps to a loading terminal or that kind of thing.

Interswitching is a big deal. I have heard from my constituents that they are disappointed that the particular method that had been brought in by the previous Conservative government was not continued in this bill. The Liberal government talks about interswitching and making it better, but the regulations and different scenarios that have to be in place are convoluted and have many loopholes. Producers in my riding are concerned that the interswitching proposed in this bill would not have a positive effect on getting their products to market.

•(1800)

We heard very eloquently from the member for Central Nova about how it is imperative that we get the products that are produced in Canada to market. That is the stated goal of the bill as well, yet we see that it is not going to happen with the interswitching as it is laid out in the bill.

Finally, I want to talk about section 14 of the bill, particularly joint ventures. I understand a joint venture is where two airlines happen to fly similar routes between two cities and could get together in a joint venture and say they will fly to some cities together rather than competing with each other. When two airlines get together, the Competition Bureau must do an assessment and say they can work in a joint venture or no, it is going to lower competition and that would be detrimental to the public interest or to folks flying on the airplanes.

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The bill proposes to change that requirement not only to have the Competition Bureau look at it, but also have the minister put a political lens on it. The term that the bill uses is “in the public interest”. I would say that the ability to use the airline, the ability to be able to afford to use the airline, and to ensure that everything is done safely would be in the public interest.

Most of these things can be dealt with. The safety aspect definitely needs to be addressed by the government, but the other two can be adequately addressed by competition. We need to ensure that there is more competition. Some of the things that the bill proposes to do are going to make it more difficult for airlines to come into the fore when it comes to rates at airports. We have seen the government in the area when it comes to conflicts of interest. We would like to see the minister sign-off be taken out of the bill because, as we have seen with other ministers of the crown, they have not been able to avoid conflicts of interest. This would place a potential transport minister in a conflict of interest when he has to judge on joint venture deals.

The government would like us to think this is all about a passenger bill of rights, but we see there are a number of other things in it that would do nothing to improve passengers' rights and would also perhaps place ministers in conflicts of interest.

• (1805)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned joint ventures. Talking about air carriers, the bill would allow the liberalization of the ownership of airlines from 25% to 49%, while actually making sure that no single entity, no single individual, or no two carriers would have more than 25% stake on any Canadian carrier. Also, the bill would not allow ownership of specialty air services like firefighting, aerial logging, and aerial photography to rise above the current 25%.

Would this increase competition in the Canadian air sector, increase the choice available for Canadians, and increase the creation of jobs?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, for sure that is a very positive thing, if we can spur on the investment within the Canadian airline industry. What I am concerned about, however, is that the joint ventures have to be signed off by the minister. We already have a system that works and has worked very well to ensure competition and improve competition. I do not see how the bill would work at all in terms of enhancing the current situation when it comes to having the minister sign off on joint ventures.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thinking of the prairies, where I came from, transportation every year seemed to have less and less choice. Rail companies were pulling out of small towns. Airlines were pulling out of small airports. We did not have access to the travel options that we used to have back in the 1960s and 1970s.

Could the hon. member comment on the need to revamp Canada's transportation system, and how it is all interconnected so that we cannot separate one from the other without having impact?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I would not disagree at all with the member when he said that we need a revamp. However, I would definitely say that the bill before us does not look like a revamp.

What we have in Bill C-49 looks more like crony capitalism or paying off somebody. I am not sure what the whole bag of goods is intended to do, but for me, the ministerial sign-off on the joint ventures raises a red flag. It would give the opportunity for the minister to bypass the board, and the opportunity to participate in what I call crony capitalism.

What we need in northern Alberta and northern Canada is more competition. What we need is more of the government getting out of the way so that our resources can be developed. As we have seen in northern Alberta, hundreds of flights are being cancelled, because there is no economic activity any more. When there was a lot of economic activity, there were choices for a person who wanted to fly out. There was a flight every hour that left the Fort McMurray airport. Now I think there are only four every day flying to Edmonton. This is one of those things that we need to ensure, that we can get the economy going again, and then there will be a lot of choice when it comes to transportation, provided the government can get out of the way.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question for the member is more of a follow-through. As I have highlighted consistently throughout the day, it is important that the government provide some sort of opportunity for more justice for passengers on flights, whether through regulation or legislation. Would the member not agree?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, on more justice on flights, the government is definitely in the business of justice, which I think is the primary role of the government. What we need more of in this country is more competition within perhaps the air industry, and everywhere else. One of the ways to drive competition is to lower regulations on businesses so that the barriers to entry are lowered, and therefore we can get more competition in this country.

• (1810)

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today, on behalf of many of my colleagues, to Bill C-49. I had the opportunity and pleasure, and privilege, to work on this, starting before we came back to the House. I worked with many great people on the committee and with witnesses and delegations that came to take part in the discussion.

There is a bigger picture. I have heard a lot of comments today in the House. Although we dug a bit deep in the weeds, I want to speak, in a broader sense, to the strategic plan for the future of transportation in this great nation, that being transportation 2030 and how Bill C-49 would actually contribute to that overall strategic plan.

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This bill would be in part an enabler of a national transportation strategy. The minister worked very hard throughout the past year to put together transportation 2030 and a train corridor strategy as part of that overall strategy. It became evident, when speaking with many of our partners throughout Canada, that modernizing rail, air, marine, and road is a critical component of that overall national transportation strategy. Bill C-49 would be a critical component of that.

When we looked at the bill, we recognized quickly that a lot of the particulars relate to how we are going to ensure that Canada's transportation system is strengthened to give us an ability globally to perform better with respect to our economy and the economies of our partners. We also recognized that we had to hear from everyone across the House of Commons. It was not just about the Liberal side of the floor. It was also about listening to the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party, and other folks, as I mentioned earlier, who were a great part of this entire process.

I want to highlight a few components of the report. The report states that, transportation 2030 will ensure that Canadians benefit from a safe, reliable, clean, and efficient transportation system that facilitates trade and the movement of people for years to come. That includes every method of transportation: rail, road, air, and, of course water. Transportation 2030 would also ensure that Canada's transportation system supports economic growth, job creation, and Canada's middle class while promoting a sustainable environment. We can see a trend here as it relates to a triple bottom line, that being economic, environmental, and social.

In a vast nation such as ours, Canadians rely on economically viable modes of transportation to travel and move commodities within our country, across the border, and to our ports for shipment overseas. The time has come to modernize our policies, not just in our own jurisdictions but with jurisdictions throughout Canada and with our trading partners, ensuring that we have a seamless method of transportation to move global trade. These practices also include a safe, greener, more competitive, and more respectful system that can respond to market conditions and to Canadians' expectations, not only with respect to moving trade but with respect to moving people, whether it be through high speed rail or any method of transportation. It is incumbent upon us to investigate those opportunities.

• (1815)

I mentioned earlier today that the transportation modernization act would represent only a first step in providing Canadians with safer, more reliable and efficient transportation, and a system that would better facilitate the trade and travel of goods and people. It would also respond to the needs of Canadians and their expectations for services, as well as allow Canada to take advantage of international opportunities and contribute to a highly productive economy.

When we look at a lot of the effort of the transportation committee now, we are starting to get a little deeper into the specifics of an overall strategy that attaches itself both to transportation and, most importantly, the economy and job creation. We cannot be content to sit back and depend on what we had, but look to what we can have. That is dependent on our strengths as a border country with our trading partners, such as the United States. Within the new trade agreements that we have and will be ensuring are in place, we have

an opportunity to include that seamless movement and ensure that the agreements are of benefit to both Canada and our trading partners.

I want to speak as well to the involvement of all members at committee. For those who may not know and are watching this on TV, all three parties participate in the standing committees, the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the NDP. As the chair of the committee so eloquently alluded to earlier in her dialogue with us, we listened to all members of the committee, ensuring that all of their voices were heard. We made amendments, and those amendments came from all sides. The amendments were as follows.

Changes were made to the exclusion zones in Quebec and British Columbia to open up a new long-haul interswitching regime to captive shippers in northern Quebec, parts of British Columbia, and Alberta, which were previously excluded in the agreement put in place by the former government. This will be of particular importance to the forestry and mining sectors.

Changes were also made to the new system of approvals for joint ventures in the air sector to provide for greater transparency in the process, to provide greater service to passengers, and to provide greater certainty when travelling.

There were changes made to the new system of approvals and joint ventures for other methods of transportation, such as by rail, water, and road.

Changes were made to the rules around closing rail interchanges so that a longer notification period and greater transparency were required. As a former mayor for the past 14 years, I can relate to that one simply because of the cost of, as well as the work that has to be done on, some of these interchanges within our own individual jurisdictions.

There were also changes made to the reporting requirements for freight rail, which will result in timelier reporting of data and speed up the implementation of a new system from one year to 180 days. Once again, that will lead to better service, transparency, and accountability.

Finally, changes were made to the amendment concerning the CN Commercialization Act so that CN's directors could apply for a new 25% limit on individual ownership of shares immediately after royal assent.

In closing I want to say that not only is there a bigger picture attached to both the efforts at committee and what the minister and ministry are embarking on with respect to a national transportation strategy, but also that when we go to the next layer we see the minister's announcement of transportation 2030, and in the next layer the specifics of how we are going to accomplish that in Canada by 2030. Bill C-49 is but one component of that and will be an integral part of ensuring that the overall strategy is put in place. It is not just a document that will sit on a shelf and collect dust, but one that will breathe. With that, Bill C-49 will become an enabler to ensure that this great nation has the tools to move this entire strategy forward to benefit future generations.

Government Orders

•(1820)

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his very important words. We have had many discussions over the past two years about transportation, and I know how important it is to get this right. I wonder if the member could reflect on how Bill C-49 would help the Niagara area, because I know how important it is to ensure that transportation is increased and improved in that general area.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question by my hon. colleague, who has done a lot of work with me on the transportation strategy.

Niagara is unique. We are a trade corridor. We have a very robust multi-modal transportation system, with the Welland Canal going right up the middle of the region, as well as short and mainline rail. We are a border community, with road and air links shared by both nations. Within a one day's drive, we represent over 44% of North America's annual income. Therefore, the bill, as well as the overall strategy with respect to transportation, not only contributes to Niagara, but because of the strength of Niagara as a border community, it can also contribute overall to accomplishing the recommendations that will be coming out of both the strategy and Bill C-49.

We look forward to its being passed. We look forward to taking advantage of the strengths, as well as the resources, that would be made available to us through Bill C-49.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his wonderful speech. Bill C-49 is a key piece of the plan to implement the transportation 2030 vision announced by the Minister of Transport last fall.

Would the member tell us a little bit about that and explain why it is important?

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my great colleague, who also does a lot of work on transportation, in particular on the committee.

Canadians expect a transportation system that allows them to travel safely and to bring global trade through our partners' jurisdictions safely, efficiently, and in an environmentally friendly manner. We want to ensure that where and when a product is moving, it is also moving economically and that jobs are created and preserved. Businesses and customers expect a transportation system they can trust and have confidence in to deliver.

Bill C-49 would become an enabler of the entire transportation strategy, transportation 2030, to become something that will breathe and mature and offer our great nation the ability to perform better when it comes to our economy on the global stage.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague to talk a little about the on-board recording device. The unions have visited us at committee and here in the House. They are quite concerned that the LVVR system not be used for disciplinary proceedings. We had assurances from the Canadian Transportation Safety Board and all of the federal

departments that this would be used exclusively for safety issues. Would the member like to comment on that issue.

•(1825)

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, this has been a point of discussion within the committee, as well as on our side. We have had discussions with both unions: Unifor and the Teamsters. The bottom line is that the LVVR devices would not be used for anything other than safety purposes. They would not be used for disciplinary purposes. As mentioned earlier today, they would be used in the case of an accident, which is reactive, but also in a proactive way, using the video and audio recordings for recommendations that may in fact make it safer for the industry well into the future.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to address the House today on Bill C-49. We have covered a lot of ground in the debate today.

The word "omnibus" has been used by both the official opposition and the NDP to describe this bill. The vision that came from committee and the minister is that this bill reflects the nature of transportation. Transportation, as we know, is now called logistics. It is more than just moving goods and people; it is also the data behind the networks. It is tracking packages as they go from one form of shipping to another. Whether it is from a ship onto a container at a transloading facility, onto rail, and then onto a truck, we need a transportation network that has an act behind it that reflects the true nature of transportation.

The acts that this legislation would cover, the CN Commercialization Act, as was mentioned by the previous speaker, would attract investment up to 25% of the ownership of CN or CP being covered by international investment, to look at attracting international capital into Canada.

The Railway Safety Act, as was just mentioned, would include the use of devices for the safety of rail and, as we saw in the disaster in Lac-Mégantic, how to avoid disasters in the future through the use of technologies, so we can make sure that the equipment is operated safely and effectively. It is governed by subsection 28(1) of the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board Act. We have a backstop. We will not have to focus on conversations in the cab between the engineer and other operators. We are looking at safety and the safe operation of equipment, and we have acts to govern that. We are looking at the comprehensive nature of safety between air travel, road travel, shipping, and rail.

We are also looking at the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Act, to authorize the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority to enter into agreements for the delivery of screening devices on a cost-recovery basis. That concern was mentioned by the NDP earlier, but cost recovery can take many forms in terms of financing activities, such as improving screening devices within facilities.

Government Orders

The Coasting Trade Act looks at repositioning empty containers on ships that are registered in any register. There can be tracking of empty containers and a more efficient way of handling the movement of containers across Canada as they become unloaded and go to other forms of shipping, and then eventually get back to the registered owners. It is to make use of the containers throughout the time they are in Canada.

The Canada Marine Act permits the port authorities and their wholly-owned subsidiaries to receive loans and loan guarantees from the Canada infrastructure bank. That infrastructure bank, which has been discussed in this place on other occasions, looks at how to attract international investment. It looks at how to maintain control of it through our management of foreign capital within our shores, knowing how expensive it is to operate ports, to add rail infrastructure, to build bridges, to improve our transportation network across Canada. There are international markets looking for investment, looking for projects to participate in. As long as Canadians know how we are doing that and we are transparent in the way the conditions of Bill C-44 will be coming forward to Parliament so that it can get royal assent and we can get on with investment in transportation, that is what we want.

There are also other acts, as always, including the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Competition Act, the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, the Air Canada Public Participation Act, the Budget Implementation Act, 2009, and also the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act.

This bill is not omnibus; it is omni-transportation. We are not suggesting that we cut down environmental protection in the middle of a budget bill or other things that have been termed omnibus in the past. We are not bringing this forward in any way, other than to make sure we have an integrated act that reflects the integrated nature of transportation in Canada.

● (1830)

When we look at integration and different forms of travel, we also have the competition between freight and people. How do we manage the investments in our infrastructure? In my riding of Guelph, people are trying to get down Highway 401 to Toronto on the train, and the train gets waylaid as freight comes through. Freight makes a profit for rail organizations. Freight always takes precedence over people. People are trying to get to work or trying to get home, and they cannot do that efficiently.

The only way to get past these problems is with comprehensive legislation that allows investment, so that we can get dual tracks between Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo, including Guelph, to have one track for freight and one track for people.

Transportation 2030 is looking at where we are going in the next 20 or so years. We want to have an integrated nature of transportation that can also pave the way to use the new forms of transportation, autonomous vehicles, new ways of moving goods through new ways of port control, and new transloading facilities for rail. We need to have comprehensive legislation, such as Bill C-49, in order to make way for future carriers of people and goods across this great country that we have.

When we look the scope of Canada, we also need legislation that is as broad in scope as we are as a country, so that we can reach northern Alberta, reach Windsor, and so we can have proper control in our major centres of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Halifax, and all points in between.

When we look at the joint ventures, attracting the most efficient use of travel, we do not want part carriers on part carriers and two operations losing money, but a means in which they can collaborate and work to the benefit of Canadians under the new legislation.

Competition is essential, and competition, as I mentioned earlier, includes attracting international participants. We can look at countries where there is best practices that we can borrow from, such as China and the United States. Europe has border issues that it has been able to solve. We are still working on old border issues that will hopefully benefit from this legislation as well, as we open up our roads and bridges and our rail lines to international markets.

Finally, I mentioned in the question section that Guelph is looking at increasing our opportunities for air travel. We have YKF, which is the international regional airport in Waterloo that is partway between Guelph, Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge. To come to Ottawa this morning, I had a 4:15 a.m. pickup and a shuttle to Pearson. I had to go through security, so I was dropped off an hour and a half before my flight. I got to my office here for 8:30 a.m., after having left Guelph at 4:15 in the morning. If we had YKF operating and we had a low-cost operator, as we almost had last year—we had it for a very short period of time—I would have been able to drive 20 minutes to the airport and be at the office an hour earlier than I was. I would be able to get home to my family a lot easier once we are finished with the work of the House.

However, we cannot do that without good legislation such as we have before us, which attracts investment, attracts competition, and enhances the network that we have in Canada, bringing it into the next century with transportation 2030.

I will be supporting this bill as it comes forward.

● (1835)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would encourage my colleague to remember that while he does not call this omnibus legislation, it is a bit of verbal engineering to try to stay away from that.

Another thing that the member mentioned in his comments was YKF, the airport in the greatest riding in all of Canada, Kitchener—Conestoga. It is not in Guelph, but it is very close to Guelph. I remember when we had good service directly from YKF to Ottawa. Certainly, anything we can do to restore that service would be welcomed by many people, not just members of Parliament.

Government Orders

My question is related to the issue of the air transport, and specifically the air passenger bill of rights that this bill includes. It seems very thin on details as it relates to the legislation. This was a campaign promise of the Liberal Party in the last campaign, and yet here we have this legislation with almost no details as to the air passenger bill of rights. All of that is going to be left for the regulatory process later on.

Would my colleague care to comment on why the Liberals did not take a little more time to get it right on the passenger bill of rights?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, YKF will become active again, coming to Ottawa I am hoping in the near future.

It is interesting to note that with respect to the passenger bill of rights, on one hand we are criticized for putting too much into this legislation, and on the other hand we are criticized for not putting everything we could into it.

The legislation lays the groundwork for a passenger bill of rights to come forward. It really is looking at making an integrated approach to all traffic. The airlines would be a part of that and the passenger bill of rights I am sure would come forward in the early new year, should we be able to pass this legislation before then.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I could not agree more with my hon. colleague from Guelph that we made a dreadful mistake when we separated out passenger rail, VIA Rail, and gave the tracks in this country to CN and freight. The current length of trains that are bringing freight across this country is so long that they do not fit on any siding, which is why VIA Rail, that does not control the signals, is sent to the siding and passengers have to wait sometimes for as much as an hour for a freight train to pass.

I do not see anything in Bill C-49 that would fix the problem the member for Guelph just identified. What we need to do is make sure we are investing in VIA Rail and investing in tracks for VIA Rail. I do not see that in this legislation.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, there is a third rail line, the Guelph Junction line, that also has some shunting yards that move freight between the two major carriers in Canada.

This legislation would open up the opportunity for international investors to see a more efficient network to invest in and attract the capital that we need to pay for the tracks that have to go in to do the dual tracking between some of the major centres in Canada.

Part of the work of this legislation involves attracting attention and investment through the greater efficiencies that it would provide.

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Madam Speaker, talking about transportation in southwestern Ontario always piques my interest. We are talking about the London International Airport of course. We are talking about a new low-cost carrier. We are hoping that will come to fruition and it might help all of us get to our destinations that much quicker.

I wonder if the hon. member could talk about that type of investment and how that would serve southwestern Ontario in general.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, if we were able to have low-cost carriers in London and in Hamilton at YKF, that would take

a large load from Pearson and it would take a lot of traffic off the 401. A lot of our traffic now goes to Buffalo because it is easier to fly out of Buffalo, so the greenhouse gas emissions in our area would be reduced. It would provide further opportunities for people to get home faster and to get to work faster.

If we can get this working in London, in Hamilton, and in YKF, Kitchener-Waterloo-Guelph-Cambridge, we will see some terrific advances being made in not only getting traffic off the 401 but also in getting to work on time.

• (1840)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to speak to Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and other acts.

This proposed legislation is critically important to help modernize transportation policies and practices to help ensure that we have safe, clean, and efficient transportation across Canada. Of course, Canada is a vast country and we rely on transportation to ensure that our trade happens across the country and that we are able to travel across the country. Therefore, it is critically important.

Last week, we had an opportunity to hear the great news of our fall economic statement. We saw growth in this country that has not been seen in quite some time in terms of our place in the G7. We have seen the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs and, more importantly, over 100,000 full-time jobs. Having an efficient transportation system will allow that growth to continue. It will give our businesses, our small businesses in particular, the capacity to get their goods and services from city to city and province to province, and across this great country.

I know that a lot of businesses in Whitby really appreciate the fact that we are looking at transportation. In Whitby, there is always heavy congestion on the 401, just as it bottlenecks into my town. Many of us realize the inefficiencies that can result when we do not pay attention to the intricacies and importance of our transportation networks and to ensuring that we are able to get our businesses' goods and services across the country. This helps broad economic growth. In this we want to make sure that we are taking a whole-of-government approach when looking at ensuring vast economic growth in Canada.

In Whitby there are a lot of families who really like to travel across the country. We have seen various reports in recent times that travel is not so nice for some passengers. The introduction of a passenger bill of rights will give families peace of mind when they are travelling. They want to know that when they have spent their hard-earned money to take a trip across the country either by train or by air that they will be treated appropriately in whatever mode of transportation they take.

Government Orders

However, this is not just about planes or trains. When we think about driving across country on a family trip, it all really ties together. We also want those roadways to be efficient. We want that transportation to be efficient so that people can travel across the country, spend their money, and encourage economic growth when they are going across the country. Again, it is very interconnected, and I think this government has taken a proactive approach of looking at each piece of legislation, seeing that we can build upon each of them in turn and ensure that we do have the economically viable modes of transportation we need to continue to grow the country.

I want to speak a little to the fact that we have adopted some of the amendments brought forward at committee.

When I came to this place, people asked me questions about our capacity to work together across the aisle and to exchange ideas and to ensure that we can put together the best pieces of legislation possible. We have taken the opportunity to put this proposed legislation to committee, and the committee came back with various amendments that we have taken into account. We know that it is very important to the Canadians, including people within my constituency of Whitby, that we serve and represent everyone and take their input into account.

The adoption of those amendments represents a critical opportunity to work together.

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 6:45 p.m., pursuant to the order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on Motion No. 1 is deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 10, 14, and 15.

The question is on the Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The vote on Motion No. 3 is deferred. The vote will also apply to Motions Nos. 4 to 9, and 11 to 13.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division at the report stage of the bill.

Call in the members.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 10, 14, and 15. A negative vote on Motion No. 1 requires the question to be put on Motion No. 2.

• (1910)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negatived on the following division:)

(*Division No. 380*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Angus
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bergen
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Calkins
Carrie
Choquette
Clarke
Cooper
Davies
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dusseault
Eglinski
Fast
Fortin
Garrison
Genius
Gladu
Gourde
Hughes
Johns
Kelly
Kitchen
Kusie
Lake
Liepert

Albas
Allison
Arnold
Barlow
Beaulieu
Benzen
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Cannings
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Cullen
Deltell
Donnelly
Dubé
Duvall
Falk
Finley
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Hoback
Jeneroux
Julian
Kent
Kmiec
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lobb

Government Orders

Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz
Nater
Nuttall
O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Ramsey
Rayes
Rempel
Sansoucy
Schmale
Shipley
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 131

MacGregor
Maguire
Marcil
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Nantel
Nicholson
Obhrai
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Quach
Rankin
Reid
Richards
Saroya
Shields
Sorenson
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Sweet
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Weir
Yurdiga

May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Robillard
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Stewart
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 165

McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peschisoldo
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Khalid
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lighthound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brisson
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cormier
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lockhart
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 10, 14, and 15 defeated.

The next question is on Motion No. 2.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The motion is adopted.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 3. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 4 to 9 and 11 to 13.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it you will find agreement to apply the results from the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting no.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply, with the Conservatives voting yes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote and will vote yes with the addition of the member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Ms. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees and will vote yes.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the decision to apply the vote and I vote yes too.

[*English*]

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Mr. Speaker, I agree to have the vote applied, and I will be voting no.

Government Orders

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this manner?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 381)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Boucher
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brosseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dusseau	Duvall
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harcastle
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Malcolmson
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Paupé
Plamondon	Poilievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Sansoucy
Saroya	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sorenson	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 132

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Soeurs	Morneau
Monsef	Murray
Morrissey	Nault
Nassif	Oliphant
O'Connell	O'Regan
Oliver	Peschisolido
Ouellette	Petitpas Taylor
Peterson	Picard
Philpott	Rioux
Poissant	Rodriguez
Robillard	Rudd
Romanado	Rusnak
Ruimy	Saini
Sahota	Sangha
Samson	Scarpaleggia
Sarai	Schulte
Schiefke	Shanahan
Sgro	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sheehan	Sikand
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sohi
Simms	Spengemann
Sorbara	Tan
Tabbara	Tootoo
Tassi	Vandenbeld
Vandal	

Government Orders

Vaughan
Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 165

Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 3 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 4 to 9 and 11 to 13 defeated.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the result from the previous vote to this vote, with the Liberal members voting in favour.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote and the Conservatives are voting no.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP also agrees to apply the vote and will vote no.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and is voting against.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply the vote and votes no.

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply and will be voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous agreement to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(*Division No. 382*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell

Bains
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Khalid
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Robillard
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 165

Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brisson
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cormier
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lockhart
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCrimmon
McGuinity
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Adjournment Proceedings

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Boucher
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brosseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dusseault	Duvall
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Hardcastle
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Malcolmson
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Plamondon	Poilievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Sansoucy
Saroya	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sorenson	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 132

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

*[English]*RECOGNITION OF CHARLOTTETOWN AS THE
BIRTHPLACE OF CONFEDERATION ACT

(Bill S-236. On the Order: Private Members' Bills:)

September 18, 2017—second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage of Bill S-236, An Act to recognize Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation—Mr. Easter.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Malpeque is not present to move the order as announced in today's Notice Paper. Accordingly, the item will be dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my constituent, Willow, in April told me of a situation that she was faced with. It was a heartbreaking ordeal that she and her nephew, Dash, had been undergoing. Her case made national headlines. I have risen in this House to ask the minister to intervene. I have written several letters to him to that effect as well.

Willow and Dash's case exposes a gap in the legislation that could affect thousands of families across Canada. When Dash's parents both tragically passed away, his aunt Willow became his legal guardian. It was a family decision to honour Dash's family name and the history to not legally adopt him. This would have forced a change and reissuance of his birth certificate. What Willow did not realize was that by not being Dash's biological or adoptive parent, it made her ineligible for parental leave benefits.

Given Dash's difficult situation, Willow wanted to take a leave from work to give Dash the support that he needed. Like many Canadians, Willow could not afford to take unpaid leave. Therefore, she applied for parental benefits under EI, a system that she had spent 22 years paying into. Willow was denied because she is not the adoptive parent or the biological parent of her nephew. She was only the legal guardian.

After months of being denied with no effect, she came to me. Finally, after we brought this to the government, Willow's EI claim was accepted in September. Remember that she applied in April and it was finally accepted in September. At that time it was also recommended to Willow that she file a formal complaint.

Adjournment Proceedings

Throughout this whole ordeal, Willow's focus on the broader impact of what she was doing was never lost. To quote her complaint letter, "Although I am personally relieved to finally be granted this leave, it is unacceptable that it took five months, a media campaign, and a question in the House of Commons. I am an educated person with a great deal of support and this has been draining on me financially and emotionally. The EI regulations are antiquated and discriminatory. Parental leave must be available to all new parents who qualify. It is discriminatory to state that permanent guardianship is not equivalent to other types of legal parenting. Ultimately, I have been granted parental leave which means that a precedent has now been set."

If the government fails to change the legislation, it is continuing to discriminate against an estimated 11,000 children in B.C. alone. It is also discriminating against indigenous children who are in homes where legally recognized alternative customs and kinship care arrangements exist.

I have been in contact with the minister throughout this entire process and even outlined the legislative or regulatory approaches that could remedy these problems. However, in response to my latest letter to the minister, his policy director writes, "I am pleased to learn that there has been a resolution to Ms. Yamauchi's case with respect to her EI claim. I am also concerned with the delays experienced in her case. The department will make efforts to improve and be more responsive in the future."

Then it goes on with a boilerplate about budget 2017 EI changes, completely ignoring what my letter was asking and what Willow's complaint is actually about, which is legislative changes.

When will the government close this unfair gap in the EI program so that families like Willow will not be hurt by it?

• (1920)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the question the member from Vancouver East asked the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development on May 29 was in fact very relevant. Her question was about a specific case that touched us all deeply. However, the question went further. It also touched on much larger social issues. The member asked how the various government measures and programs in place could respond to this individual who was declined employment insurance parental benefits.

Under the current regulations, employment insurance parental benefits are provided to parents taking care of a newborn or a newly adopted child. There are also certain circumstances where parental benefits could be provided to claimants when they can demonstrate that they have been granted permanent, legal custody by the court because it was in the child's best interests not to proceed with an adoption. As the minister said, we are all saddened when Canadian families go through difficult times such as this. However, each case is unique and has to be assessed on an individual basis, according to the EI Act and regulations.

Service Canada has reached out to the individual, encouraging her to share any additional information to support the reconsideration of her application.

• (1925)

[Translation]

I will give three concrete examples of improvements that will be made to the employment insurance program.

[English]

The improvements announced in the last budget will come into effect this fiscal year and will make the employment insurance program more flexible, accessible, and inclusive. We will create a new employment insurance benefit for a duration of up to 15 weeks for people who take care of a critically ill or gravely injured adult family member. Additionally, the new measures will allow parents to choose to either receive employment insurance parental benefits for a period of 12 months or for an extended period of up to 18 months. This choice will be available to both birth and adoptive parents.

Finally, pregnant workers will be able to apply for employment insurance maternity benefits up to 12 weeks before their expected delivery date, increased from the current maximum of eight weeks, if they choose.

[Translation]

In the meantime, our government is taking action on a number of fronts to help Canadian families.

[English]

For example, in July 2016, we replaced the previous child benefit with an all new Canadian child benefit. This new benefit is simpler, non-taxable, better targeted, and more generous. In fact, nine out of 10 Canadian families now receive more support than ever.

[Translation]

I invite my colleague to do as the minister suggested and, if she has not already done so, send Employment and Social Development Canada all information relevant to an in depth review of this file.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the talking points the member just offered have nothing to do with the issue at hand. I am very well aware of the changes made in budget 2017 and to the EI program. As I stated, I have been sharing with the minister the legislative and regulatory changes that could have been included in budget 2017 to fix this problem. As the parliamentary secretary knows, those provisions were not included.

Budget 2017 changes will not fix this. The changes have no impact on legal guardians, because legal guardians remain ineligible for EI parental leave benefits. This is not fair. I think the member agrees with that. I think the government is in agreement with that. It requires legislative change or regulatory changes.

I am happy to provide those documents to the government again, as I have done for a number of different ministers. However, I am happy to do that if we can in fact get those changes made so no Canadian has to go through what Willow and Dash have had to go through.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I would like to assure my colleague that we are all working for the same cause on this file. [Translation]

We want the best for all Canadians.

[English]

As I mentioned, the Government of Canada does provide Canadians with a wide range of programs and services for families, particularly for those in the middle class and those working hard to join it. We are committed on this matter, and we will continue to improve the social services to which Canadians are entitled.

Our government looks forward to working with the member opposite to bring this file to conclusion.

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, the last time we were debating this issue, it was June, and the government had quietly announced the phase-out of the Coast Guard's only team of emergency rescue divers on the British Columbia coast.

The Liberal government's plan to disband this specialized search and rescue dive team came as a great shock to B.C. mariners who had already lived through this once before. In 2001, when the Liberals were previously in federal government, they had cancelled the dive team as a cost-saving measure, but two days later a man crashed his vehicle into the Fraser River and the Coast Guard was unable to rescue him from the waters. People died.

On the same day in June of this year, the government also announced the ending of funding for the stream to sea salmon program. This program had provided over a million students with hands-on learning experiences around B.C. salmon, the province's fisheries, ecology, and the role of history of salmon in British Columbia's culture and particularly in indigenous culture.

Here is an example of the kind of mail that everybody was getting in June regarding a deep concern about the cancellation of the salmonid program. This is from Nina Evans-Locke, from Nanaimo, where I was elected. She writes:

I cannot imagine why DFO decided to cut the very successful salmon education programs from our schools here in BC. It is beyond belief. So many children are affected, as are thousands of streamkeeper volunteers and other volunteers who come out in droves to support these programs, including me.

...

The Salmon in the Classroom program is an important educational project where Coho eggs from the local hatchery are placed in aquariums in schools.... Departure Bay Eco School, one of our important partners in our projects to restore Departure Creek, is involved in this program.

...

These cuts involve 0.02% of your overall budget. Thanks for rescinding these cuts for this next year and please do not go ahead and cut these programs the following year.

Just weeks later, we were really pleased that the federal government, under great pressure from the NDP and fisheries critic, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, announced a reversal of its decision to cut the B.C. salmon enhancement program and the salmon education program, and the restoration of funding for the search and rescue dive teams.

My question is, first of all, why were these cuts ever proposed? It was a deep mistake, a blunder. Second, public pressure worked. It was a real win for coastal communities.

We also had public pressure applied to other decisions of the federal government, the fish farm bill on the transition to closed containment, and closure of the Comox Coast Guard base, which happened just 18 months ago under the Liberal government's watch. In those cases, there was tremendous public push-back. That was not a win for coastal communities. The Liberal government went ahead, despite that opposition.

That is my question to the member across, why are you not listening to coastal communities, despite the fact we got a win with salmon and the Coast Guard dive team? When will you listen to coastal communities in relation to other Coast Guard closures?

● (1930)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Of course that is through the Speaker. I would just remind the member to address the questions to the Speaker and not the individual members.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, a riding I used to represent myself as a municipal councillor some 18 years ago. I know, as someone who used to live there, that everyone on the coast, especially on the west coast, is very passionate about our coastal communities. It is exactly why this government continues to support the salmon enhancement program. It is exactly why we are investing in coastal restoration. It is also why we continue to have the dive program, which is an excellent program for the community, continue to go forward.

It is my privilege to have this opportunity to highlight some of the good work the Canadian Coast Guard fulfills on a daily basis. I am also very excited to share the many investments our government has made in the department and in the fleet since 2015.

The Canadian Coast Guard and the brave women and men who wear the uniform prioritize the safety of Canadians, mariners, and the environment above everything else. The Coast Guard is always seeking to improve services to Canadians and works closely with local communities and indigenous groups to ensure that resources are utilized where they can best have a positive impact on mariners and on coastal communities.

Adjournment Proceedings

I can also confirm, once again, that the Canadian Coast Guard dive team will remain at the Sea Island base. I would also like to point out that with last summer's reopening of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station and the announcement of the historic oceans protection plan, Vancouver harbour is safer than it was two years ago. The entire coast will be safer than it has ever been once all these historic investments have been made.

The \$1.5-billion oceans protection plan will ensure that our coasts are protected in a way that ensures environmental sustainability, safe and responsible commercial use, and collaboration with coastal and indigenous communities. It is built on Canadian science, technology, and traditional knowledge to protect Canada's unique marine environment from coast to coast. This plan will also help create economic opportunities for Canadians today, including jobs for middle-class Canadians, while protecting our waters for the benefit of future generations.

In addition to this, search and rescue capability in British Columbia has sharply increased through recent investments, such as those through the oceans protection plan, which will help deliver four new search and rescue lifeboats to the west coast as well as crews that will operate those boats 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. These and other initiatives will lead to safer, more responsible marine shipping and cleaner, healthier marine ecosystems. These recent investments, in addition to a further \$1.4 billion the department is receiving from a recent program integrity review, will create more job opportunities within the Coast Guard.

The total number of personnel assigned to the Coast Guard's search and rescue mission in British Columbia will increase over the next three years, resulting in safer waterways for everyone in the region. In fact, over the next few years, DFO and the Coast Guard will staff upwards of 900 positions across Canada on all three coasts. It goes without saying, but increased hiring of new employees will greatly benefit the Coast Guard's critical frontline services.

Investments will be made in areas that are key to sustaining and improving the Coast Guard's critical operations, core activities, and assets. The Canadian Coast Guard is the backbone of one of the safest marine systems in the world. As more goods are being shipped from our coasts, our men and women will play an enhanced role in facilitating the safe, clean, and efficient marine transportation of Canadian goods to market.

I would like to close by thanking the men and women of the Canadian Coast Guard for working hard every day across the country to ensure that maritime search and rescue services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to mariners in Canadian waters.

• (1935)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, the Coast Guard's men and women on the water just two weekends ago acted quickly when a 100-foot, 90-year-old vessel, the *Anapaya*, started to sink in Ladysmith Harbour. This is a vessel that had been identified in 2014 by Transport Canada as a vessel of concern, but nothing was done. When the vessel sank, and it still sits on the bottom of Ladysmith Harbour, it was Coast Guard employees who boomed it and prevented an oil spill from getting worse.

I am hoping that the government will hear the public pressure from coastal communities and enact an abandoned vessel legislation regime that is full and reflects what coastal communities have been asking for for 15 years. The minister's announcement today was a very good first step, but it does not deal with pleasure craft or with the backlog and problems with vessel registration.

I am hoping for the government's assurance that it will hear coastal communities' full concerns on abandoned vessels.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity very recently to spend some time at the regional district in Victoria where we talked about the issue of abandoned vessels. We are taking it very seriously. That is why we have a very detailed plan. That is why we invested \$1.5 billion in the oceans protection plan. We are taking action. In fact, we are taking more action than any other government before us.

If I go back to the initial topic, which was the Canadian Coast Guard, I have very limited time, but it was worth sharing that the Coast Guard plays a crucial role in saving lives and protecting our waters, including from vessels of concern. It is responsible for the on-water component of the federal search and rescue system. It maintains a reaction time of 30 minutes or less, and a one-hour standby posture for search and rescue calls.

I wish to take this opportunity to again confirm that the Canadian Coast Guard dive team will remain fully operational at the Sea Island base, and that new significant investments through the oceans protection plan and our core strategic review mean that the Coast Guard will continue delivering critical—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the time is up.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, last spring, I asked the minister about the infrastructure bank and the fact that it would result in user fees and tolls on Canadians. It is an important issue for a vast majority of Canadians, who deserve a real answer. I hope the Liberals will, despite previous practice, be honest with the people they serve, just as they promised when they came to power.

The 2017 budget, as well as this fall's economic statement, represented great opportunities for the government to build an economy that benefits everyone, not just the wealthiest. Sadly, the Liberals did quite the opposite in both cases. Despite sunny ways, it appears that the current government remains focused on using governance as a means to increase the wealth of its friends at the expense of hard-working Canadians. Where is the promise to be transparent and accountable? The infrastructure bank proves, on several fronts, that the Liberals cannot keep their word.

Adjournment Proceedings

The infrastructure bank project was included in an omnibus bill that was about 300 pages long. I recall the Liberal promise during the last election campaign to abolish the use of undemocratic omnibus bills, which the Liberals vigorously denounced while the Harper government was in power. Can the minister explain why the use of such undemocratic practices has suddenly become acceptable?

In 2015, the Liberals promised that the Canada infrastructure bank will provide low-cost financing for new infrastructure programs. One year later, we learned that the infrastructure bank will be largely financed by private sector investors, who would demand significant returns on that investment. Projects funded under the infrastructure bank will have to produce revenues, notably by imposing user fees, tolls, and other new costs to citizens throughout Canada. I do not recall the Liberals being transparent about tolls at the time that the legislation was introduced. The bottom line is that Canadian taxpayers will be funding private corporations for public services. The infrastructure bank represents nothing less than the privatization of our infrastructure, privatization that benefits wealthy investors at the expense of hard-working Canadians who rely on public services.

It raises the vital question of whether public services would be deemed unessential if they do not meet an acceptable profit margin for infrastructure bank investors. For example, would the public safety of rural areas and impoverished regions be overlooked because they would not generate enough profit? Once again, profit appears to trump the public good and the sunny ways rule book.

The NDP has been very vocal in its opposition to the infrastructure bank. It does not serve the needs of Canadians. This privatization is disastrous for all of us. Infrastructure should first benefit all Canadians, including workers and families, not the financial elite and corporate friends of the Liberals. We should most certainly not be double billing Canadians with additional user fees and tolls for essential infrastructure that they have already paid for with their tax dollars.

Earlier this month, a report from the Columbia Institute, echoed by Canada's Information Commissioner, argued that Bill C-44, passed in June, will further undermine the public's ability to access information about the infrastructure bank. The report clearly stated that private sector interests are given a veto over releasing information about how public money is spent. It is clear that nothing has improved since I first asked my question in May. In fact, it looks worse than ever.

• (1940)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for the question regarding the infrastructure bank, however, the question that was brought forward was with respect to veterans affairs. Therefore, I will be happy to respond to that question.

I would like to thank the member opposite, who also sits on veterans affairs committee, for her advocacy on behalf of veterans and military families.

Canada's veterans do deserve respect, financial security, and fair treatment. This government has committed to treating our veterans with the respect they deserve.

As everyone in the House knows through experience, there is often inaccurate information floating around and it is important Canadians get the facts, so let me set the record straight.

Shortly after taking office, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence established six advisory groups composed of veterans and members of stakeholder organizations. Their input contributed to the changes made in programs and benefits for veterans, and for that we thank them.

[*Translation*]

In 2016, Veterans Affairs Canada began taking steps to reopen the nine offices closed by the previous government, as well as open a new office in Surrey, British Columbia. Budget 2016 contributed to improving the financial security of veterans and their families by making sure they have more money in their pockets.

[*English*]

Budget 2017 supports the health and well-being of veterans and families by investing in mental health supports, education opportunities, and career transition services.

For example, we will invest \$17.5 million in creating a centre of excellence to research and share knowledge and best practices on post-traumatic stress disorder and related health conditions for veterans and Canadian Armed Forces members.

[*Translation*]

Beginning in April 2018, the new education and training benefit will give veterans with at least six years of military service the opportunity to receive up to \$40,000 in financial assistance to use towards post-secondary education, while veterans with at least 12 years of service may be eligible for up to \$80,000.

We are also expanding access to military family resource centres beginning in April 2018 to include families of all medically released veterans.

• (1945)

[*English*]

The continued access to all 32 MFRCs across Canada will provide veterans and their families a familiar support group post-military career.

The new caregiver recognition benefit will provide \$1,000 every month, tax-free, to caregivers of veterans to better recognize and honour the vital role they play. This is based on direct feedback received from the minister's advisory groups.

In addition, to help with the transition from military to civilian life, we will expand coaching and job placement assistance to equip veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, survivors, and veterans' spouses and common-law partners with the tools they need to navigate the transition to the civilian workforce.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

These are just some of the changes that we are confident will result in better outcomes for veterans and their families.

[*English*]

Yes, it has taken time. That is because this government is listening and responding to the real needs of veterans and their families. I have personally visited 12 Canadian Armed Forces bases and wings since March of this year and I have spoken with hundreds of military members, veterans and their families to listen to their needs.

We will continue to strive for excellence in the care and support of our brave men and women in uniform, those who have served, and the families that support them.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I too, am absolutely convinced of the parliamentary secretary's integrity and her desire to help veterans and their families, but I have some concerns along the lines of what is happening to veterans and their families.

We still have veterans who are desperately ill and need help with their mental health issues. We desperately need to know that veterans will be supported financially. An increase in all veterans' pensions would help profoundly. Recently, the DND ombudsman said that financial security would go a long way to help everyone, and I believe that is true.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, when it comes to mental health for our Canadian Armed Forces members and our

veterans, it is something I truly believe is a joint effort. I was delighted to be part of the joint suicide prevention strategy announcement two weeks ago. DND and Veteran Affairs Canada work in lockstep to ensure that support is there.

The Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence clearly gave priority to re-establishing a lifelong pension to injured veterans, and we are committed to doing so.

[*Translation*]

The minister has committed to taking the time it takes to meet the needs of veterans and their families. Veterans Affairs Canada continues to work with veterans and other stakeholders to develop a pension option.

[*English*]

The minister has committed to delivering on that by the end of this year. Stay tuned.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:49 p.m.)

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