



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, May 9, 2013**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 9, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*English*]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

\* \* \*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on International Trade entitled, "Report on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Between Canada and India".

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party is in favour of broadening and deepening economic relations between Canada and India. We believe that a well-structured comprehensive economic partnership agreement between Canada and India could lead to worthwhile business opportunities for both countries.

The NDP generally supports the report's findings and recommendations. However, we think they are incomplete. We think Canada's economic agreements can and must be improved. Our supplemental report contains findings and recommendations that we think will make it possible to truly create stronger, lasting trade relations with India.

Without going into detail, we have concerns about workers' rights, the environment, public service and any abuse of labour mobility clauses. The NDP believes that Canadian treaties must protect

Canadian exporters, increase exports of value-added products and create truly lasting employment for all Canadians.

Therefore, we encourage continued dialogue with India for a CEPA, but we want the government to consider the important elements in our report.

[*English*]

#### JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons).

[*Translation*]

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

#### ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

In accordance with its order of reference of Monday, February 25, 2013, the committee has considered votes 40 and 45 under Justice, votes 15 and 20 under Parliament, and vote 45 under Treasury Board in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, less the amounts granted in interim supply, and reports the same.

[*English*]

#### GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

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### TAX CONVENTIONS IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2013

**Hon. Bal Gosal (for the Minister of Finance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill S-17, An Act to implement conventions, protocols, agreements and a supplementary convention, concluded between Canada and Namibia, Serbia, Poland, Hong Kong, Luxembourg and Switzerland, for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes.

*Routine Proceedings*

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present this morning.

The first is signed by a group from my riding. They state that recently they were appalled by the CBC program *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* in which the most sacred sacrament of the Holy Communion was the object of an offensive and most disrespectful attack on the very core of our faith, the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, they ask the House of Commons to stop the federal funding of CBC, which is financed by our tax dollars.

## SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the other petition consists of three petitions, all on the same topic. The petitioners call on the members of Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls through sex-selective abortion and to do all we can to prevent sex-selective abortions from being carried out in Canada.

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Mr. David McQuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising today pursuant to Standing Order 36 to table a petition signed by local residents who are urging the government to impose a moratorium on genetically modified alfalfa.

There has yet to be a transparent process established to determine the genetics, preservation or production of GM organisms, nor are there any measures for establishing the possibility of co-existence or cross-contamination or for appropriate mechanisms for transportation.

I am pleased to table this petition. I look forward to the government's response.

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition signed by a large number of constituents. It concerns the closing of three Canada Post offices: one in Westmount, one in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and one in Snowdon.

These post offices were closed without public consultation the way public consultation should occur, and are at the heart of the communities that are affected by the closing.

I would ask the government to reconsider its decision.

## HEALTH

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition regarding physical activity.

A lack of physical activity is a major public health issue in Canada. Canadian children are getting more than six hours per day of screen time, and are spending more than half their waking hours sitting down. Only 9% of boys and 4% of girls meet the Canadian physical activity guidelines.

The petitioners call upon the government to work with the provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive pan-Canadian strategy to promote physical activity, to commit to the resulting strategy and to make the necessary investments.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

## CANADA-CHINA INVESTMENT TREATY

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to present two petitions.

The first petition has been signed primarily by people from Parksville and Qualicum Beach, in British Columbia, as well as people from Mississauga and Grimsby, in Ontario.

The petitioners are calling on the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers to not ratify the Canada-China investment treaty because it will undermine Canada's sovereignty, as well as its environmental, labour, health and other regulations and protections.

[*English*]

## SHARK FINNING

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on the subject of shark finning, and calls for the government to regulate the trade, distribution and offer for sale of shark fins.

More than 90 million sharks a year are killed simply to take their fins for a specific delicacy. The petitioners, in this case from Surrey, Victoria and Vancouver, urge that we do whatever we can to stop this practice.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1258, 1259, 1261 and 1262.

[*Text*]

Question No. 1258—**Mr. Robert Aubin:**

With regard to the next review of the Canadian Postal Service Charter: (a) when will the government begin work on the review of the Canadian Postal Service Charter; (b) what form will the review process take; (c) what criteria will be used to determine whether the Charter meets requirements or whether it must be revised; and (d) will there be an opportunity for public input during the review of the Canadian Postal Service Charter and, if so, how will this input be obtained?

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), (b), (c) and (d), under the Canadian Postal Service Charter, the government is to review the charter every five years after its adoption to assess the need to adapt the charter to changing requirements. Since the charter was announced in September 2009, the first five-year review would not be until September 2014.

Question No. 1259—**Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

With regard to written questions Q-1226 to Q-1237, Q-1244 and Q-1245, what is the estimated cost to the government for each response to each question?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as these answers were tabled very recently, the government is currently compiling the cost information for producing these responses. Once all the cost information has been received, the government will provide a supplementary response.

The vessel had a brief soft landing on an uncharted sandbar amid the silt in the mouth of the Fraser River, moved away within minutes, and continued on without any damage. As per regulations, this was reported to Canada vessel traffic and Transport Canada so that others would be aware of this uncharted sandbar.

Question No. 1261—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to the recent sale of crown land owned by the Correctional Service of Canada, in the amount of 1,554.48 square metres, located on Frontenac Institution in Kingston, Ontario: (a) who was the purchaser; (b) what was the purchase price; (c) what was the closing date of the transaction; (d) what were all of the measures taken to respect the Commissioner's Directive for Real Property for the Correctional Service of Canada, in particular the statement, under Principles, that, "acquisition and disposal of real property assets will be done in a fair and open manner, which shall include public consultation"; (e) what was the first date of any communications regarding the sale of this land between the government and the purchaser; (f) what was the first date of any communications regarding the sale of this land between the government and parties who expressed interest but ultimately did not purchase the land; and (g) what was the first date of any communications regarding the sale of this land between the government and parties other than those in (e) and (f)?

For more information, the member may contact the Western Marine Response Corporation.

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as of March 25, 2013, the sale of the Crown land owned by CSC located on Frontenac Institution in Kingston, Ontario, has yet to be finalized. Therefore, CSC is unable to respond to the question, pending the completion of the sale.

\* \* \*

Question No. 1262—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to the the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation vessel that ran aground while traveling from its base to the Coal Harbour News conference: (a) on what date was the decision made to have a vessel travel from its base to the Coal Harbour News conference; (b) who approved the decision to have a vessel travel to the Coal Harbour News conference, (i) which Ministers and Departments were involved with the decision, (ii) who had signing authority to authorize a vessel to travel to the Coal Harbour News conference; (c) what correspondence exists regarding the decision to have a vessel available for the press conference; (d) what correspondence exists regarding the follow-up after the vessel scheduled for the press conference ran aground; (e) what was the cost of having a vessel travel to the Coal Harbour news conference for the Western Canada Response Corporation, broken down by (i) cost of personnel, (ii) cost of transport including fuel, (iii) cost of equipment; (f) what was the cost of having a vessel travel to the Coal Harbour news conference for the government, broken down by (i) cost of personnel, (ii) cost of transport including fuel, (iii) cost of equipment, (iv) cost of wear and tear; (g) what was the dollar value of the damages incurred when the vessel ran aground, and where will the funds to pay for these damages come from; (h) what are the costs of repairs to the vessel for damages incurred; (i) what are the operational impacts to the vessel and the projected days that the vessel is expected to be out of commission; and (j) how many days has the vessel been out of commission as a result of this grounding to date?

[English]

#### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1254, 1255, 1256 and 1257 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) to (j), the president of the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation was invited by Port Metro Vancouver, which was hosting the Government of Canada's world-class tanker safety system press conference. After being invited to participate in the event, Western Canada Marine Response volunteered to send the vessel to demonstrate its capacity to the public.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

The Western Canada Marine Response Corporation routinely informs the public about its activities and the organization participated in this event at no cost to taxpayers.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Text]

**Question No. 1254—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to access to information requests ATI 2012-005 and 2012-006 submitted by Ms. Kirsty Duncan, M.P., for which a response was sent on February 22, 2013: (a) on what date were the two submissions made and what was the timeframe for completing the response; (b) why were the two requests returned together, some parts featuring page numbers and others not; (c) how many updates have been received from the Canadian Chronic Cerebrospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI) Systematic Review Group to date, (i) how many studies in total have met the criteria for inclusion in the review, (ii) why does the group not identify, for each complication, the number of cases per number of people treated, (iii) why does the government not provide, for each serious complication listed, the number of cases per population treated; (d) on what date was the request for proposals for the CCSVI trials first drafted, (i) how many drafts were undertaken and on what dates, (ii) how many people worked on these drafts, for how many hours, and at what average cost to taxpayers, (iii) on what date did the provincial and territorial Ministers of Health review the draft, (iv) what was the feedback provided; (e) why, on November 22, 2012, was the amount available for the CCSVI trials in the range of \$3-5 million, (i) what is the significance of the expression "should we just fudge a number"; (f) how was the decision made to earmark \$3 million for the CCSVI trials and on what date was the decision made; (g) on what date and at what time was the Request for Applications (RFA) announcement for clinical trials published on the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR)'s website, (i) on what date and at what time was Bill C-280, An Act to establish a National Strategy for Chronic Cerebrospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI), scheduled to be debated; (h) why was there a change by the President's office at CIHR that the commitment from the CIHR be \$2 million with the balance to come from partners, i.e. the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MSSC) and "relevant provinces and territories", and what were the relevant provinces and territories referred to; (i) how many versions of the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) research update deck were produced and on what dates, (i) how many people worked on these drafts, for how many hours, and at what average cost to taxpayers, (ii) when was the final draft presented, and for what purpose; (j) how many government MPs has the Health Minister met with on the issue of CCSVI/MS since May 2010, and how many government MPs have the Minister's officials met with on the issue of CCSVI/MS since May 2010; (k) how many draft speeches were prepared for government MPs for Motion M-274, (i) how many versions of each speech were produced and on what dates, (ii) how many people worked on these drafts, for how many hours, and at what average cost to taxpayers, (iii) how many government MPs read these prepared speeches; (l) regarding the briefing note for Dr. Alain Beaudet's meeting with Dr. Jeffrey Turnbull, President of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) on December 21, 2010, why did a recommendation in the briefing note state "The possibility of the CMA producing a position statement regarding patient access to physicians for patients who have received the Zamboni procedure", and "The fact that CIHR would be willing to provide the CMA with any necessary support in order to produce this statement", when the Scientific Expert Working Group (SEWG) stated that, "media reports that have stated that Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients who experience complications after Chronic Cerebrospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI) treatment are not being seen by Canadian doctors are not justified"; (m) regarding the briefing note for Dr. Alain Beaudet's meeting with Paul Emile Cloutier, CEO of the CMA on January 31, 2012, which shows CMA President Haggie testified before a Senate committee on Dec 2, 2011, and a House committee on October 17, 2011, (i) did President Haggie bring up at either committee meeting CMA's lack of support for either bills C-280 or S-204, (ii) why was President Haggie unaware of the lack of follow-up care for MS patients treated for CCSVI when President Turnbull was made aware, (iii) why was there a hiatus in correspondence with the CMA, (iv) for how long was the hiatus, (v) when did the hiatus end; (n) regarding the MS-Societies' seven funded studies regarding CCSVI, why was there, at the 18-month mark, an inquiry into the training of the teams, (i) which of the teams were trained by Dr. Zamboni and which individual members of each team were trained by Dr. Zamboni, (ii) which of the teams were trained by Dr. Zivadinov and which individual members of each team were trained by Dr. Zivadinov, (iii) which teams were trained by neither or by another team; (o) how many people worked on drafts of prepared speeches for bill C-280, An Act to establish a National Strategy for Chronic Cerebrospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI), for how many hours, and at what average cost to taxpayers and how many government MPs read these prepared speeches; (p) how many people worked on drafts of prepared speeches for bill S-204, An Act to establish a National Strategy for Chronic Cerebrospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI), for how many hours, and at what average cost to taxpayers, (i) how many government Senators read these prepared speeches; (q) on what dates was the Canadian MS Monitoring System to be ready to receive data and when did the system start collecting data; (r) is the government's position regarding MS patients' input into the Scientific Expert Working Group (SEWG) in accordance with the statement "CIHR's Scientific Expert

Working Group includes researchers with expertise in different disciplines such as neurology, vascular surgery and vascular imaging who are treating MS patients and who will be bringing their patients' concerns to the table" (ATIP); (s) is it still the government's position that "Benoit's motion speaks far more to PHAC's monitoring system than anything we are doing on the trials front" (ATIP); (t) how many draft MS slide decks were prepared for Senatorial Caucus, (i) how many versions of each deck were produced and on what dates, (ii) how many people worked on these drafts, for how many hours, and at what average cost to taxpayers, (iii) who presented the deck to the Senatorial Caucus; (u) is the government's position as per the information sheet provided when Dr. Alain Beaudet wrote to the Colleges of Physicians on February 29, 2012 which says, "MS patients who have received a venous procedure abroad should be reassured that they will be continued to be cared for by their physicians and/or regular MS specialists as any other patients?" or is it that follow-up care is primarily the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments to ensure that no Canadian is denied post-treatment and follow-up care (ATIP) and what role does the federal government have if patients are being denied follow-up care by a province or territory; (v) why did the government ask the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MSSC) on February 7, 2012 about approved venous angioplasty; (w) is it still the government's position that the MS documentary that aired on the Nature of Things on February 9, 2012, was "balanced and fair"; (x) why does a February 16, 2012 e-mail list MS patients who are also CCSVI advocates; (y) is the government's position regarding imaging for CCSVI in accordance with the International Society for NeuroVascular Disease (ISNVD) venography statement and consensus document and, if not, why not; and (z) does the government know how many Canadians are actually impacted by MS, (i) if so, what is the number, (ii) if not, why not; and (aa) when Dr. Alain Beaudet wrote to the Colleges of Physicians on February 29, 2012, (i) why was the list of 11 recent peer-reviewed publications provided not a comprehensive list, (i) why did the list not specify what were positive and negative studies, and what imaging techniques were used, (ii) for MS patients who are denied follow-up care, what recourse and resources do they have, (iii) what is the position of the Scientific Expert Working Group concerning MS patients who have been denied follow-up care, such as Roxanne Garland?

(Return tabled)

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE****Question No. 1255—Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau:**

With regard to the repeal of regulations related to container standards announced in Budget 2011: (a) when exactly will these changes be made; (b) what is the consultation process for making these changes; (c) how much time is scheduled for each step of the process; (d) in his testimony before the AGRI committee on February 28, 2013, the Minister of Agriculture said that some industries can choose not to adopt the regulatory changes, what does this mean for foreign products that do not meet Canadian sizes; (e) are there plans to set aside funds to upgrade equipment (for example, to package the previously non-standard new containers) so that manufacturing companies can remain competitive; (f) what industries were consulted to determine whether the regulations should be repealed; (g) what are the reasons for repealing regulations related to container standards; (h) what industries, groups, stakeholders or companies called for the repeal of regulations related to container standards; (i) are there studies or reports on the economic impact of repealing these regulations and, if so, what are they; (j) will there be changes for requesting and administering ministerial exemptions and, if so, what are they; (k) were analyses done to determine how repealing regulations related to container standards could improve inter-provincial trade; (l) are there expected to be savings or extra costs for Canadian food processors following the repeal of regulations related to container standards and, if so, what kind; (m) are there expected to be savings or extra costs for consumers following the repeal of regulations related to container standards and, if so, what kind; and (n) are there expected to be savings or extra costs for farmers following the repeal of regulations related to container standards and, if so, what kind?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1256—Hon. Geoff Regan:**

With respect to offences related to money and other assets held offshore, for the period from April 1, 2006, to March 31, 2012: (a) how many convictions were there during this period; (b) what are the details of each conviction in (a) including (i) the name of the individual(s) convicted, (ii) the name and type (i.e. civil or criminal) of offense, (iii) the amount of money or the type of asset and the value of the asset involved, (iv) the location of the money or asset involved, (v) the possible range of penalties/sentences upon conviction, (vi) the actual penalty and/or sentence received, (vii) whether the conviction was achieved through sentencing, plea bargain, settlement, or another means, (viii) the amount of time that passed between the commencement of an audit, investigation, or some other form of compliance action in respect of the offence and the date of conviction; (c) how many offences related to money and other assets held offshore were considered or referred for civil prosecution during this period but never pursued; (d) how many offences related to money and other assets held offshore were considered or referred for criminal prosecution during this period but never pursued; (e) how many offences related to money and other assets held offshore were prosecuted civilly during this period but were thrown out of court or lost in court; and (f) how many offences related to money and other assets held offshore were prosecuted criminally during this period but were thrown out of court or lost in court?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 1257—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to the March 18, 2013, announcement by the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in Vancouver, British Columbia: (a) what flights took place in Atlantic Canada as part of the National Aerial Surveillance Program in 2011-2012 specifying (i) number of flights, (ii) date of each flight, (iii) geographic area covered, (iv) what, if any, pollution occurrences were detected; (b) how many flights are proposed for Atlantic Canada in 2013, 2014 and 2015; and (c) pertaining to Tanker Safety, and more specifically, public port designation, what is the plan for designating more ports in Newfoundland and Labrador and what are the names of these ports?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## SCOPE OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I feel I need to address the question of privilege raised by my hon. colleague opposite regarding my private member's Bill C-425, which amends the Citizenship Act. From the time I tabled my bill, I have been clear in saying that I am open to friendly amendments that are in line with the aims and intent of my legislation, which is to create more pathways to integration, reward those who put their lives on the line for Canada and underscore the immense value of Canadian citizenship.

The second part of my bill revokes citizenship from a person who demonstrates deep disloyalty to Canada and Canadian values. My colleagues opposite want the House to believe that amending my bill to articulate acts of terrorism is not in line with the original intent of my bill. I can tell the House, as the author of the bill, that strengthening it to include acts of terrorism in addition to treason is well within my stated aims and intentions.

I also want to remind my colleagues opposite that as feared, the threat of terrorism has become very real to Canadians in recent days and months. I believe we, as members of Parliament and members of the committees of this House, have an obligation to take these threats seriously and need to be able to deal efficiently and effectively with the issues that touch the lives of Canadian citizens in a timely manner.

The members opposite perhaps forgot that a national poll conducted on this matter showed that over 80% Canadians agreed that the citizenship should be revoked of those who commit acts of terrorism. I hope my colleagues opposite are not using delay tactics to thwart the will of Canadians, but from this side of the House I am afraid that it looks as though they are. Perhaps they should be clear about their intentions. Do they oppose stripping citizenship from convicted terrorists? If they do, they need to come clean and say so.

Adding serious convicted terrorists to my bill wholly conforms to the spirit and intent of my legislation. I have been talking about stripping the citizenship of those who act against our Canadian values and commit violent acts of disloyalty. Being a terrorist is absolutely against our Canadian values and should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

I would hope the opposition members would appreciate an extra three hours to debate my bill and make their case. Perhaps they could use the extra time to clarify their position. Do they support removing citizenship from convicted terrorists or not? Canadians need to see their Parliament able to act and act quickly in the interests of safety and security of its people.

*Privilege*

I urge opposition members to stop playing politics with this issue as it can have dire consequences. Or they should tell Canadians why we need to keep convicted terrorists in Canada. The House should be allowed to have a debate regarding the scope of my bill, especially in the light of recent, timely events that have put homegrown terrorism front and centre in the minds of Canadians and have put Canada's reputation at stake at the international level.

•(1015)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in response to the interventions made by the hon. members for Toronto Centre and Saint-Lambert concerning the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

This report contains the request that the committee be granted the power to expand the scope of Bill C-425, an act to amend the Citizenship Act (honouring the Canadian Armed Forces), such that the provisions of the bill not be limited to the Canadian Armed Forces.

One member suggested that the report itself is out of order, while the other suggested that the recommended instruction is deficient and, therefore, out of order.

I disagree with both of these assessments.

Let me address the first of these objections, the one put forward by the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

At the core of his presentation, he argued that Standing Order 97.1 excludes the possibility of a committee seeking an instruction in relation to a private member's bill, because that Standing Order enumerates three reports—not two as the honourable and learned member said—that a committee may present within 60 days of an order of reference.

The hon. member made reference to one approach to legal interpretation in support of his view. On the other hand, I would offer a different school of thought on interpretation, the mischief rule; in other words, what problem or mischief was being remedied when a law was enacted.

To this end, I would refer members to the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented during the first session of the 36th Parliament, back in 1997.

In the section on the disposition of bills by committees, the report observes:

A number of private Members' bills that have received second reading and been referred to committee have unfortunately disappeared and never been heard from again.... We are not in a position to comment on specific cases, but we do wish to prevent this situation from arising in the future.

There you go, Mr. Speaker. The intent was not to interfere with or restrict the manner in which a committee can consider legislation, but just that a committee cannot sit on a private member's bill indefinitely.

This was echoed in the Private Members' Business Practical Guide, 9th edition, which was published in October 2008 under the authority of the Clerk of the House of Commons. At page 16, under the heading of "Committee Consideration of Bills", one reads that:

A votable Private Members' bill follows the normal procedure for a bill: if second reading is agreed to by the House, the bill is referred to a committee for the hearing of witnesses, clause-by-clause study and possible amendment.

The guide then discusses the rules that are particular to private members' bills: deadlines to report and proceedings on recommendations not to proceed further.

Nothing is suggested in this publication of the House to suggest that these types of bills are exempt from procedure on instructions.

I would further argue that Standing Order 97.1 has also not been circumvented by the eighth report. The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration remains seized by Bill C-425, and it remains subject to the 60-day sitting deadline established by that standing committee to dispose of the bill. Indeed citation 684.1 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms of the House of Commons of Canada*, 6th edition, advises that:

The Instruction should not be given while a bill is still in the possession of the House but rather after it has come into the possession of the committee.

Therefore, it follows that the committee remains seized with Bill C-425 and, consequently, has not made, yet, any of the reports required by Standing Order 97.1.

Having demonstrated that Standing Order 97.1 does not exclude the ability of the House to give an instruction to a committee on a private member's bill, as argued by the hon. member for Toronto Centre, I will now turn to the argument advanced by the hon. member for Saint-Lambert about the requested instruction itself.

Instructions are not common in our contemporary practice, which page 752 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* explains:

Motions of instruction derive from British practice during the second half of the nineteenth century. They were carried over into the practice of the Canadian House of Commons, although they have rarely been used.

Therefore, I will be referring to some of our older texts and United Kingdom authorities in addition to our contemporary procedural books.

•(1020)

Page 752 of O'Brien and Bosc states:

Once a bill has been referred to a committee, the House may instruct the committee by way of a motion authorizing what would otherwise be beyond its powers, such as...expanding or narrowing the scope or application of a bill. A committee that so wishes may also seek an instruction from the House.

Then at page 992, the manner for committees to obtain additional powers is described. It states:

If a standing, legislative or special committee requires additional powers, they may be conferred on the committee by an order of the House...or by concurrence in a committee report requesting the conferring of those powers.

Indeed, the chair of the citizenship committee cited this at the committee's meeting on April 23, and then added, "That's what...[the hon. member for St. Catharines] is doing with his motion".

Citation 681(2) of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, observes that:

The purpose of the Instruction must be supplementary and ancillary to the purpose of the bill, and must fall within the general scope and framework of the bill. It is irregular to introduce into a bill, by an Instruction to the committee, a subject which should properly form the substance of a distinct measure, having regard to usage and the general practice of enacting distinct statutes for distinct branches of law.

*Privilege*

Citation 222 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, fourth edition, traces that proposition to an 1893 ruling of Mr. Speaker Peel of the United Kingdom House of Commons.

In the present instance, we are considering a proposal for the extension of the objects of Bill C-425. These types of instructions are explained in citation no. 686(1) of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition. It states:

An Instruction is necessary to authorize the introduction into a bill of amendments, which extend its provisions to objects not strictly covered by the subject-matter of the bill as agreed to on the second reading, provided that these objects are cognate to its general purposes.

This statement, as distilled from citation 226(2) of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, fourth edition, quotes at length pages 398 and 399 of the 13th edition of Erskine May. There is one portion of that passage that I would like to add to the record. It states:

The object of an instruction is, therefore, to endow a committee with power whereby the committee can perfect and complete the legislation defined by the contents of the Bill, or extend the provisions of a Bill to cognate objects....

Page 559 of Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, offers the same abbreviated advice we saw in Beauchesne's sixth edition. The British text then goes on to recite several examples of instructions to this effect. The first bill on that list offers a compelling parallel. It states:

The Public Bodies (Admission of the Press to Meetings) Bill 1959-60 was limited to the single purpose of admitting the press to meetings. An instruction was necessary to extend the bill to the general public.

The Chair may be interested in knowing that the bill was also a private member's bill. In fact, many of the bills on that list, as I understand, were private member's bills.

As a historical aside, members may be interested in knowing that the sponsor of that 1959 bill was a then young, up-and-coming member of Parliament by the name of Margaret Thatcher. To be clear, though, the text of the instruction in relation to Mrs. Thatcher's bill bears similarities to the case now before us. The British motion is found at column 1,064 of volume 619 of the United Kingdom *House of Commons Debates* for March 14, 1960. It states:

...That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill that they have power to make provision in the Bill for requiring members of the public other than representatives of the Press to be admitted to meetings of bodies exercising public functions, and for matters arising out of their admission.

In the case of Bill C-425, we have legislation that proposes to make two changes to the Citizenship Act with reference to the Canadian Armed Forces. The eighth report simply proposes that the citizenship committee be empowered to consider amendments that extend the application of those two objects to circumstances not involving the Canadian Armed Forces specifically.

•(1025)

As I understand the context, it became apparent at committee that the "act of war" is not defined clearly in either our domestic law or international laws, so that those references in Bill C-425 needed to be clarified. Amendments were to be proposed to address and clarify this.

Moreover, the committee heard suggestions about convicted terrorists in the context of the provisions for deemed applications for renunciation of citizenship. Amendments were also to be proposed in this vein.

I am further informed that there was an interpretation by the committee clerk that these amendments could be outside the scope of the bill. I am also told that the 8th report, which is now before the House, was drafted with the assistance of one or more committee clerks.

This report specifically addresses what committee members have been grappling with through their study of the bill, while at the same time being careful not to hamstring their own deliberations or to risk bringing forward a report with inadmissible amendments, as contemplated at pages 775 and 776 of O'Brien and Bosc.

Additionally, there was a view that this action was consistent with the intentions of the sponsor of Bill C-425, the hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

Ultimately, it is up to the House to decide what to do with Bill C-425. The discretion of the House and the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration remains unfettered. Should a motion to concur in the 8th report be moved, the House would have a concurrence debate and vote in which all members would have an opportunity to have a say on the proposed instruction. Should the report be concurred in, the instruction to the committee would be permissive; that is to say that the committee is not mandated to amend the bill in such a manner.

Should the committee report the bill with amendments consistent with the instruction, it remains up to the House to accept the amendments, reverse them or propose further amendments when Bill C-425 is considered at report stage. Alternatively, the House retains the option of defeating the bill.

In summary, the intention of the instructions sought by the citizenship committee is not overly broad and results in an intelligible outcome. It is consistent with instructions authorizing the extension of the objects of a bill. It is for a purpose cognate to Bill C-425. It does not import a different subject matter into the bill or seek to amend other parent acts.

Finally, it does not propose an alternative scheme contradictory to the principle of the bill adopted at second reading.

Therefore, I respectfully submit that the 8th report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration is admissible.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be somewhat brief, but it is important that we be perfectly clear about what is happening here.

I sit on the citizenship and immigration committee. I am very familiar with the motion that has been proposed by the government and I want to make two quick points.

It is interesting to note that both the mover and the parliamentary secretary who spoke to this issue are implying motives in one sense. We are not using this in any form to filibuster or to prolong debate on Bill C-425, and that is important to note. We raised it as a question of privilege a couple of weeks ago because we believe it is important that private members' bills be respected for what they are as they go through the process, and you, through your office, Mr. Speaker, will be reviewing that. This is not a delay tactic in any way.

*Privilege*

The parliamentary secretary made reference to “perfect and complete”. He is suggesting that the amendments that the government wants to propose at committee stage are going to make it “perfect and complete”, and he cites Beauchesne's and other rules of order to substantiate that comment, but what is clear is that the government, and particularly the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, intends to change the scope of the legislation.

The legislation can be best described as proposing two things. First, it would reduce the amount of time that a landed immigrant would be required to be here in Canada in order to receive his or her citizenship. As opposed to waiting three years, the individual would only be required to wait two years to acquire citizenship if that individual is a member of the Canadian Forces. That is the number one reason behind Bill C-425. Second, if a Canadian citizen commits an act of war against the Canadian Forces, that individual would be deemed to have denounced his or her Canadian citizenship.

Those were the two issues related to Bill C-425. Then guests were invited to participate in the committee hearings, and individuals started to change the focus of the bill. Then we found out that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration wanted the principle of the bill to be about terrorism as opposed to the issue of citizenship and the act of war on the Canadian Forces.

As a result, government members on committee recognized that they were attempting to change the scope of the private member's bill, and that was the reason government members put forward a motion for the bill to be brought back to the House before we went into clause-by-clause consideration: it was because they recognized that they had to change its scope.

I cannot tell the House how many times I have sat in a committee or in caucus where there has been a discussion about members not being allowed to change the scope of legislation. That is very clearly what is happening here. My concern is that the government wants to use its majority in the House to override a very important principle of private members' bills as well as the process involved with them.

Let me talk about the process of a private member's bill very briefly. First there are two hours of debate in the House, and then the bill goes to committee. The bill can be discussed for 60 hours at committee stage; it then comes back to the House, where it is debated for two hours and then ultimately voted on.

We do not want to use private members' hour as a back door for government legislation, and that is what we would be opening it to.

I caution all members of the House to review what has taken place and what the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration hopes to do. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration should be bringing in his own piece of legislation.

My advice to all members, and particularly to you, Mr. Speaker, is to protect the rights of individual members to bring in their own bills without having them hijacked by the government making changes to their scope.

● (1030)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to one brief point made by my friend from Winnipeg.

He cautioned you, Mr. Speaker, against allowing private members to propose legislation that might have the same scope as the government can propose in legislation. That would be a very alarming interpretation.

I understand that for the Liberal Party, it has always been about ensuring that individual members of Parliament do not have any power here. However, in the rules of the House, they do have the same power as the government to propose legislation. It is a strong power, and we believe it is important that private members be allowed that power.

There are some who argue that private members do not have as much power in this day and age as they once did. The reality is that in Parliament, more private members' legislation is becoming law than in any other Parliament in Canadian history, because we finally have a government that empowers private members in its caucus to bring forward legislation on important issues. It allows them to do that. It gives them the freedom to participate in a meaningful way in the legislative process on matters that are important to them.

I have to respectfully differ with my friend when he says that private members have to be restricted in some way, shape or form, have to be prevented from introducing meaningful legislation. The proposal from the deputy House leader is a very dangerous proposition.

● (1035)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I will be extremely brief. Suffice it to say that there is clearly no privilege in this case.

No privileges of any member have been impugned because, as I pointed out in my intervention, procedurally, we are—“we” being the House—absolutely within our rights to give instructions to a committee to expand a bill.

I gave the one reference and the one example in my intervention of the 1959-1960 bill by Margaret Thatcher. The intent of that bill was to allow members of the press, and only members of the press, to attend committee hearings. Mrs. Thatcher wanted to expand that to allow members of the general public to also attend hearings. Therefore, the House gave instructions to that effect to the committee, which then made the proper amendments, and the resulting bill allowed both members of the press and the general public.

The point is that the House has the complete authority to give instructions to a committee to allow it to expand the scope of a bill. That is the procedure of this place. Therefore, there is no privilege argument to refute that.

**The Speaker:** I thank all hon. colleagues for their further contributions.

As the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons just stated, and as I stated last week when this issue was first brought to my attention, I am not treating this as a question of privilege but as a point of order, because it has to do with procedural reporting of the committee. There is no evidence of members' rights and privileges having been affected.

*Business of Supply*

I think that when the hon. member for Toronto Centre raised this issue, he should properly have raised it as a point of order, and that is how I will be treating it.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—2013 SPRING REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP)** moved:

That, in light of \$3.1 billion of missing funds outlined in Chapter Eight of the 2013 Spring Report of the Auditor General of Canada, an order of the House do issue for the following documents from 2001 to the present, allowing for redaction based on national security: (a) all Public Security and Anti-Terrorism annual reports submitted to the Treasury Board Secretariat; (b) all Treasury Board submissions made as part of the Initiative; (c) all departmental evaluations of the Initiative; (d) the Treasury Board corporate database established to monitor funding; that these records be provided to the House in both official languages by June 17, 2013; that the Speaker make arrangements for these records to be made available online; and that the Auditor-General be given all necessary resources to perform an in-depth forensic audit until the missing \$3.1 billion is found and accounted for.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time.

I like to try to look at things with as much clarity and wisdom as possible. My dear colleagues will no doubt agree that when the sun is shining, everything is bright and everything is good. Spring has arrived, bringing warmth and hope to all of us, right?

This is therefore a very good time for the tabling of the Auditor General's report. Unfortunately, this debate brings very little light with it. The government is quoting the Auditor General out of context, in order to defend itself. The truth is that, once again, this government has proven that it is a bad fiscal manager and that, although it claims to spend taxpayers' money judiciously, it is not paying close enough attention.

The Auditor General did a good job. I would remind the House that in chapter 8 of his spring 2013 report, a chapter entitled "Spending on the Public Security and Anti-Terrorism Initiative", he states:

Information on whether departments used \$3.1 billion in initiative funding was not available.

It is simple. It means that they did not find any trace of this money, period. During his audit, the Auditor General asked the Treasury Board Secretariat for information that could help explain how the balance of \$3.1 billion allocated between 2001 and 2009 was spent.

No clear explanation has been given, but the secretariat has admitted that one possible scenario is that the funds were allocated to various public security and anti-terrorism activities but categorized as ongoing program spending.

It is important to remember how the Auditor General arrived at that sum of \$3.1 billion. In 2003, the Treasury Board Secretariat received funding to strengthen its ability to properly report on and

evaluate horizontal public security and anti-terrorism, PSAT, activities.

The secretariat was the only department in the entire federal government to collect financial and non-financial information from a number of departments and agencies on this initiative. The information was stored in a departmental database designed for that purpose.

In addition, at the end of 2003, the secretariat established a reporting framework. The Treasury Board expected the departments and agencies to comply with the secretariat's reporting requirements.

The framework required departments and agencies to provide yearly financial and non-financial information about their PSAT-related activities. Then, the Auditor General reviewed departmental projects and approved allocations to determine how much funding had been granted to departments and agencies for the PSAT initiative.

The Auditor General found that, from 2001 to 2009, \$12.9 billion was approved for department and agency programming under the PSAT initiative. Treasury Board Secretariat officials agreed with the Auditor General's analysis. The Auditor General then reviewed certain annual reports to see whether the departments had submitted their expenditures and the actual results of the initiative to Treasury Board every year. This covered the expenditures and results that were clearly stated and corresponded to the themes and objectives of the initiative.

By using the information about expenditures set out in the annual reports, the Auditor General determined that, of the \$12.9 billion allocated, the departments and agencies had reported to Treasury Board that approximately \$9.8 billion had been spent on PSAT-related activities. That leaves \$3.1 billion that the government cannot account for.

● (1040)

It is unbelievable. The Conservatives are establishing ineffective and unnecessary laws on terrorism that violate our civil liberties, yet they are unable to say whether the astronomical amount of \$3.1 billion allocated to the public security and anti-terrorism initiative was even spent. If it was, how was it spent and on what programs?

What is more, the Auditor General's report showed a blatant and shocking lack of oversight with regard to government progress and the reports on funding for public security. Unfortunately, today, we can add to this amount the \$2.4 billion in contracts awarded to external consultants for which the government also does not have any reports.

This did not just occur in 2009. What happened in 2010? Well, the Auditor General and his assistant had plenty of interesting things to say on this subject. They said that their audit stopped there and that it was at that point that this method of reporting was done away with. They added that the Treasury Board Secretariat had stopped collecting data from departments through annual reports and that it was in the process of implementing another procedure that it hoped to launch in 2014.

*Business of Supply*

Yikes. The entire public security and anti-terrorism initiative is being called into question. The Auditor General noted that the Conservatives were not keeping track of money as they should have been and that the government had simply stopped counting. Instead of humbly accepting the Auditor General's report on this spending, the government decided to throw around quotes of his taken out of context.

The President of the Treasury Board said that it was simply an accounting problem and that all of the information was available in the public accounts of Canada.

Here is what the Office of the Auditor General told *Maclean's* reporters:

The information reported annually in the public accounts was at an aggregate level and most of the PSAT spending was not separately reported as a distinct (or separate) line item. Furthermore, with over 10 years elapsing since the beginning of the PSAT program, much of that information is now archived and unavailable.

Canadians do not have access to all of the information. The Conservatives are fond of defending their actions by sharing partial quotes from the Auditor General. The Conservatives and ministers like to use the following quote: "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way that it should not have been."

However, there is more to that quote: "...it's important for there to be...a way for people to understand how this money was spent and that summary reporting was not done."

What is also shocking is the Liberal Party's silence on this issue. Perhaps the Liberals realize that they are just as guilty. For example, why did they not take action in 2004? What did they do? Nothing. No, the Liberals have no credibility to condemn the Conservatives for losing \$3.1 billion, considering their dismal record of losing \$1 billion.

If this government truly believes in properly managing taxpayer money, it will support this motion. That \$3.1 billion is a lot of money. Our motion is simply asking for information. This government must provide all of the information available on the loss of \$3.1 billion.

• (1045)

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my NDP colleague from Pontiac on his excellent speech and excellent initiative.

He has moved a motion that asks a fairly simple question: where has taxpayers' money gone? How can the Conservative government lose \$3.1 billion and not know what happened to it?

With Bill C-60, we see a government that wants to meddle in the negotiations of crown corporations' collective agreements. This paternalistic and condescending government is telling them that they are incapable of managing public money and that the President of the Treasury Board has to be at the negotiating table because he wants to ensure that public money is well spent.

Why does the government feel that it is in a position to give crown corporations advice on how to run their affairs when it cannot keep track of \$3.1 billion?

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very good question.

There is a double standard. The Conservatives are poor managers. I think that they believe that managers and employees in the public service cannot manage. I firmly believe that our public servants are practically the best in the world. As for this government, that is another story.

• (1050)

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, clearly there has been a significant problem tracking dollars. The Auditor General has identified it. We have yet to hear any response from the Conservatives and their administration as to how this money could have been so poorly tracked. We know from the Auditor General that it was not spent on national security, as far as he can see, although it might have been. It might have been shifted to other government spending, but there is no way to tell. It might not have been spent at all, but he does not know.

That summary of what the Auditor General found is quite astonishing. It is a much larger amount of money that is missing, although the Conservatives, we know, will say, as they have in question period, that the Auditor General did not say there had been any wrongdoing. Obviously, the Auditor General cannot figure out where the money has gone. It is going to be a difficult forensic exercise.

I wonder if the hon. member would comment on whether he believes that the motion from the official opposition will allow us to get to the bottom of the matter.

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is a forensic exercise, and that is why our motion proposes access to information that would allow us, as parliamentarians, to find out what happened to this \$3.1 billion in missing money. It is a scandal. It is incredible that the President of the Treasury Board is absolutely incapable of saying what happened or of even indicating what might have happened. That is worrisome. The responsibility of a government is first, to take care of taxpayers' money, and this is a clear violation of that pact with the Canadian people.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his very pertinent speech, which raises concerns about how this country is governed.

I was wondering if he thinks that there is almost a systematic link to the culture of secrecy that exists within the Prime Minister's office and clearly dictates decisions and choices.

My colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie mentioned the unbelievable meddling in the CBC. I wonder if the ministers responsible for these agencies and crown corporations are even aware of the proposals in this bill.

Does my colleague agree that this notion of secrecy that drives the Conservatives can result in this type of huge mistake?

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat:** Mr. Speaker, I think so.

*Business of Supply*

I would like to add one more thing, and that is this government's inability to listen to its officials, the experts and now the Auditor General. It puts in place symbolic measures. It throws money around. It could not care less about how the money was spent. It could not care less whether reports were produced. It is totally incompetent.

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to this motion.

When I began my parliamentary career, I myself was on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, where I had the opportunity to see various reports by the Auditor General, read the public accounts and see how the process works. That puts me in an even more interesting and beneficial position because I can see just how much of a mistake, a monumental oversight, losing \$3.1 billion is. We are talking about billions of dollars here. It makes absolutely no sense.

To begin with, I would just like to say that this is interesting because we are talking about a very large amount of money. However, day after day, we are on the receiving end of somewhat personal attacks by government MPs. They make up stories about this or that and create myths. They say that tax rates will increase because of the New Democratic Party's tax and spend plan. They can call it what they want, but it is this government, and not the NDP, that is mismanaging things and hurting Canadians by increasing their taxes. It is this government that, once again, lost \$3.1 billion. I cannot say it enough.

Today, when they get up during question period and say the same things yet again, you will note the irony in their attacks. Their government is in absolutely no position to criticize others about how they spend and manage taxpayers' money. It is quite disgraceful.

What we are seeing today is also a question of ministerial accountability. Each day, the leader of the official opposition, the member for Outremont, has been raising this matter. The members for Welland and Pierrefonds—Dollard, who also serve on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, are also asking about the \$3.1 billion. The Prime Minister and the President of the Treasury Board disdainfully reply that they just have to look in the public accounts, that it is all there. That is simply not true; it is not in the public accounts.

I would like to know if the President of the Treasury Board is going to go see the Auditor General and tell him that if he forgot to check something, he just needs to look in the public accounts because it is all in there. He needs to have a bit more respect than that for the Auditor General, his expertise and the work he does, work he was appointed to do. He is perfectly capable of saying whether or not the money is in the public accounts, and that is not the case today.

I would like to thank the member for Pontiac for moving such an important motion, which is asking the government and the House to require that the necessary documents be provided to parliamentarians and the Auditor General so that they can do their work. The member for Pontiac mentioned the Auditor General's quote, which the government is repeating over and over again. It is just the opening of the quote. A teacher would not be too happy if a student were to use only part of a quote in a paper.

I cannot imagine that taxpayers and the Auditor General are too happy that only part of a quote is being used. We have to look at the entire quote to understand what is being said, which is that there is no indication that the money was misspent—on things like gazebos, something the G8 fund was used for—but the fact remains that the money cannot be found. This is by definition a scandal, a disgrace and a very serious problem.

The Auditor General said that the money does not seem to have been spent on anything illegal or inappropriate, but he does say in no uncertain terms that the money is nowhere to be found. He does not know what this money was spent on, which is a very serious problem. The President of the Treasury Board needs to live up to his ministerial responsibilities and submit the documents, not only to the Auditor General, but also to parliamentarians, so that we can exercise diligence and identify the problems.

The funny thing is that this is not a new problem. The Conservative government is not alone in this. This problem started under the Liberals.

• (1055)

We saw this in 2004, when Sheila Fraser issued her report. She is a well-respected auditor general who did an incredible job, including uncovering the sponsorship scandal. I will save that topic for another day, but it was the same kind of mismanagement of taxpayers' money that we are seeing today. Ms. Fraser's 2004 report showed that there were serious structural problems with regard to how spending on the public security and anti-terrorism initiative was being reported and that the Treasury Board Secretariat needed to make some serious improvements.

Nine years later, no improvements have been made and the problem still has not been resolved. This \$3.1 billion is gone without a trace. That is a lot of money. What is more, when the Auditor General and his assistant appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, they said that instead of improving the way it accounts for money, the government seems to have stopped counting money altogether. New ways of reporting this money are being proposed for next year, but what do we do in the meantime?

Considering the level of government spending we are talking about, if we spend an entire fiscal year without any mechanism in place or without making any improvements, we will be sucked into a black hole devoid of transparency, ethics and accountability. It is irresponsible.

Yesterday, when the hon. member for Pontiac asked the government a question, I heard the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages jeering. He said that it had only been a year, which is not very long. He was wondering why we were whining. The government has spent that year making billions of dollars in expenditures without knowing where taxpayers' money is actually going. That is shameful and unacceptable.

*Business of Supply*

The public security and anti-terrorism initiative began in 2001 following the September 11 attacks, which is understandable because we were trying to improve public safety by implementing anti-terrorism measures. This is still a relevant issue. Think of the debate surrounding Bill S-7, which seeks to implement new anti-terrorism measures. I gave a speech about this bill about two weeks ago. In it, I mentioned that it is unfortunate that the government is making cuts to public safety resources. I also indicated that, rather than giving more resources to the men and women who protect us, for example RCMP officers, the government decided to make cuts and introduce a bill that violates our civil liberties.

I am asking myself a serious question today. Before making fundamental changes to issues related to civil liberties, should the government not stop making cuts and ensure that the money that is already being invested in this regard has been well spent? We are talking about significant amounts of money. Today, there is a \$3.1 billion hole in the Public Accounts of Canada. This money is lost or missing.

On behalf of the taxpayers in my riding and all ridings, since we are here for them, I am calling on the government to take responsibility and start doing some real work to stand up for taxpayers and make sure that their money is well spent. The government must tell us where that \$3.1 billion went and give the relevant documents to parliamentarians and the Auditor General.

• (1100)

I hope that they will support this motion and finally take responsibility. It is the least they can do.

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on his speech.

We can now safely say without a doubt that the Conservatives are just as bad as the Liberals when it comes to managing public finances. We all remember the Liberal scandals in the past. Now the Conservative scandals are adding up. The latest one involves \$3.1 billion.

What does my colleague think could have been done with that \$3.1 billion in his riding? How could that money have been spent usefully, rather than just leaving it sit there? No one seems to know if it was even spent. No one knows where it went. How could the \$3.1 billion have been put to good use?

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

Indeed, there are many pressing needs in the areas of infrastructure and culture, for instance. We could be here all night listing all the needs. A couple of things that come to mind are the new Champlain Bridge and Fort Chambly, which needs some serious repairs, despite the excellent job the city is doing, even with very little assistance from the federal government. That would have been money well spent.

I am sure that all of my colleagues, regardless of their political affiliation, could list needs in their regions that could have been met with that missing \$3.1 billion.

I would like to come back to the preamble to my hon. colleague's question. He talked about how bad the Liberals and Conservatives

are at managing public funds. That is what matters here today. My hon. colleagues from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher and Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie also mentioned that earlier.

Since the beginning of the week, we have been hearing about interference in the activities of crown corporations. The Prime Minister is fond of saying that the Conservative Party takes taxpayers' money very seriously. So, I hope his party will take this \$3.1 billion very seriously.

• (1105)

[English]

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while I was listening to my hon. colleague's speech, I was thinking about some of the members on the front bench of the Conservative Party who were on the front bench of the Mike Harris government in Ontario.

When the Harris government took power in Ontario, one of the first things it did was fill in a big hole on Eglinton Ave. that had been dug to build a subway. It cost the taxpayers millions of dollars to fill that in. Some members may remember that. Now we are spending millions to dig that hole again to build a subway.

That is the kind of economic model the Conservative government operates under. It is no wonder the Conservatives have lost \$3.1 billion. It is no wonder they have the biggest deficit in Canadian history.

I wonder if my hon. colleague can talk a little bit about the disconnect between the idea, on the one hand, that the Conservatives are sound fiscal managers and the reality that they are incredibly, unbelievably inept at this.

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is connected to what my colleague from Sherbrooke asked. Examples abound of how the Conservatives have mismanaged infrastructure and other files. We could certainly do better. I think that Canadians deserve better. The missing \$3.1 billion is a glaring example of this.

His comments and question are spot on. It is exhausting to hear the Conservatives go on about how they are sound fiscal managers and how we would spend our money taxing Canadians. The reality is that no one knows where this \$3.1 billion went, and the government has completely lost track of it.

This money was meant to be spent on public security and anti-terrorism initiatives. This government claims to be tough on crime, but when the time comes to spend the money on public safety initiatives, the government suddenly has no idea where that \$3.1 billion went.

That is unacceptable. The government went on and on about common sense, and those provincial examples apply here. The time has come for common sense. I think it would do a lot of good on the other side.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the opportunity to stand in the House today and respond to the hon. member's motion. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for North Vancouver, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

The motion in question concerns chapter 8 of the 2013 Spring Report of the Auditor General of Canada on the reporting of public security and anti-terrorism initiative funds. I have reviewed the motion in detail and appreciate this opportunity to correct the false assumption on which it is based.

The Auditor General and his office have had full access to all of the public security and anti-terrorism, or PSAT, reports. He has been clear, saying, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money, you know, was used in any way that it should not have been".

That is not all he said. He also confirmed in his testimony before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that characterizations of these funds as lost are inaccurate. In fact, he clarified in his testimony that the reporting on the funds in question was purely an internal government reporting process. He verified that the shortcomings, which our government acknowledges, did not prevent parliamentarians or Canadians from scrutinizing spending through the estimates process and through the public accounts process. Those are the facts.

It is also a fact that our government has taken decisive action to ensure the security and safety of Canadians. Canadians can be assured that government funding tagged for security initiatives was used for that purpose. Core security-oriented organizations, such as the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, or CATSA, the Canadian Border Services Agency, National Defence, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, are the types of agencies that report through PSAT.

On July 14, 2000, I was in the Pine Lake tornado, so I have seen death and destruction among neighbours and students. Our family lived through this disaster. I had to speak to my students when I came back in September about that event. A year later, we were getting over this trauma. When the world witnessed the destruction of the twin towers by terrorists in 9/11, those images affected me on both a personal level and as a horror shared with my fellow citizens. Again, I had to discuss with my students the intolerance and the devastation in the fall of 2001.

I understand what it is like to try to make sense out of both natural and man-made disasters. When it comes to terrorism, I take it very personally.

In a post-9/11 environment, Canadians expect law enforcement to adopt a proactive posture in order to disrupt terrorist plots before an attack occurs. Our government has taken strong action to keep Canadians safe, including measures such as the recent combating terrorism act, targeting serious drug crime, cracking down on organized crime and preventing nuclear terrorism.

I think all members in the House would agree with me when I say that terrorism is a heinous crime. Its objective is to strike fear into all citizens and to discourage us all from going about our lives freely

and without fear. Terrorists live by a philosophy that rejects the democratic process, and their motivation is fundamentally at odds with our rule of law.

Acts of terrorism cannot be allowed, and our government continues to act to prevent the types of tragedies we have seen in New York and in Boston.

● (1110)

We are balancing, though, two very distinct needs in this post-9/11 world. We will keep our country safe and we will be responsible with taxpayer dollars while doing so.

This chapter of the Auditor General's spring report 2013 comes with important recommendations that our government agrees with and intends to implement. We acknowledge that there was some lack of clarity and some aspects of horizontal reporting, despite all expenditures of the federal budget being reported through the regular parliamentary reporting cycle.

Despite all the factual statements made by the Auditor General, the NDP is again willing to be deceitful and is attempting to manufacture a scandal, despite formal assertions that our reports to Parliament are sound.

Let me reiterate that the premise of the motion in question is completely false. The processes that departments follow for reporting to Parliament and Canadians on their spending and results were respected.

The audit acknowledges that deputy heads, as departmental accounting officers, are responsible for accounting and reporting their spending through the Public Accounts of Canada. These reporting requirements are in addition to the internal reporting requirements imposed under the public security and anti-terrorism initiative.

All government spending, every nickel and dime, is reported to Parliament and accounted for in the Public Accounts. This took place in 2001, in 2002 and so on all the way to 2009. The Auditor General said that he did not find anything that gave him cause for concern that money was used in any way that should not have been.

On the contrary, what the Auditor General has concerns about is the clarity and the characterization of reporting between government departments over the period 2001 to 2009. The Auditor General's recommendation focused on improving that reporting process.

Our government accepts his recommendation and is committed to improved public reporting on initiatives that involve multiple departments. In fact, our government has already taken action to improve public reporting on such horizontal initiatives.

In the fall of 2011, the Office of the Auditor General said that the government did a good job of monitoring progress and spending for economic action plan initiatives, saying that the government was diligent in monitoring the progress of projects and their spending.

With respect to reporting to Parliament and Canadians, the government has taken several steps to improve financial reporting and to support parliamentary scrutiny of estimates and supply.

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On April 22, a new searchable, online database was launched that for the first time ever would consolidate all information on government spending in one place. The website allows the public and parliamentarians to track government spending, showing trends and government-wide totals for specific areas like personnel spending.

This is in addition to other significant actions that we have taken. For example, we now post financial data sets on the Treasury Board Secretariat website and the open data portal. We also now publish quarterly financial reports.

Our government has made ongoing improvements to the form and content of reports on plans and priorities and departmental performance reports.

Clearly, much effort has been made to improve reporting. Therefore, I ask the House to reject the hon. member's motion and to reject this diversion from what really matters: the work done every day to keep Canadians safe.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this morning I had breakfast with people from food banks across Canada, the people who feed those who do not have the means to feed themselves. If these people had \$3.1 billion, no one would go hungry in Canada.

The government cannot claim that this is nothing but an administrative problem. We are talking about \$3.1 billion that should have been spent on public security but instead went missing. What disappeared? The needs were estimated at \$12.9 billion, so what was not done? Did the government forget to automate passport applications or requests to verify when Canadians are leaving the country? What did they cut for that \$3.1 billion to go unspent? What public security measures were cut?

[*English*]

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, those unfortunate people who have to go through food banks also expect honesty. The statements coming from the opposition are misleading and they are political mischief.

Let us go through what the motion is about: \$3.1 billion of missing funds outlined in chapter 8, that is what is mentioned. The opposition motion is based on a false premise and the members know perfectly well that in the words of the Auditor General:

We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money...was used in any way that it should not have been

As the opposition knows full well also, there is no indication that any dollars are missing, misappropriated or misspent. Only time missed comes into play in the Auditor General's report. I would like to read from the press release in which the Auditor General said:

We believe that the government missed an opportunity to use the information it collected to generate a picture of spending and results under the Public Security and Anti-Terrorism Initiative across departments...

He went further to say:

The government recognizes that it needs to improve the way it reports financial and non-financial information for future government-wide initiatives.

I mention the word "future" for the member.

• (1120)

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear from the Auditor General's report that he cannot identify where the \$3.1 billion was spent or whether it was spent, so in that case it is truly missing. However, I would like to read from the auditor general's report of late 2004, Sheila Fraser, who had this to say about the anti-terrorism initiative:

The current management framework of the Public Security and Anti-Terrorism initiative met most of our audit criteria. The vast majority of funds allocated in the 2001 Budget have been channelled to identified priority areas. In addition, the Treasury Board Secretariat is taking care to track spending...

At the end of 2004, it was tracking the spending so the problem came later, presumably under the Conservative government.

Could the member indicate what went wrong once the Conservatives came to power?

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, certainly, I would love to explain what took place. In fact, in the Auditor General's report I can read through what happened in 2004. It says:

In our 2004 audit, we examined the management framework of the Public Security and Anti-Terrorism Initiative, including funding allocations and spending. We identified weaknesses in the way the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat assessed departmental proposals for funding. We also found that the reporting process needed to be improved.

I think that is how the present Auditor General categorized the types of things that were said. Therefore, I question perhaps how up-to-date the member is with regard to that.

Let us talk about the situation between 2001 and 2009, and I suppose as well to go back to the motion. It says, "issue documents from 2001 to the present". The audit was from 2001 to 2009. Therefore, either the opposition members did not read the actual audit, or they are purposely trying to create some misdirection to align the conversation with the misguided and malicious talking points.

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the motion before us today.

I would first like to thank my hon. colleague from Red Deer for the great work that he does on the public accounts committee. I would also like to thank the hon. member for Pontiac for bringing this issue forward and for the opportunity to talk about our government's strong record in cracking down on crime.

Before I go any further, I want to clarify the Auditor General's statements on this chapter. I was at committee. He confirmed that this money was not lost and that he found no reasons to make him believe money was misspent.

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Since our first day in office in 2006, our government made a firm commitment to Canadians that would make their safety and security a key priority. Chief among our efforts includes moving forward with measures to address the threat of terrorism very seriously. Terrorism is a global phenomenon and Canada is certainly not immune. Several hundred Canadians have been killed or injured in terrorist incidents in the past several decades. We can all recall tragic events like the 1985 bombing of Air India flight 182. In the past decade, our world and the way we view it has changed since September 11, 2001, when terrorist acts took place in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania and claimed thousands of lives, including 24 Canadians.

We also clearly recall recent attempts to blow up airliners, such as the failed underwear and shoe bombers' plots in 2009. Most recently, the Boston Marathon bombings have again reminded us that we are not immune to terrorism. The memory of the victims of terrorism and the pain of their families strengthen our resolve to fight criminals and terrorists at home and abroad and to stand up proudly for the principles that bind us: freedom, democracy, rule of law and human rights.

Our goal is to continue to build the resilience of our society and all communities to all forms of violent coercion. Since first coming to power, our government has taken decisive action to address the evolving threat of terrorism, both within and beyond Canadian borders, through legislative changes, targeted programming, criminal investigations and other initiatives.

As security threats are borderless, particularly threats to our cyber networks and critical infrastructure, in 2010 we launched Canada's cyber security strategy and the national strategy and action plan for critical infrastructure. Through our beyond the border action plan signed with the United States, we have strengthened aviation, marine and rail security in Canada, including our more rigorous screening for port and airport employees, enhancements to technology and improved security procedures.

We have improved information sharing among the agencies involved in detecting terrorist financing. We have listed terrorist entities under the Criminal Code to send a strong message that Canada will not condone any kind of terrorist activity. We have passed the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, which allows victims of terrorism to sue listed foreign states for committing an act of terrorism or for supporting listed entities under the Criminal Code. Hitting these entities in their bank accounts and pocketbooks helps prevent and deter them from carrying out further acts of terror.

Countering terrorism and securing Canada is a shared responsibility that involves many organizations from all levels of government: law enforcement, border services and private-sector and international partners. While terrorism remains a threat, it is one that we are better able to deal with as a result of greater collaboration and partnerships.

Given the global reach of terrorism today, addressing the threat requires universal co-operation. We stand firm with our allies against the threat of terrorism. By combining resources and aligning our focus on a common set of priorities with our international partners, we are in a better position to target the threats to our safety and security.

These priorities are clearly laid out in Canada's counterterrorism strategy, a comprehensive strategy introduced in 2012 that outlines our efforts to prevent individuals from turning to terrorism, detect terrorists and their activities, deny terrorists the means and opportunities to attack and respond in a rapid and proportionate manner. It speaks frankly about the terrorist threats we face at home and abroad and the importance of strong partnerships and collaboration among government, security agencies, law enforcement and community groups, among others, and it underscores Canada's contribution to the global efforts to counter the terrorist threat.

● (1125)

We have made great progress in meeting our commitments under the three previously mentioned strategies, and we will continue to put forward a clear focus on combatting terrorism and countering violent extremism.

At the same time, we have no plans to stop our work to strengthen our justice system and keep Canadians safe through a number of robust measures. We will continue to take action on crime, as we have done since we came to power. We have toughened sentencing and bail provisions for serious gun crimes. We have strengthened the sentencing and monitoring of dangerous, high-risk offenders. We have ensured that murderers connected to organized crime will be treated automatically as first-degree murderers, and we have imposed mandatory jail time for drive-by or reckless shootings. Our government has ended sentence discounts for multiple murders and it has passed legislation to abolish the faint hope clause, which allowed early parole for murderers. We have delivered legislation that limits credit for time served in pre-sentence custody.

I am very proud to note that our government has passed legislation to help reform the pardon system. In particular, we have made sure that the Parole Board of Canada has the discretion it needs to determine whether or not granting a pardon would bring the administration of justice into disrepute. I am equally proud to note that our government has passed legislation to strengthen the national sex offender registry and the national DNA data bank so that all persons convicted of sex offences are registered.

All in all, our government has taken significant action that achieves results in tackling crime in our communities and in countering terrorism. We will continue to do more. With each of these measures, we have kept one goal at the forefront: to keep Canadians and their families safe. We have done all these things, and more, while ensuring that we are using Canadian taxpayers' dollars prudently.

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Indeed, we have taken great strides to leverage partnerships across governments, with law enforcement and security agencies, and with our international partners. By combining resources, and aligning our focus on a common set of priorities with our international partners, we are in a better position to target the threats to our safety and national security.

Law-abiding Canadians expect to live in a country where they do not have to worry when they go to bed at night. They expect, and rightfully so, to live in a country where their government is working with its allies to create a strong and robust national security system that is ready to prevent, detect and respond to any type of emergency. They want to know that their streets are safe and that their children are protected against predators.

This is the commitment that our government has made and it is one that it has kept.

Today's opposition motion is not concerned about the well-being of Canadians. Instead, it is focused on manufacturing a crisis where the Auditor General himself has clearly said there is none.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague opposite from the very beginning.

The Conservatives can say what they want, but there is no trace of \$3.1 billion. That is what we are debating.

How will the member explain to Canadians, who work very hard to make ends meet, that the government can find no trace of the \$3.1 billion? I would like him to answer my question.

[*English*]

**Mr. Andrew Saxton:** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said that there is no indication that any dollars are missing, misappropriated or misspent. In fact, I was in committee when the Auditor General himself said, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that money was used in any way that it should not have been."

I would like to ask the member opposite why she is disagreeing with the Auditor General himself.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member over there is denying the undeniable.

In the Auditor General's report, he said:

However, information to explain the difference of \$3.1 billion between the funding allocated to departments and agencies and the amount reported spent was not available.

In other words, the money may have been spent appropriately. It may be in the public accounts. Perhaps it lapsed or perhaps it was spent. We do not know what it was spent on.

How can the hon. member possibly deny that this \$3.1 billion is missing, in the sense that we do not know what it was spent on, or whether it was even spent? That is very clear from the Auditor General's report.

**Mr. Andrew Saxton:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member of the Liberal Party asked me a question, because it was exactly

scandals that took place in that government that required us to bring in tough new rules when we came to power in 2006 with the Federal Accountability Act.

I want to address his immediate question with regard to the matter at hand and this matter relates to the categorization of expenses by Treasury Board between 2001 and 2009. His government was in power part of that time. All of the funds in question are accounted for in public documents presented to Parliament, including the public accounts.

Let me repeat. The Auditor General said there is no indication that any dollars are missing, misappropriated or misspent, and that Treasury Board Secretariat has accepted all of the Auditor General's recommendations.

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board for clarifying this issue once again.

I want to ask him about what kind of feedback he is hearing from his constituents.

The opposition continually tries to manufacture scandals and the Canadian people are much smarter than the opposition gives them credit for. The Canadian public saw this report, heard the comments from the Auditor General, and heard that no money is missing and that the Auditor General is satisfied. He has suggested some improvements and we have taken those suggestions.

I am not getting calls or emails in my office from Canadians. Why? Because Canadians do not buy the nonsense from the opposition.

I am wondering if my colleague has had the same experience. Does he find that Canadian people are basically looking at the opposition and saying same old game, it is trying to make a scandal where there is no scandal?

● (1135)

**Mr. Andrew Saxton:** Mr. Speaker, the number one priority of government is to keep its citizens safe, safe from terrorism and safe from threats. That is what my constituents want. My constituents expect us to have measures in place to make sure that their safety is protected.

Since coming to government in 2006, we have taken extensive measures to make sure that public safety is one of our top priorities, and we are making real progress in that regard.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this matter.

[English]

The subject, of course, concerns the missing \$3.1 billion. Why are we here today? Among the many troubling revelations in the Auditor General's spring report was a rotten Easter egg in the form of a \$3.1 billion hole in the government's public security and anti-terrorism spending. It turns out the Treasury Board Secretariat simply cannot find the money. Notwithstanding the opposition members' statements to the contrary, it is abundantly clear from the report that they cannot locate that \$3.1 billion.

It is not surprising coming from this President of the Treasury Board. Simple details like the term "border infrastructure" can mean gazebos in his riding. Or what about \$5 billion in budget cuts announced last year? We still do not know where those cuts are, which is why the former parliamentary budget officer had to take the government to court.

What is worrying is that this audit only covered public security and anti-terrorism funding. We have no information on other government programs. We have no idea what other programs and services that middle-class families rely on are not getting the funding the government says they are.

In the Auditor General's report, the Treasury Board provided three possible explanations for where the missing billions were: one, the money lapsed, in other words was not spent; two, it was spent on public safety and anti-terrorism, but was not properly recorded; or three, it was carried forward and spent on non-public safety and anti-terrorism programs.

Those are mathematically what the options must be. It was not spent, it was spent on public security or it was spent on things other than public security. The government simply has no way of knowing which of those three options was the more prevalent. They all stem from the same problem: the TBS tracking process for those funds was not developed enough to keep track of everything.

However, it was a tracking system. I was completely blown away to read in the report at paragraph 8.24 that:

In 2010, the Treasury Board approved the Secretariat's request to end the government-wide reporting requirements on Initiative spending. The last reports entered into the database are those related to the 2008–09 fiscal year. The Secretariat stated that it would develop a new mechanism for managing and collecting performance information on the Public Security Initiatives. At the time of the audit, a project was in the pilot stage, but a new mechanism was not yet in place.

This is deeply concerning. It would appear the Treasury Board now has no system at all to monitor public safety and anti-terrorism spending. We have actually regressed. The Treasury Board promises to have a new system in place by March 2014, nearly a year from now and four years from when it killed the original system. Whatever the flaws of the old system, certainly it must have been better than nothing. Or perhaps it was not, but right now what it has had for three years is nothing in terms of monitoring those public expenditures on security.

I turn now to the response we have had from the government on this matter. The President of the Treasury Board has repeatedly told this House that all the money is accounted for and can be found in the public accounts for the years 2001 to 2009. This is a laughable response. Every financial transaction is "recorded" in the public accounts to some extent. What we do not have is any details in terms

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of where that money is in the public accounts. We know it is in the public accounts, but we do not know where in the public accounts, so in that sense it is truly missing.

The minister's response did not provide us with any information, nor does it do anything to calm the concerns of Canadians that the current government simply cannot keep track of its own money. That is why I have asked the Conservatives, in a written question, to detail where in the public accounts these funds can be found. I eagerly look forward to their reply.

As I said previously, we do not know if there is a systemic problem with other categories of expenses. The Auditor General only examined public safety and anti-terrorism funding. Again, we do not know if other funding destined for services for middle-class Canadians may not also be missing.

● (1140)

I also want to share my concerns about the NDP's reaction to this matter. The NDP motion we are debating today demonstrates a curious lack of understanding about the role and powers of the Auditor General.

The Liberals support publishing the information related to this audit so that Parliament and Canadians can examine it for themselves. However, the portion with respect to turning the data over to the Auditor General is interesting, as he already has that power. He certainly would have looked at all the relevant information. We do not need a motion to ask him to get the information to which he is already entitled.

Subsection 13(1) of the Auditor General Act states:

Except as provided by any other Act of Parliament that expressly refers to this subsection, the Auditor General is entitled to free access at all convenient times to information that relates to the fulfilment of his or her responsibilities and he or she is also entitled to require and receive from members of the federal public administration any information, reports and explanations that he or she considers necessary for that purpose.

The law is perfectly clear on this matter. The Auditor General would not have had to contend with security matters either, as subsections 13(2) and 13(3) also grant the Auditor General access to secret materials as long as his staff take the oaths required of public servants handling such information.

Therefore, it is fair to say that access to the required information was not a problem for the Auditor General. The problem was that the information did not exist.

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This is also a question of resources. I would contend that if that money could have been found, then the Treasury Board would have found it during its consultations with the Auditor General on this report. No government wants the Auditor General to tell the public that we have lost \$3.1 billion. It is the worst-case scenario. I imagine many Treasury Board officials worked late hours trying to find the missing money. I have no doubt that if it could have been located, it would have been, and the Auditor General's office would have been shown exactly where it was. It is purely a case of self-interest. I imagine the government and the public servants worked very hard to find the missing money, and did not, because the information did not exist.

That said, of course we are in no way opposed to giving the Auditor General more resources. If his office thinks that more resources would help answer this question, then let us provide more resources.

The Liberals support this motion because more transparency is good. The Auditor General has raised serious concerns about the systems used to track government expenditures, and Canadians deserve to see how it is done so that they can judge the government's track record.

Before I move on to the next portion of my remarks, I want to comment on the general tone of the NDP's response to this matter.

Good government is about solutions. However, we do not see many solutions emanating from the NDP. I find this particularly surprising, considering how plainly obvious the solution to this problem is. Perhaps it is simply easier to point fingers and try to score political points. I was dismayed to see the member for Pontiac ignore an obvious solution proposed by the committee we are both members of. The solution is to change how the government appropriates money.

The government operations and estimates committee held a wide-ranging and in-depth study on the process of supply. We heard from experts inside and outside the government, including former parliamentarians, the Auditor General, a former clerk of the House, other governments and the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Our committee made numerous recommendations, some of which the government has endorsed, others not so much.

However, the most important recommendation that was made was to transition the estimates from their current vote structure to a program-based structure. Our current vote structure is archaic and cannot keep up with the size and scope of 21st century government. Its failings are well known.

Most departments have three votes: operating, which means paying for public servants and hydro bills; capital, for acquisitions; and grants and contributions, the funds that are handed out to Canadians.

If a department wants to transfer money inside its vote, it only needs the approval of the Treasury Board, not Parliament. It only has to tell us if it wants to switch money between the votes, such as to fire a public servant and buy a new ministerial limo.

The best example of this problem may be the G8 legacy fund debacle. As a consequence of the confusion with our current system,

parliamentarians thought that when they approved the supply bill, they were authorizing money specifically for the border infrastructure fund. That was not the case.

● (1145)

In fact, Parliament approved a single massive pot of money for infrastructure construction; the only condition was that the money be spent on infrastructure. That is why the Treasury Board was able to create a new program, the G8 legacy fund, and provide it with funding by taking money from the border infrastructure program. The Conservatives did not have to tell Parliament they were doing this, since the money all came from the same large pot that Parliament had approved for infrastructure. However, if Parliament had to approve spending by programs rather than in the current way, this would have been impossible, and we would also have been able to track public security spending.

Therefore, our primary proposition is to amend the NDP motion to include a solution to the problem, and the evident solution so that this will never happen in the future is to do the estimates according to programs rather than according to the current archaic system.

I would like to read my proposed amendment.

I move, seconded by the member for Bourassa, that the motion be amended by adding the following: "And that, in order to avoid losing funds in the future, the House requests that the government take all actions necessary to transition to program-based appropriations according to the timeline provided to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates."

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion, or in the case that he or she is not present, consent may be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party.

Since neither the sponsor nor any of these other members are present in the chamber, I cannot consider that there is consent for the amendment. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder why the Liberals think they have any credibility when it comes to this matter.

I would like to give the Liberal member a short history lesson. In her 2004 report, the Auditor General examined the management framework for the PSAT initiative, including all funding and expenditures. She identified weaknesses in the way in which Treasury Board evaluated departmental funding proposals. She also noted in 2004 that, under the Liberal government, the reporting process needed to be improved.

Why did the Liberals not take action when they were in power in response to the 2004 Auditor General's report, in order to put in place a more solid reporting procedure and a better method of evaluating funding?

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Clearly, the Liberal government mismanaged this file, just like the Conservative government. An NDP government will be transparent and truly accountable to the Canadian people

• (1150)

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member might recall that I read a quote from the 2004 Auditor General's report, in which she states that, until the end of 2004, the Treasury Board tracked all public safety spending. This means that the problems began after that, when the Conservatives were in power.

The problem I have with the NDP's proposals, as I said in my speech, is that they do not offer any solutions. The amendment I proposed offers a solution to help ensure that this kind of problem never happens again.

The NDP does not have any solutions to suggest.

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, audits, of course, are looking for the paperwork to match against the money that is spent. Certainly I can recall a recent audit in which the comment was, as in this case, "There is no evidence of wrongdoing, but we cannot find the paperwork and we cannot figure out exactly where the money was spent."

Would the hon. member for Markham—Unionville contrast and compare the reaction of the Conservatives when fingers were pointed at much smaller amounts of money in the Attawapiskat community with the way they are sloughing this off as though nothing has happened when \$3.1 billion cannot be tracked?

This is lousy attention to detailed paperwork and keeping track of money. The Conservatives were contemptuous when it was a small first nation community, but now they just say, "Look the other way; there is nothing here."

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Green Party for that excellent comparison. I think it is telling when the Conservatives bring in a third party administrator to deal with an impoverished, small aboriginal community, maybe dealing with, I do not know, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and then they slough it off when \$3.1 billion goes missing under their watch.

I think this shows a certain tendency to take on small, poor communities with a vengeance and to simply ignore the problem of \$3.1 billion going missing under their watch.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in trying to get a better understanding of just how much \$3.1 billion is, it is fair to say that it is virtually 50% of the total budgets of some provincial governments here in Canada. We are talking about a significant amount of money.

The government is standing in its place and saying that it is not true and that the money has not been lost. Could my colleague point out in a very simple fashion why Canadians need to be concerned about this \$3.1 billion and explain what it is the Auditor General is actually saying?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, it is true that \$3.1 billion is a huge amount of money. It is so big that it is hard for many Canadians to picture an amount that size. It is perhaps half the budget of the

Province of Manitoba, or something like that. That gives some idea of the magnitude.

Our amendment would be a practical solution to this problem. We acknowledge it is a huge matter when an amount of this size goes missing. However, our proposal would ensure that such a thing would not happen in the future, whether it is a Liberal government or a Conservative government. That is the practical nature of our suggestion to bring a solution to this matter.

• (1155)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have been told by the government that the \$3.1 billion is not lost, it just is not found, and that is good management on the government's part.

I would like to go back to the issue of third party managers. The Conservatives viciously attacked the impoverished community of Attawapiskat, not saying that the money was misspent but that there were not enough receipts. There was not even an allegation that the money was misspent; it was just that they did not have all the receipts. Meanwhile, they cannot even produce the receipts for misspending \$3.1 billion.

Given the sheer magnitude of incompetence that we see over there, has my hon. colleague thought what the costs would be for us to bring in independent third-party managers for each of these departments that are misspending money, losing money, hiding money through secret contracts that they are not coming clean with?

We need some sense of accountability over there.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his point and I have already acknowledged it. I think the Attawapiskat comparison is telling.

I think to bring in third party managers when we are talking about funds on the scale of \$3.1 billion would be enormously expensive, so our proposal, I think, is the more practical one. If we move to estimates based upon programs, then we would avert any such problems in the future.

It would be nice if we could solve this \$3.1 billion problem, but I am not sure we ever will. I think the Auditor General has done his best, and he simply says the information is not there.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on December 4, 2002, the current Prime Minister, who was the Leader of the Opposition at the time, asked the Liberal government a question about the loss of \$1 billion, which he called a boondoggle. It was clearly a scandal. The Prime Minister, who was the opposition leader at the time, shouted from the rooftops about this scandal.

Could my colleague comment on the difference between the Conservatives' attitude during the Liberal scandal and their current attitude, now that they are the ones who have lost \$3.1 billion? Why have they changed their attitude towards a scandal that is almost exactly the same? What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, it was not at all the same. Neither my colleague nor I was here at that time.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

However, at the end of the day, it was proven that the billion-dollar boondoggle did not exist. That is the difference.

[Translation]

That is the difference. The Liberal scandal was not a scandal. It did not exist. As for the Conservative scandal regarding the \$3.1 billion, that is real. No one knows where that money is. This is completely different.

[English]

**Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, clearly the \$3 billion we are talking about is a reporting thing. It is horizontal, and clearly it will come out in due course.

I have a question for the member. If he and his party are so good at finding money, perhaps he can tell us where the \$40 million in sponsorship money went?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the hon. member focus on today's issue, not on something from decades ago.

He says that he thinks the \$3.1 billion will be identified in due course. What does that mean? The Auditor General said the information was not available. How can he say that it will be identified in due course when the Auditor General said that the information does not exist?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the hon. member for Nickel Belt.

We are talking about \$3.1 billion in a \$12.9 billion budget.

Government representatives are saying that there was an emergency in 2001, that there was a real terrorist threat. It never went away. Canada could be attacked and be unable to respond. That justified allocating a budget. The government decided that Canada needed to spend \$12.9 billion to protect itself.

Now \$3.1 billion is missing. Where did it go? There is no way of knowing. That is a pretty big deal.

The Auditor General said that there is no explanation for the \$3.1 billion difference between the funds allocated to the departments and agencies and the reported expenditures. In other words, nobody knows what happened to that money.

Fortunately, we have been told that the money has not been diverted to a Swiss bank account by a corrupt public servant or minister. We have that assurance, at least. Still, it is not so bad because, given what is going on in the Senate, we could say that it has rubbed off on the ministers.

Needs were identified. What became of them? It is like cyberthreats. No one knows what happened to the \$750 million.

The problem with the cyberthreat file is that, 10 years after the money was spent, we were blatantly told that our computer systems are not protected from a cyberattack. That is fairly serious.

That is the real problem: there is no accountability. The government chooses to spend money or not. Funds get reassigned,

but we are never told whether the critical mission was accomplished. That is the whole problem with this government.

If this \$3.1 billion was spent so Canada could be protected from an act of terrorism, that is good, because that is what should have been done. However, we do not have that information. We do not have that guarantee. We were quite simply told that \$3.1 billion was missing. We demand to know what happened.

How can we right a situation if the extent of the problem or its very nature are being kept from us? To find a solution, we need to know the exact nature of the problem. That is what we are asking. That is exactly what is at the heart of this motion: we want to know. We do not want relevant information kept from us anymore.

The best part is that in 2010, this government decided to abolish the reporting process. The Auditor General clearly states that that is where their audit stopped. The government did not fix the problem. It got rid of the method for finding out about the problem.

Sweeping things under the rug will not make them disappear. Sooner or later, it will start to get cluttered under there.

In theory, it takes \$3.1 billion to keep Canada safe. However, this same government introduced Bill S-7, saying that Canada needs to be protected from terrorism.

What will we use to fight terrorism? The Conservatives have cut public safety spending by \$687 million. That must make the terrorists happy. I imagine that representatives and lawyers for the mafia and organized crime are thanking their lucky stars and hoping that this government never gets voted out of power. The election of the Conservative Party is the best thing that ever happened to the mafia.

They have slashed \$143 million from the border services budget.

● (1200)

Right now, border posts all along Quebec's border are empty. Fraudsters and people smuggling in illegal immigrants are being asked to pick up the telephone and say they are crossing the border. Life is grand. This government is making every effort to be reckless. It says it will protect Canada and then it asks terrorists to turn themselves in. Well done.

In Granby and Bromont, the RCMP is helping people who crossed the border illegally and claim to be political refugees. That is fine. The problem is that there are some people who do not report to the RCMP. There are some who come straight across the border. Who are those people? We do not know and there is no way we can know, because the Conservatives have cut positions: 626 full-time positions, including 325 front-line police officers and 100 positions directly related to the intelligence directorate. They have cut 19 sniffer dog units that searched for drugs and explosives. That means that they have eliminated, from airports and border crossings, our system to protect against bombs and against terrorists who blow up airplanes. In theory, that should make us safer.

*Business of Supply*

Meanwhile, the government does not know where the \$3.1 billion that was supposed to be used to combat terrorism has gone. When I say that the work is not being done, I mean it is really not being done. Another very serious issue is the \$195 million in cuts to the RCMP. That is the icing on the cake. It is really no longer able to do the job.

What is more, with regard to search and rescue and aviation safety, we are being told that if a plane ever crashes somewhere as a result of an act of terrorism, if a boat is ever in difficulty or there is a hijacking at sea, the Royal Canadian Air Force does not have the planes or helicopters to intervene, to protect and save the victims of an act of terrorism or any other accident. They no longer have the means to do so.

The \$3.1 billion has gone missing. It would have been useful to look at any threats against Canada and use the money to counter those threats, yet that was not done. However, we may have an idea of where that \$3.1 billion went.

The G8 and G20 summit expenses raised many questions. Today, the same minister is under scrutiny for the disappearance of \$3.1 billion. Is that money buried under a gazebo in his riding? It might be worthwhile to go and dig there. We might strike it rich.

Let us not forget that the \$50 billion he spent on sidewalks, gazebos and public restrooms was supposed to have been spent on securing our borders. That money was allocated to border protection infrastructure. In order to get re-elected, the Conservatives took \$50 million to assure the President of the Treasury Board's friends that they would all get small contracts, that they would all get a little treat. It does not make any sense at all.

It was important to point out that, under the Conservative government, that money was used for purposes other than those for which it was intended. That is clearly what happened in the President of the Treasury Board's case.

The President of the Treasury Board obviously has the makings of a future senator. This seems to be a Conservative government trademark.

This motion calls for something to be done about the \$3.1 billion. Is Canada safer from terrorism than it was, when only \$9.7 billion of the \$12.9 billion allocated for this purpose was spent?

• (1205)

The government has not answered this important question. The loss of this \$3.1 billion therefore demands some accountability. That is what Canada needs.

• (1210)

[*English*]

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this problem is not unique to what was in the Auditor General's report, nor is it unique to the period in question. In fact, there is a more recent example in this year's budget.

I am the critic for Veterans Affairs. Within the budget this year, there is an indication that \$65 million has been allocated over the next two years for the Last Post Fund. The Last Post Fund spends about \$10 million a year, so we know very well that \$65 million will

not be spent in the next two years. A few years from now, is there going to be another Auditor General's report that says that \$40 million cannot be accounted for and that it was not spent when the government said in the budget that it was going to be spent?

Given what is in the Auditor General's report, and this behaviour apparently continuing in this year's budget, how do we stop this from recurring in the future?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Giguère:** Mr. Speaker, the culture of secrecy must be abandoned and accountability rules must be put in place. It is a common practice to look at a budget over a 10-year period and then, if the amount is too great for the stated objective, to reduce it. That is good management.

Is that what happened in this case? We do not have the slightest idea. That is what we are asking. We are not asking for the moon. All we want is the earth. We are fine with it, but there is no accountability in this matter.

We have no problem with a reassessment of expenditures. However, we need to be informed.

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech.

If I am not mistaken, I believe that he serves on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. He is very well positioned to recognize the government's poor management and lack of accountability.

I had the opportunity to talk about this a little earlier in my presentation. I would like to know my colleague's views on this. I talked about the Conservatives' dishonesty, which we see day after day, and their insults to the effect that the NDP cannot do a good job of managing the economy, and so forth. These are myths invented by the Conservative Party.

The reality is that today—and we have heard about it all week—we see that \$3.1 billion has been lost and that the Conservatives do not know how to manage the economy and protect taxpayers.

What does my colleague think of this lack of logic?

**Mr. Alain Giguère:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question that opens the government up to some scathing criticism.

The Conservatives claim that they are the best at managing the economy and they compare themselves to Greece, Spain and Italy. It would be nice if they would occasionally compare themselves to the best: Sweden, Germany and Australia. No, they compare themselves to mediocre managers and think that this makes them the best. In reality, they are simply less mediocre than other mediocre managers. What a fantastic achievement.

Our country has 1.4 million unemployed workers, and that number is going up by 50,000 a month. We have a trade deficit of \$60 billion. Households have a debt-to-income ratio of 163%, and the Conservatives still think they are the best. That is not true.

*Business of Supply*

The best example is that they have lost track of \$3.1 billion, at a time when Canada's economy is struggling and Canadians are experiencing serious problems. Food bank use has more than doubled. That is not a sign that things are going well. Here is the problem: the government is hiding the truth and shamelessly lying about economic figures.

Rather, I should say that the economic figures this government uses do not at all reflect the reality in Canada. That is a bit more parliamentary.

[English]

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak today on our official opposition motion on the recent Auditor General's report on the missing \$3.1 billion.

I have to say that there are days as an MP on this side of the House when I do not know whether to laugh or cry. On the surface, we can shake our heads and poke fun at the government that cannot find \$3.1 billion of taxpayers' money. We know what we do at home when some money goes missing. We look under the bed and in the washing machine. Maybe a few Canadians check socks. Yesterday we asked the government if it checked the banana stand.

All kidding aside, we are not talking about some loonies or toonies or change. We are talking about \$3.1 billion. This is the stuff accounting teachers use with their students as prima facie evidence of accounting gone wrong. This is where one wants to cry rather than laugh. This comes from a government that has inflicted on Canadians ad nauseam its economic action plan commercials for itself. It is more wasting of taxpayers' money.

The Conservatives have made outrageous claims about being good managers of the economy, when the evidence, such as the missing \$3.1 billion, tells the real story. This is the government that brought Canada the \$50-million spending spree of the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka for the G8 summit, with gazebos and the paving of the yellow brick riding that had nothing to do with security. Is this where we should be looking for the \$3.1 billion for security measures?

We saw the financial fiasco of the F-35 jets. Are their fumes where we should be looking for the \$3.1 billion?

In the past, we have seen economic mis-managers spend money on government programs that did not exist. Coming from northern Ontario, I know the fiction of FedNor's spending claims from the President of the Treasury Board.

Is it any wonder that when someone with the integrity and independence of Kevin Page, the former parliamentary budget officer, pointed out this incompetence, the government chose to shoot the messenger rather than conduct the business of the government in a proper fashion?

The ridicule of the Conservative government's spending and accountability knows no bounds. Richard Cléroutx writes, in his Straight Talk blog, that the President of the Treasury Board is a treasury minister who has lost his treasure. The minister claimed the money was not lost, that it was only an accounting difference between him and Michael Ferguson, the Auditor General. Mr. Cléroutx suggests that the treasury board minister might not be wise

speculating that the money might have been spent in Afghanistan and on border crossings. Mr. Cléroutx reminded Canadians that the minister “spent \$50 million on building public toilets in a farmer's field, a gazebo in a town, buying a \$2 million cruise boat that wouldn't float, and the killer—paying \$1 million to have somebody carve a fake, miniature lighthouse out of an old tree stump...If anybody out there comes across a \$3.1 billion bundle somewhere in a government office, you'll know whose it is”. Others are calling the government's explanation a fancy fudging of facts.

The minister acknowledges that the individual reporting by departments is not followed by whole government reporting. If we do the math, it is pretty simple. Add up the different departments and get the bottom-line figure. However, it does not add up. We are out \$3.1 billion.

Let us be clear about the importance of security and anti-terrorism initiatives. They are needed to meet the post-9/11 security environment. No one disputes that, but with all the spending cuts happening, we need to be sure we have value for our spending. We need to know where this money is going and whether we are getting the security we are paying for. We have a problem when the Auditor General tells Canadians he does not know and cannot determine how this money was spent. It is a real concern that the government shows such a lack of interest in monitoring overall spending on national security.

●(1215)

The government loves to blame the previous Liberal government for getting us into this mess, and there is some truth to that. However, it is the Conservative government that in 2010 let drop the commitment to strategically monitor overall spending on national security. It was the Conservative government that stopped providing annual reports on where all the money was going.

The Auditor General found that \$3.1 billion was missing between 2011 and 2009. What happened in 2010? Both the Auditor General and the Assistant Auditor General had some interesting things to say about that. The Auditor General said:

Our audit only went up to this time period, and at the end of this time period this method of reporting was stopped.

It seems that when the Auditor General found that the Conservatives were not counting money properly, the government's answer was to simply stop counting. That is banana-stand nonsense.

We can do better. We must do better.

I am the mining critic for the official opposition. We have a 20-member mining caucus that met this week to look at what a proper national mining strategy might look like, one that could support the good-paying jobs and the investment the mining industry makes in our economy, which was \$35 billion in gross domestic product in 2011. A mining strategy that can pay dividends for Canada when it is done in a sustainable fashion is good management of the economy.

*Business of Supply*

My leader has made it clear that for these natural resources projects, it is not in Canada's best interest, not even for our bottom line, to take as much resources out of the ground in as short a period of time as possible to sell to whomever, usually foreign countries, with foreign companies getting most of the profit. This does not serve Canadian interests now or future generations. We in the party know something about sound economic management. It means paying attention to both the bottom line and the social good. It is not surprising, as a federal government report indicated, that, taking into account all governments and all parties, NDP governments have balanced the books more than any other party. Whether it is mining or national security, we can get it right. That is good fiscal management.

That is not what we are talking about today with this missing \$3.1 billion. Where is that money?

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

During his audit, the Auditor General asked the Treasury Board Secretariat for information to help him explain how the balance of \$3.1 billion, allocated between 2001 and 2009, had been used. Although no clear explanation was given, the secretariat worked with the Office of the Auditor General to identify several possible scenarios: the money may have lapsed at the end of the fiscal year for which it was allocated; the money may have been spent on different public security and anti-terrorism activities and reported as part of ongoing program spending; or the money may have been carried over and spent on programs not related to the initiative.

[*English*]

With this motion, we are calling on the Conservatives to make public, by June 17, 2013, a detailed summary of all departmental expenditures specifically related to public security and anti-terrorism initiatives between 2011 and 2009 and to give the Auditor General all the necessary resources to perform an in-depth forensic audit until the missing \$3.1 billion is found and accounted for.

Surely it is time to stop politics and actually take the issue of preventing terrorism seriously and account for the money spent on anti-terrorism initiatives. Conservatives are bringing forward initiatives and unnecessary laws that infringe upon our civil liberties without actually being able to explain whether the whopping \$3.1 billion allocated for public security and anti-terrorism initiatives was actually spent, and if so, how, and on what programs.

Ordinary Canadians need to know why \$3.1 billion of their taxpayer money is missing and why the Conservatives are not doing everything in their power to find where the \$3.1 billion went and what it was used for. We will leave no stone unturned to try to get to the bottom of this boondoggle. That is a real economic action plan.

If the Conservatives have nothing to hide, why do they not make it transparent and release all necessary documents to the Auditor General to make sure the \$3.1 billion is found and accounted for?

• (1225)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that \$3.1 billion is a huge amount of money. It is ultimately very difficult for many, if not most, to really get an appreciation of just how much money it is.

One of the things we are hoping to see, if this motion were to pass, is a solution and some way to prevent this from occurring in the future.

My question to the member is in regard to the amendment that was brought forward by my colleagues earlier, in essence stating that it is necessary for a transition to program-based appropriations, according to timelines provided by the standing committee, in order to change the way in which we do estimates.

Does the member agree with that? Would he support what the Liberal Party is suggesting?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North asked me what we expected. We expect the government to supply all the proper information to the Auditor General.

At the end of the day, we want to know where this \$3.1 billion is. Where was it spent and how was it spent? We want to know where it is. That is all we want to know. Where is it?

Give us the documentation. Give it to the Auditor General and he can figure out where the money is. If it was misspent, the government should pay it back.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during the debate, we heard Conservative members say a number of times that all the information is available in the Public Accounts of Canada. Canadians are not fools and know that what the Conservatives are saying is totally false. Here is a quote from a discussion between the Auditor General and Aaron Wherry from *Maclean's*:

The information reported annually in the Public Accounts was at an aggregate level and most of the PSAT spending was not separately reported as a distinct (or separate) line item. Furthermore, with over 10 years elapsing since the beginning of the PSAT program, much of that information is now archived and unavailable.

Therefore, what the Conservatives are saying is false. Would my colleague like to comment on that?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague does indeed have reason to believe that what the Conservatives are saying is entirely false. After hearing this discussion, we must believe what the Auditor General is telling Canadians. We must believe him and not the Conservatives, who are known as a party that hides the truth from Canadians. We should not believe them.

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I direct this question to the hon. member for Nickel Belt.

My father was an accountant and I vividly recall, because I was about eight years old, that he was the senior cashier for a large insurance company. During year-end, they could not find \$1 million. He came home from work and said they could not find that \$1 million. It was a matter of accounting to figure out where it went. I was a very little girl and I remember saying, "Keep looking in all the wastepaper baskets; it has got to be there somewhere".

*Business of Supply*

I find the misapprehension from Conservative members of the House today of what it means to have \$3.1 billion missing to be quite like my reaction as a little girl, saying that the money is not really missing. They just cannot figure out where it is; it is not really missing money.

I think we understand that in an audit we have to track where the money is and where it was spent. That is why we have an Auditor General, to figure out that the government is taking good care and can account for every penny spent.

If \$3.1 billion cannot be accounted for, will my friend from Nickel Belt agree with me that it means it is missing?

• (1230)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the member: the money is missing. All the Conservatives have to do is give the Auditor General the proper documentation so he can find where the money is. If he cannot find where the money is, then it is up to the Conservatives to tell us where they spent that money; \$3.1 billion is a lot of coins to be missing.

**Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to add to this debate. It gives me an opportunity to talk about our government's strong commitment to protecting the personal safety of our citizens and defending them against threats to our nation. It also gives me a chance to assure Canadians that government spending tagged for security initiatives continues to be used for this purpose. This includes initiatives such as the public security and anti-terrorism, or PSAT, initiative.

As we know, the Auditor General of Canada recently released a chapter of the spring report on the reporting of PSAT funding. Contrary to what some have said and would lead members to believe, the Auditor General did not find that PSAT funds are missing or were misappropriated or misspent. The Auditor General did express some concerns about the clarity and categorization of the reporting between departments between 2001 and 2009. He also made some recommendations to improve the process. I am pleased to say that the Treasury Board Secretariat has accepted these recommendations and is committed to following them.

One of the developments under the PSAT initiative was the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, or CATSA. I am pleased to take this opportunity to highlight the work done by our government to strengthen the security of the transportation system in Canada. Our safety measures affect all means of transport. However, it is aviation security that I will speak about today.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, marked a turning point for aviation security, not only in Canada but also globally. In the decade since, many countries have taken significant action to improve the safety and security of their aviation industries and the travelling public. This is certainly the case in Canada, where the government works with international partners and industry to enhance aviation security. Thanks to the significant improvements we have made to the network of Canada's aviation security since September 11, 2001, our transportation system is now one of the safest and most secure in the world.

While time does not permit a comprehensive list of aviation security accomplishments, I will briefly highlight a few: implementing the restricted area identity card in Canadian airports to strengthen airport access control, the first dual-function biometric card, iris and fingerprint; and working with industry to ensure that all air cargo is screened to the highest standards using the most effective technology at a point in the supply chain that makes the most sense to shippers. All this work has contributed to making Canada's civil aviation security program one of the strongest in the world, and we are proud of that.

We know terrorists are constantly adjusting their tactics and trying to exploit what they perceive to be soft spots in our defences, so we must ensure our aviation security system continues to evolve to meet these challenging threats. In part, we do this through effective risk management. One lesson we have learned during this last decade is that, in enforcing prescriptive regulations, the one-size-fits-all approach does not always mean getting the best outcomes. Instead, we recognize that our partners, including airlines, airports and CATSA, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, are committed to security and capable of managing risk. Where possible, we believe we should allow industry to pursue innovative ways to meet their obligations while accounting for their local realities.

Fundamentally, this means focusing our efforts on areas of aviation security systems where they have the greatest benefits. Our approach to securing air cargo is a good example of our putting these principles into practice. As we know, cargo is handled at multiple stages from the point at which it is packaged until it is boarded on a plane. This includes shippers, agents, freight forwarders and air carriers. It would be not only inefficient but near impossible to impose one-size-fits-all security rules to each stage of the package's journey from factory to aircraft.

• (1235)

That is why we decided to adopt the security supply chain. This model allows for security checks where industry has determined that it is more economical to do so in the supply chain, while ensuring the cargo remains in control while passengers board the aircraft. This approach is balanced. It maximizes safety and it minimizes cost while maintaining the efficiency of the entire network for travellers and goods.

*Business of Supply*

In addition to managing risks, our government recognizes that having a safe and secure aviation system depends on the strength of the partnerships that support it. First, this means partnerships at home. While the Government of Canada may develop policies, set regulations, oversee those regulations and set technology standards, our industry partners are the ones who must implement them. They may do this by either complying with the regulations or developing the technology that meets our standards.

These are the people who are on the front lines of aviation security, including our industry partners. Our international partnerships are equally important to our shared security. We know terrorists do not respect boundaries. We have also seen how attacks launched from halfway around the world can affect us all.

Co-operation on our shared air border with the United States remains a priority, given the fundamental role it plays in our bilateral economic relationship. We want to make sure this strong relationship continues long into the future. We are confronted with ever-evolving threats. The ability to provide the practical technical solutions to these threats is integral to maintaining aviation specifically and more generally, for all Canadians.

The steps we have taken to ensure the security of Canada's transportation network are good examples of our government's strong commitment to protecting the personal safety of citizens. Indeed, the first job of any government is to keep citizens safe from harm. I believe our government's record speaks for itself. We continue to fund measures to enhance the security of all Canadians.

The Auditor General has provided useful recommendations to improve the reporting around this important initiative. I am pleased to say that we are doing exactly that. For example, we have made significant improvements to reporting the financial and non-financial information on future government-wide initiatives such as PSAT.

To conclude, I cannot support the motion, as I believe it is clear the Auditor General has reviewed all available documents and has reached the conclusion that he did not find anything that would lead him to believe money was used in any way that it should not have been.

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, what the Auditor General said was that it is important that there be a way for people to understand how this money was spent, and that summary reporting was not done. In other words, nobody knows where the money is. If money cannot be accounted for, then it is missing.

What we want to know is where the money is and what the money was spent on. The member across the way can go on and on and drone on and on, and many of the members on the government side have done that all day. They talk about how the opposition is trying to manufacture a scandal. No, we are not trying to manufacture a scandal; Conservatives are doing a fine job on their own manufacturing scandals. Instead of all the torqued rhetoric, why do they not just come clean and tell us where the money is and what it has been spent on?

**Mr. Jay Aspin:** Mr. Speaker, essentially the hon. members are manufacturing misinformation. There is no money missing. It is clear that these are summary reports. We have adopted the recommendations by the Auditor General, and that information will

be coming forth in due course. There is no money missing. The only money missing is the \$40 million from the Liberal scandal years ago.

• (1240)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member really needs to get a little bit more focused in terms of today's reality, which is quite different from what he just finished stating in his answer and his speech on this issue.

I will put it very simply to the member. There is a question about \$3.1 billion. We are talking about tax dollars, ultimately. Canadians have a right to know where that money is spent. All we know is that there is \$3.1 billion that is not accounted for. So if we ask the government where it spent that money, the government's response would be, "We don't know, but trust us; it hasn't been lost". Canadians do not trust Conservatives. They do not trust the government.

Can the member provide us today with any tangible, concrete display of where that \$3.1 billion is?

**Mr. Jay Aspin:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend should be more focused on what the Auditor General said. He did not say that there was any money missing. The Auditor General wants us to come up with a summary reporting, as per his recommendations. We have agreed with the recommendations and that will be forthcoming.

I repeat that the only money missing is the \$40 million his party lost several years ago.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the scandal is that it is coming from the Conservatives.

The government lost track of \$3.1 billion. The Auditor General himself says that he does not know where or how the money was spent. However, the NDP would like to know where the money went. We are not talking peanuts, here, but \$3.1 billion. That is a lot of money.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jay Aspin:** Mr. Speaker, there is nothing scandalous here. The only thing that is scandalous is the opposition trying to make the public perceive that there is money missing. There is no money missing, as I continue to repeat. It is summary accounting.

If the hon. members do not know what summary accounting is, it is a horizontal accounting system. This goes back to 2001. It involves the Liberals when they were in power. We have to reconstruct a summary accounting system to show the Auditor General where all this money is. That is simply the case.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the concerns expressed by the hon. member opposite about the funding for Canada's public safety and anti-terrorism, PSAT, initiative.

The Auditor General has been very clear on this issue. When he released his report on April 30, he indicated that he "didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way that it should not have been".

He had access to all available documentation on this issue and found there were some reporting deficiencies. The Auditor General recommended that our government improve our reporting practices.

I am a CGA. I sat on a finance committee with city council for years and have had financial reports presented to me. Certainly, from time to time, reporting mechanisms and reporting procedures differ. Ultimately we will find that this is simply a reporting practice and the money will materialize. It is in the public accounts.

We agreed with that recommendation and the government is already improving the way it reports on whole of government projects.

We recognize that Canadians are concerned about how their government invests in their safety. The first job of any government is to keep its citizens safe from harm.

Since the tragic incidents of September 11, 2001, the Government of Canada has taken important steps to increase and strengthen security in the air, on the ground and at sea.

One of the things we did, and it is something many Canadians have experienced first hand, was to create CATSA, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority.

CATSA plays a critical role protecting travellers at Canadian airports by screening passengers and their belongings before they get on the plane, screening checked bags to look for explosives and other objects that would pose a threat and screening people who enter restricted areas at airports. The government has also been working on improving the infrastructure for air travellers.

On planes, that means we have reinforced cockpit doors to prevent unlawful intrusions. We have also introduced highly sophisticated detection equipment to screen travellers and their luggage. We have redesigned the sections of flight attendant training that deal with air security.

In airports, we have increased the number of screening officers. We have also enhanced requirements for airport security plans and have introduced the restricted area identity card for Canadian airports. The card strengthens airport access control. It is the first dual-function biometric card, using both iris and fingerprint identification.

However, air travel is only one part of it. We are also working to improve security for ground travel.

Our Conservative government has been working since May 2007 with major rail, transit and intercity bus operators from across Canada and their primary associations, including the Canadian Urban Transit Association and the Railway Association of Canada.

We have developed a series of voluntary security standards and security guidance documents with these associations.

We also changed some of the laws to better respond to threats. For instance, the International Bridges and Tunnels Act came into force in April 2007. The act provides the government with the legislative authority to ensure effective oversight, including safety and security of the existing 24 international vehicle bridges and tunnels and 9 international railway bridges and tunnels, as well as any new international bridges or tunnels built in the future.

Thanks to this legislation, the Minister of Transport has the authority to issue an emergency directive in response to a potential threat to the safety or security of any international bridge or tunnel.

Under amendments made to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act in 2009, the federal government has the authority to ensure effective oversight, including security, over the transportation of dangerous goods on our roads and rail lines.

In November 2007, the Minister of Transport and the Railway Association of Canada signed a memorandum of understanding that reflected the core principles of a good security regime, including regular updates to risk assessments and security plans, drills and exercises, training and awareness and incident reporting.

Beyond land and air, the marine security program protects Canada and Canadians by safeguarding the integrity, efficiency and security of Canada's marine transportation system against unlawful interference, terrorist attacks or use as a means to attack our allies.

•(1245)

Marine security program personnel conduct inspections, review and approve security plans and work with stakeholders to assist them in meeting the requirements of the Marine Transportation Security Act and its regulations.

Established in 2004, coastal Marine Security Operation Centres, MSOCs, have the authority and capacity to support a national response to perceived and real marine security threats to our country. MSOCs are located in Halifax, Dartmouth, Victoria and Niagara.

We rely on the skills and knowledge of federal government departments and agencies responsible for marine security, asset support or maritime expertise to ensure that MSOCs are effectively protecting our marine borders. These centres have the authority and capacity to use all the civilian and military resources necessary to detect, assess and support a coordinated response to a marine security threat or incident.

*Business of Supply*

In addition to these investments in air, ground and marine transportation security, the government continues to work closely with international partners and allies, sharing information of interest such as threat assessments, best practices and mitigation strategies to help develop harmonized and compatible security systems. This information is shared bilaterally as well as with international forums such as the International Civil Aviation Organization.

In addition, the aviation and marine transportation security clearance programs reduce the risk of security threats by preventing interference with the aviation and marine transportation system through background checks on employees who perform certain duties or who have access to certain restricted areas of airports and ports.

These comprehensive background checks better protect Canada's transportation infrastructure, employees and passengers against insider threats and reduce the risk of having individuals linked to organized crime working at airports and ports. The government also conducts and participates in government and industry-led exercises on air, marine and surface security to ensure the government and industry are ready to react in emergency situations.

These are wise investments protecting Canada from threats, investments that began under the PSAT initiative.

Before I conclude, I cannot support this motion. The Auditor General reviewed all available documentation during his audit and concluded, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way that it should not have been".

•(1250)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech, even if I do not agree with his analysis or conclusion.

I would like to share a story that will strike a chord with any parent. Last winter, I asked my son where his other mitten was. Children are always losing their mittens in winter. He said that he did not know. I asked if he had lost it again. He told me that he did not lose it, but that he just did not know where it was.

The Conservative government has that exact same attitude. It says it did not lose \$3 billion, but that it just does not know where the money is. It is somewhere. It may have been spent. If that is the case, it was not misspent, but the government cannot say how it was spent or if it is in a reserve fund. The Auditor General is telling us that there is a lack of information.

The government advocates transparency, but it does not follow through. There is constant secrecy and denial. It hides information. Many departments and agencies have a failing grade when it comes to access to information.

The entire Conservative government deserves an F. It needs to tell us where that \$3 billion is. That money belongs to Canadians.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bryan Hayes:** Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges I have with this motion is that it asks for a forensic audit. A forensic audit is an examination of an organization's or individual's economic affairs, resulting in a report designed especially for use in a court of law. It is

ridiculous that the opposition would bring forward a motion that speaks to having to do something in a court of law.

Forensic accountants may be involved in recovering proceeds of crime and in relation to confiscation proceedings concerning actual or assumed proceeds of crime.

The NDP is talking about crime. However, no crime has occurred. The Auditor General has been very clear in terms of what he stated. Specific to reporting, one of his quotes is that the departments are responsible for accounting and reporting their spending through the Public Accounts of Canada. He says, "The spending within the departments would have undergone normal control procedures in those departments; so there are internal controls in departments about spending and they would go through all of those normal processes. We didn't identify anything that would cause us to say that we felt that anything was going on outside of those processes".

To ask for a forensic audit is unbelievable.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech and I think I heard him say that the money would appear, that somehow it is going to materialize. That is interesting. We will wait to see how that all works out. However, I would like to ask him a question about money that we know exactly how it was spent, and that is money that relates to government advertising. I would like him and his colleagues to listen for a second and then explain how he can justify this when looking into the eyes of his constituents.

The government has erected 9,000 billboards at a cost of \$29 million. It is running economic action plans now on an annual basis at about \$100 million a year. It spent \$23 million doing media monitoring for 60% of the backbench MPs in the Conservative caucus. It is spending \$90,000 per advertisement on each and every ad during the hockey playoff series. That alone would pay for 40 to 50 additional summer student jobs. Can the member and other members of the Conservative caucus, who I am sure are ashamed of this, explain to Canadians how this is possibly defensible given the situation we are in now economically?

•(1255)

**Mr. Bryan Hayes:** Mr. Speaker, I am really not sure what that question has to do with this. I am surprised you are not bringing it to the member's attention, because that is not at all what we are talking about today.

I can state that we, as a government, have spent significantly less on advertising than the former Liberal government and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as always it is a great honour to rise in this House and represent the people of Timmins—James Bay. I will be sharing my time with the member for Welland.

*Business of Supply*

We are here today to make the simple request that the government admit that it lost track of \$3.1 billion and work with us by bringing forward the documents so we can find out what happened to the money. We have heard a number of fascinating euphemisms, such as the money is not lost, it just has not been found, and that the money is horizontal. Perhaps that means it is under someone's bed. We heard that it will materialize. Is the government just expecting it to appear at some given time? What that speaks to is the sheer level of defiant incompetence within the government.

I remember when the Conservatives replaced the Liberal Party in 2006 and made a promise to Canadians. At that time, Canadians were frustrated by the years of arrogance coming from the Liberal Party and the numerous scandals. The Conservative government at the time made a promise that it would come in and clean up Ottawa. It was a simple promise that it would bring a standard of ethics back to Ottawa.

That is not what has happened. What we have seen is a level of defiant immaturity on the most basic issues of public policy. It is like the government created this carnival circus of spite and mediocrity and has attacked all of the existing standards of transparent accountability essential to ensuring democratic foundations.

At the centre of a lot of these scandals, we see the present Treasury Board president who bragged about destroying Canada's long form census. At the committee hearings he said that if one person in the country objected, that would be enough to destroy this system that was a gold standard around the world for gathering information. Then the government came out with Bill C-30, which shows that it is more than willing to intrude on the privacy of Canadians. In fact, it thought it was perfectly fine to spy on Canadians. Again we see that its decision on the long form census shows a level of managerial incompetence that is staggering.

As well, the member took \$50 million of border infrastructure money and blew it on the most outrageous and needless projects, such as building gazebos, investing money in a sunken boat, and putting a lighthouse in a forest in northern Ontario, while telling senior citizens living in poverty that he was sorry but the cupboard was bare and these are tough times. However, the member took money that was meant for border infrastructure security and blew it in his riding. We now find out there is \$2.1 billion of secret contracts being shovelled out the back door, again happening under the Treasury Board watch. The government is not even meeting the basic guidelines. It is taking money without any sense of accountability.

Now \$3.1 billion has gone missing and the Conservatives are saying not to worry because it was spent well, but cannot tell us where it was spent. That is not a standard for accountability.

Canadians watching the government wonder what is happening in this nation. People do not expect government to do everything. They expect the government to play a role at times when people need it, such as with respect to pensions, infrastructure and health care. The role of government is to maintain a good standard of public policy that is accountable, transparent and can meet international norms.

Canadians expect government to unify and bring people across this great country together. However, what we have seen in this

carnival circus of spite and mediocrity is that sneering has replaced leadership and that the 140-character attack has replaced debate. We are seeing this sense of political mendacity being moved throughout every level of the government, including its committees and backbenches. I have not even mentioned the fact that it is spending millions of Canadian taxpayer dollars to keep tabs on its own backbenchers. The level of suspicion and wastefulness is staggering.

We also see attacks by the Conservatives on science and international institutions. Canada once had a reputation as a country that was the model of openness and decency. Under the current government, Canada is now becoming a stranger to the world, a place where the government responds with suspicion and distrust, and representatives of the United Nations are being ridiculed.

• (1300)

We see the Conservative backbench ridiculing members of the United Nations who are dealing with the fact that in the far North, in the riding of the Minister of Health, for example, people cannot afford food.

The government attacks. It attacks international institutions. It has shut down Rights and Democracy. It has shut down the Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. It has attacked, relentlessly, the role of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, whose primary job is to provide documents to Parliament.

The Conservatives have turned this House of Commons into a place where the role of the MP to hold the government to account has been shut down through efforts to shut down debate time and time again. What we are left with is this culture of arrogance where the Conservatives believe they are entitled to their entitlement. They believe that their friends, like Mike Duffy and Patrick Brazeau, can get away with things because they are Conservatives.

It is a level of arrogance that even outstrips something the Liberals had, and I think that is staggering. It is an insult to the Canadian people who were promised that the Conservatives would do government differently.

Now \$3.1 billion is missing. That is incompetence. It is incompetent management when the President of the Treasury Board says that he does not know where the money is but that it is okay, and that we should trust them. That is not what should be done in accountable government. In any western nation that would be considered an abomination. The Conservatives have taken the Berlusconi model and just made it meaner. It is not an acceptable standard.

We are asking the Conservatives what happened to the money, and they cannot explain it but they tell us all the good stuff they are doing. Meanwhile, they continue with their cuts. They continue wasting money on their ads. They continue wasting money spying on their own members.

*Business of Supply*

They continue wasting money going after civil rights activists, like Cindy Blackstock, spying on her, going to court to fight basic things that most Canadians would consider issues of decency and fairness. Those are words that do not belong in this government's lexicon. It makes me think of Andrew O'Hagan's recent article on Maggie Thatcher, where he said that her legacy was to make England a seedier and greedier place. The kind of attitude that we are seeing from the government, where it has taken the level of partisanship to the level of almost psychosis, is dividing Canadians to change the channel on the fact of basic incompetent mismanagement.

I would suggest that if we were to go into any Tim Hortons in any place in this country, and we asked people if it was okay that the government cannot find \$3.1 billion and whether they trusted the government, I do not think we would find a single Canadian who would answer, "Yes."

The contempt that the Conservatives have for Canadian taxpayers' dollars, with their friends like Mike Duffy and Patrick Brazeau and with their attitude of their secret contracts, refusing to say whether it is tendered, refusing to come forward and produce documents showing how money is spent, is an example of why the government has lost touch with the Canadian people.

What we are asking for in the motion is fairly straightforward. We want to know where the documents are. Is it a case like that of the President of the Treasury Board, who took \$50 million from the border infrastructure and funnelled it through his constituency office, burying the paperwork, and got away with it? He buried the paperwork. He hid the paperwork. He said, "Sorry, there is no paperwork." That was not true. There was paperwork. He did it on homemade forms.

Were the Conservatives filling out homemade forms? They can blame the former Liberals for being part of it, but they should have changed the system. If there was a problem when the Liberals were doing it, they could have changed it but they did not.

Now we see this level of mendacity and this level of incompetence being shown to the Canadian people in a level of arrogance that shows they do not believe they are accountable or need to explain what happened to \$3.1 billion. It is simply not acceptable.

• (1305)

**Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my challenge here is that, in the normal process, what would happen with the Auditor General's report, in all likelihood, because apparently it contains a little controversy according to the opposition, is it would go to the public accounts committee.

Undoubtedly when the resolution fails, which it will, this is going to go to the public accounts committee. So my question to the member is, does he not think that the public accounts committee is capable of doing its job, bringing forward witnesses and reviewing this report? Considering the public accounts committee is chaired by a member of the opposition, I would think it would be able to.

That is my question. Does the hon. member not agree that the proposed resolution is redundant because there is a committee in place that will undoubtedly look at this report, and report back to Parliament?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, the real question here is not whether I believe that the committee is able to do its job but whether I believe the government is doing its job. Clearly, it has not been, and clearly, the Auditor General supports the position of the New Democratic Party.

The government is saying it is just a little bit of controversy that it lost \$3.1 billion dollars. The Auditor General said:

...it's important for there to be...a way for people to understand how this money was spent and that summary reporting was not done.

Where is the money? It is a simple question. If the government has nothing to hide, it should be willing to bring forward the documents and exonerate itself.

What is it trying to do is play procedural games to escape from the basic fact that it cannot account for \$3.1 billion through its own incompetence and it is hiding whatever documents there are that would show where the money was spent.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a document here in my hands. It is clearly indicated on the document that it comes from the Government of Canada, which is the government over there.

The document speaks about political party years and the surplus number of budgets. It is about accountability. I would like to quote these numbers. It says the NDP had a surplus 48% of the time; that is 65 surplus budgets. The Conservatives had a surplus 41% of the time; that is 101 deficit budgets. The Liberals had a surplus a dismal 27% of the time; that is 80 deficit budgets.

These numbers are so important that I would like you, Mr. Speaker, to ask unanimous consent for me to table these numbers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the member for Nickel Belt have unanimous consent to table this document?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no unanimous consent.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, that is what we are up against. They will say or do anything to keep Canadians from knowing what the real numbers are.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, in 2008 the world economy was in the worst tailspin since the depression and the major financial houses in the United States were melting down. Back then, the current Prime Minister said it was a good time to pick up some deals. That showed how out of touch the government was. It said there would be no spending to stimulate the economy and that the government was fine.

At this point, the government had already blown through the surplus. It was already going into deficit. It said that if Canadians let the NDP get into power, there might be a \$30 billion deficit, but within three months it had racked up a \$50 billion deficit. The Conservatives had no plan for dealing with the economic crisis at the time. They thought it was a good opportunity to go and pick up some good easy gifts.

*Business of Supply*

It shows a level of incompetence and a lack of managerial skills in the government that when they lose \$3.1 billion, they tell us not to worry: the money is horizontal.

What kind of answer is that to the Canadian taxpayer?

● (1310)

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for sharing his time with me.

The member's last comment was that the Conservative Party said it was horizontal. The last time I checked, if somebody is horizontal, that person is actually asleep; however, if someone loses \$3.1 billion, that person must not be asleep but comatose, because if the person was just asleep and woke up and rolled over, the money might be found under the mattress. In this particular case the government cannot find the money at all; it does not know where it is.

The government says it just lost track of it; it is not really lost. The Conservatives need to find themselves a good bloodhound. Maybe they could find the track and find where they lost it, because they have clearly misplaced it.

When we talk about that type of money and the size of the Government of Canada, we have to ask ourselves if it is a rounding error. Because the government spends billions of dollars, it might be a rounding error, but that is not the case here. Here we have slightly less than \$13 billion, of which the government lost \$3.1 billion. The government has simply lost track of it. If we do the quick math, that is about 24%. If a business lost track of 24% of its product, it would go bankrupt, yet the Conservative government says it is okay; the money just went places.

The Conservatives relied on the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General went through a list of possibilities with government departments and said, "The funding may have lapsed without being spent. It may have been spent on PSAT activities and reported as part of ongoing programs. It may have been carried forward and spent on programs not related to PSAT."

The interesting part about those three statements is that there are two common words in every one of those statements, and those words are "may have". The government does not know, and the Auditor General did not know either. He had no idea. This was purely a "perhaps".

Let me posit another "perhaps". Perhaps the government did spend it somewhere else and does not want to tell us. The Conservatives cannot tell us that they did not, even though they continue to say that nothing was misspent because the Auditor General said so. No, the Auditor General said they might have done something; the Auditor General did not say they definitely did something.

The problem is that it is open. We do not know what they did with it because they cannot find it. If they could find it, they could tell us what they did with it, but they cannot find it, so they cannot tell us. How do we know that they did not misspend it?

When I asked the President of the Treasury Board the other day about it, he did not know either. He could not tell me where he put it. He does not know. He says he believes the money is in the public

accounts. Oddly enough, the Auditor General disagrees. He says the money is not there. The President of the Treasury Board needs to go back and take a look.

My good friend from Pontiac has moved this motion to do just that. Let us find out where that \$3.1 billion actually went.

The Conservatives said they would account for every penny. That being the case, I would look to my young colleagues, the pages, to do the numbers for me. If we take \$3.1 billion and multiply it by 100 pennies, how many pennies have the Conservatives lost? We are now talking about a number that would probably be best presented with a digit behind the 10, since we would probably have to do it to the fifteenth power or whatever.

I may not be a mathematician, but I am a Scotsman by birth and I count every penny and I tend not to lose them. Perhaps that is why we need to become government in 2015: so we can count the pennies. We will not lose them, unlike the Conservative government, which has taken \$3.1 billion and literally lost it.

A number of things are happening with this issue. What is PSAT? Canadians deserve to know. Is it some sort of department that does not really matter to people a lot and is not that important? Is it one of those things that just happens and does not affect Canadians in general?

Let us see what PSAT is.

According to the Auditor General, the PSAT department has five initiatives, and he outlined them in his report.

The first initiative is keeping terrorists out of Canada while keeping Canadians safe. I would say that has an effect on Canadians.

● (1315)

After September 11, 2001, we knew what we needed to do and we allocated money to do it. It was the previous government that started it.

The second item is "deterring, preventing, detecting, prosecuting and/or removing terrorists".

The third is "facilitating Canada-U.S. relations". Canada and the U.S. share one of the biggest unguarded borders in the world. We have an obligation to our partner and friend across the 49th parallel. For me, where I live, it is across the Niagara River. I know that where you are, Mr. Speaker, it is across the Detroit River. We are very close. We can literally see our friends across the way.

The fourth item is "facilitating international initiatives". The fifth is "protecting our infrastructure and improving emergency planning".

Funding of \$13 billion was provided to protect Canadians against terrorists, to ensure terrorists were not in our country, to deport them if we needed to, to protect vital infrastructure, and to show our intentions to our common friend across the way, with whom we have been at peace for over 100 years, one would think that we would be saying to them that we spent every last nickel and penny to make sure it happened.

*Business of Supply*

However, what do we have? We have is a Conservative government that says that it kind of wanted to do that, but kind of lost track of \$3.1 billion. To our friends across the way to the south, the Conservatives say they are not sure if they did, while to Canadians they say they are not sure if they did all the safe things that they were going to do because they did not spend the money—perhaps. They may have, but the problem is that now they cannot tell us.

To me, not being able to track the money is on a par with the possibility that things may have been left undone in protecting Canadians against terrorists because the Conservatives do not know what they did with the money. That is a critically important piece. That is an answer the government has not been able to give, because the Conservatives do not know if they did or did not spend the money. Which parts of that security that should have been done did they perhaps not do? I qualify it very specifically with the word “perhaps” when I say that “perhaps” it was left undone and Canadians were less secure than they might have been if the Conservatives had spent the money in the first place.

That is a question the government members cannot answer because they cannot answer to where that \$3.1 billion is. The Treasury Board Secretariat has not been able to do that.

When I was reading through chapter 8 of the Auditor General's report, I found it fascinating that the department was given \$2.75 million, a relatively small amount, to build a reporting system so it could track the \$13 billion. The amount of \$2.75 million is a relatively small number, but it is a big number for Canadians. For the average Canadian, \$2.75 million is a lot of money. The department had almost \$3 million to figure out what it did with the \$13 billion; it spent the \$3 million, and then it lost \$3 billion. There is an example of government incompetence for us.

If the Conservatives are spending money to devise a system to track a system that is spending money and then they lose the money, in a math class they get an F, an unadulterated F for failure, pure and simple. It is not even an issue of not doing the right thing, of not doing the things against terrorists that they said they would do, because they do not know if they did them.

It is also about their saying they could count, and they cannot. Then they want to tell us it is there, that we should not worry, that they will find it, maybe, because they might have put it somewhere.

Let me just say this. If they cannot find it for us now, in 2015 we will look for it, we will find it and we will tell Canadians what the Conservatives did or did not do with it. Then we will actually ensure Canadians are safe. We will spend the appropriate amount of money that needs to be spent to ensure Canadians are not under threat by terrorists, to ensure they are safe and to ensure that infrastructure is looked after, unlike our friends across the way, who lost track of \$3.1 billion and think it is okay.

I say to my friends across the way that it is not okay. You failed Canadians miserably when you lost the money. You lost track of it. You do not know where it went and you cannot defend it. It is a lot of money. Unfortunately, you have lost track of it. You need to come clean and tell Canadians where it went.

● (1320)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired. I would ask him and all other members to direct their comments and questions through the Chair, not to other members.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of my jobs is as Canadian co-chair of the Canada-U.S. Permanent Joint Board on Defence.

Let me say what is not okay, and that is to insinuate that somehow the Americans have no confidence in what we are doing with respect to collective perimeter security. Collective perimeter security of North America is something the NDP has consistently opposed because of some of the members'—but probably not the member for Welland, because he lives close—knee-jerk anti-Americanism when it comes to collective security.

I can say that the Americans have every confidence in the co-operation they are getting from their allies across the border in Canada, and we have every confidence in them. To suggest that because of some accounting things that went on in 2001 we are somehow shirking our duties with respect to the collective protection of Canadians and Americans is simply false.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague is passionate about security, and I respect his duty and service to this country as a former member of the armed forces. I have said it before and I will continue to say it every time he asks me a question, because I admire his service.

Unfortunately, I disagree with him. The problem is that the government cannot tell us if it actually expended the money the way it intended to. It cannot. Did it leave bits out of the security piece it intended to do? It does not know, and neither do Canadians, and that is why I say neither do our friends across the way.

He is absolutely right that I live within a stone's throw of the border. The Americans are great friends of ours. They have been coming back and forth across the border for hundreds of years and continue to. We have many friends in the U.S. Those of us who live in border areas respect and love our friends across the border. We truly do.

I respect the fact that my colleague says that we need to be careful about it. I agree with him that we need to be careful about it. That is why the government has to tell us where the money is. What did it do with it? How did you spend it? If you spent it appropriately, then we can say that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Again I would ask the member to direct his comments through the Chair and not to individual members.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a veteran member of the public accounts committee and happens to be the senior lead for the official opposition. He was in attendance on May 2 when the public accounts committee held its public hearing with the Auditor General on this report. During the course of that meeting, one of the members asked the Auditor General this question: “Is there a risk that some of the \$3.1 billion may not have necessarily been spent on what Parliament had approved it for?”

The answer by Mr. Ferguson was this: “I guess I would have to say that there would be a risk because there is not enough information to answer the question completely”.

Is the hon. member as concerned about this risk as we found out we should have been with respect to the border security infrastructure money, which happened to find its way to building gazebos in northern Ontario? Is that concern shared by the hon. member?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Hamilton Centre is absolutely correct. He quoted the Auditor General quite clearly and succinctly. I share the Auditor General's concern about risk. As much as he said “may” have in the three scenarios that he and the department said could have happened, they clearly could have added another “may have”, which is that there is a potential risk that it was not spent the way the possibilities were laid out. There is no definitive answer. No one knows. The government will not provide an answer, because it seemingly does not know. Otherwise, I am sure the government would provide a list of things it spent it on.

It has been unable to do that, which clearly indicates that they do not know and that the Auditor General, Mr. Ferguson, was correct in his assessment when he said that there is, indeed, a risk that the money went to another place. That is potentially why the government does not want to provide the information. Perhaps it went to pay for a gazebo and perhaps not in northern Ontario. Perhaps in some other place in this country there is a new gazebo being erected as we speak that would be quite lavish. Clearly, for \$3.1 billion, one can build a lot of gazebos.

• (1325)

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to rise in the House to talk about the hon. member's motion. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

The motion before us relates to the reporting of the public security and anti-terrorism initiative funds, as examined by the Auditor General in chapter 8 in the spring 2013 report.

Let us turn our attention instead to what really matters: the work done every day to keep Canadians safe and secure while encouraging economic growth, development and job creation. In fact, let us take a very recent example. In the immediate aftermath of the Boston bombings, officials with the Canada Border Services Agency and U. S. Customs and Border Protection were in contact to coordinate efforts to protect public safety on both sides of the border. This example speaks to the strength of our relationship with the United States overall.

Our American friends and neighbours know that they can count on us to be a stalwart partner in protecting safety and security for both of our countries. We are more than trading partners; we are friends and neighbours. When our nations are under attack, we stand together defending our shared values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Providing the level of security we need in today's complex threats environment is a significant undertaking. Doing so without encumbering the biggest and most important bilateral trade relationship in the world makes the challenge even greater. With our government's efforts here in Canada, and in collaboration with our partners in the United States, it is clear that we are making substantial progress toward our goals. We continue to move forward with the implementation of the beyond the border action plan and in developing and implementing new measures to strengthen our mutual security while fostering the economic relationship between Canada and the United States.

We are moving forward with our commitment to the integrated cargo security strategy. We are continuing to harmonize standards and test new approaches to further ease congestion at the border. Last October, we launched a pilot project for marine cargo arriving at the port of Prince Rupert in B.C. Cargo cleared for entry into Canada is simultaneously cleared for entry into the United States. Cleared once: accepted twice. We expect to launch a second pilot for incoming cargo at the Port of Montreal in the upcoming months.

In March 2013, Secretary Napolitano and the Minister of Public Safety signed a memorandum of understanding clearing the way for a pilot project in which U.S. Customs and Border Protection will conduct cargo pre-inspection of U.S.-bound trucks in Canada. In addition, the pre-load air cargo targeting pilot has been under way since last fall. An expanded version of the free and secure trade program is being tested at the Blue Water Bridge at the crossing in Sarnia. If the pilot is successful, we could see this implemented on a permanent basis at all three ports where the free and secure trade program is now in place.

We are also installing new wait-time technology at key ports to enable more effective logistics planning. In British Columbia, NEXUS lanes opened in Douglas and Abbotsford last November. We opened an additional lane to better manage peak-period traffic at the Surrey/Blaine crossing in February. In Ontario, a third NEXUS lane was opened at both the Peace Bridge and Fort Erie crossings.

We continue to promote membership in NEXUS, and we now have over 800,000 members. NEXUS itself was created as part of the public security and anti-terrorism initiative. Expanding our trusted trader and trusted traveller programs, reducing paperwork and expanding pre-clearance programs are all integral to making the border more efficient and supporting economic growth in both of our countries.

• (1330)

Increasingly, we see businesses on both sides of the border building products together and working to produce and assemble parts and components. We are also addressing these threats to our joint security and economic well-being.

*Business of Supply*

In March, our government introduced new legislation to address the growing problem of counterfeit goods. This legislation gives new authority to police and customs officials to seize and destroy shipments of counterfeit and pirated products. It will also establish new criminal provisions for copyright and trademark infringements. It will help ensure that businesses in Canada and the United States enjoy similar protection from counterfeiters. This is a global problem, and we continue to work with our partners in the United States and with our allies around the world to identify and respond to these kinds of threats.

As close as we are, Canada and the United States are independent countries, with their own sovereign interests, which we will continue to pursue in our own ways. There are, however, areas in which our sovereign interests coincide, such as preserving and growing our economic relationship and protecting the peace and security we enjoy. We cannot do these things effectively if we act unilaterally. The connections are too many and too complex, so we are compelled to work together.

The beyond the border action plan is a commitment to do just that on these key items. We are developing and implementing innovative measures that enhance our joint security while ensuring that the legitimate flow of goods, services and people across our shared border is as efficient as possible. We are making real progress toward those goals, and with the continued support of organizations such as the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance, we will continue to get the results we want and need.

Much good work is being done to ensure the well-being of Canadians. The programs conducted under the auspices of the public security and anti-terrorism initiative represented the beginning of a new focus on the safety and security of our fellow citizens. In fact, the audit conducted by the Auditor General found that the overwhelming majority of spending reported by departments was evaluated and was consistent with the objectives of the public security and anti-terrorism initiative.

Where the Auditor General had concerns, they were about the clarity and categorization of reporting between government departments over the period of not just one year, but from 2001 to 2009. The Auditor General has provided recommendations to help improve the reporting process. We on this side agree with those recommendations. The Treasury Board Secretariat agrees with those recommendations.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which was very enlightening. So far, the Conservatives have avoided talking about the missing \$3.1 billion. It is all well and good to list all of the anti-terrorism measures that have been implemented—these are important and I do not deny that, because we all agree that public safety is important—but today, we are talking about transparency, as the Auditor General pointed out.

My colleague quoted selectively from the report. I would like to share another part of the Auditor General's report. With respect to the Public Accounts, he said:

The information reported annually in the Public Accounts was at an aggregate level and most of the PSAT spending was not separately reported as a distinct (or

separate) line item. Furthermore, with over 10 years elapsing since the beginning of the PSAT program, much of that information is now archived and unavailable.

It is not simply a matter of checking the Public Accounts. The government must work with all parliamentarians and with the Auditor General. I wonder what my colleague thinks about that.

• (1335)

[*English*]

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague. He has filled in on a couple of committees, and I always have an appreciation for his questioning and ability to understand things.

That is why I want to speak about the whole issue around the public security and anti-terrorism initiative fund. That is what this discussion is and should be focused around.

Quite honestly, what I am hearing from the other side I find a little disrespectful. We have members on the other side who are taking on the challenge of what the Auditor General is saying.

The Auditor General is saying that he did not find anything to give him cause for concern that any money was used in any way that it should not have been.

One can twist the words and come up with one's own initiatives. However, quite honestly, I think the reason those initiatives come up is that the NDP does not have a platform on which to run in a budget. It has not supported one of the initiatives in any of our budgets since I have been elected and since that party formed the official opposition.

I understand the anxiety the members must have over there, as they need to search and swing things to try to get something to come to fruition. However, that is not the way it is, not by the Auditor General's report.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that the Conservatives recognize that citizens have an expectation of government. Government collects a phenomenal amount of tax dollars every day, and citizens have this expectation that the government knows what it is doing with those tax dollars.

In this particular case, we have \$3.1 billion, which is an astronomical amount of money. If I were to pose a question to any minister of the government as to what the government is doing with the taxpayers' dollars it is spending, one would like to think I could get a tangible answer. However, that is not the case with regard to this \$3.1 billion.

My question to the member is specific. If one of his constituents were to raise the issue of the \$3.1 billion that is unaccounted for in terms of where or if that money has been spent, how would he answer that constituent?

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Mr. Speaker, clearly I will not have to repeat what the AG said in that there was absolutely, in any way, no money used where it should not have been. That is pretty clear.

However, I will turn to the member who belongs to a party that scammed \$40 million from Canadians and ask him if he could help provide us with that information. We have not withheld anything.

*Business of Supply*

Clearly, the Auditor General also said that:

...the Secretariat collected detailed performance information on public security investments, but there was no obligation to provide a government-wide perspective on the Initiative. In our opinion, this resulted in a lost opportunity as the ability to generate a government-wide perspective....

That is the categorization, which is why we accept the Auditor General's report.

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really do appreciate the opportunity to stand today to speak to this opposition motion, especially being in the House over the last few hours and hearing its members stand and, time after time, deliberately mislead the Canadian public and deliberately twist the words of the Auditor General, a highly respected man and office in this country. It is very disturbing. It is troubling. As my own colleague just said, I think it is clear that the opposition is in a panic mode because it has no ideas for the Canadian public. It certainly has no ideas that would benefit Canadians economically and so, instead, the members are actually attacking, indirectly and directly, the very integrity of the Auditor General by twisting his words. I am very pleased that I can stand today to speak against the motion.

As we know, the opposition is calling into question the government's accounting for the money used to fight terrorism both at home and abroad. The fund it is referring to is funding for Canada's public security and anti-terrorism initiative, also known as PSAT. This is a very important initiative, something we have taken seriously, which was proven again last week when we debated Bill S-7, a bill that gives law enforcement the ability to stop terrorism, intercept terrorism and stop individuals from leaving the country to engage in terrorist activity, which is a real threat to Canadians.

That party voted against it, and again today it is using its opposition day, instead of doing something constructive for the country, to twist and mishandle the words of the Auditor General. Shame on it.

We have indicated that all the funds in question have been accounted for in the public accounts, and those are available to Parliament. That is what the Auditor General said, as well.

What is more, there is no indication that any money is missing or that any money has been poorly used or wasted. These are not our words but the Auditor General's. Shame on the opposition for misusing and twisting the Auditor General's words.

Thank goodness. Do members know what I am so grateful for today? The Canadian public is smart. Canadians are intelligent. They know a distortion when they see it. They are not buying that. I think it has even been indicated by all of our offices that we are getting support from our constituents. Thank goodness the Canadian public is smart and does not buy this kind of nonsense.

As I said, these are the conclusions of the Auditor General. He gave the government a clean bill of health in the accounting for these expenses. In fact, he just confirmed, at committee, that the anti-terrorism funding he was reviewing was purely an internal government reporting process.

My hon. colleague from across the way mocked the term "horizontal", so let me read the words. I guess he is laughing at

the Auditor General because the Auditor General said, in his testimony to the committee:

What we were looking for—Again—

And these are his words:

—this was a very large initiative. This was a horizontal initiative.

Again, those are not our words. That is not our description. That is the description of the Auditor General.

We understand that the priority of Canadians and our priorities are aligned together. We understand that there is no more fundamental duty than to protect the personal safety of our citizens and defend against threats to our national security. That is why we did things like introduce and pass Bill S-7 to greater protect Canadians. Again, the opposition voted against it.

This objective to protect Canadians with regard to spending on anti-terrorism measures has been successful. We work with other countries to prevent terrorist acts, to monitor developments in unstable nations and to take appropriate actions to deny and respond to the threats faced by peace-loving people.

Over the past few years, we have witnessed many severe changes in several countries in North Africa, Asia and the Middle East, changes that had an impact upon the stability of many of these countries. We are seeing that terrorism remains a problem in countries like Afghanistan, Algeria and Iraq. We take this very seriously.

Indeed, part of our efforts to combat terrorism includes strengthening our laws to deter terrorist-related activity within our borders and to support Canadians who fall victim to these acts.

That is why, just to reiterate, we passed the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act. This legislation allows victims of terrorism to sue listed foreign states for committing an act of terrorism or for supporting listed entities under the Criminal Code. That is also why we list terrorist entities under the Criminal Code: to send a strong message that Canada will not condone terrorist activity.

● (1340)

That is why it is so disappointing to see the NDP vote against the great bill we just passed last week to combat terrorism. Again, the NDP members are too busy trying to spread mistruths and mislead the Canadian public, which is really shameful on their part.

While terrorist threats may seem to take place far away from Canadian shores, we know we cannot be complacent in the belief that we are immune here at home. We know terrorism is a threat and remains a threat, even here in Canada.

We must be ready to counter threats like these through investments in public security and anti-terrorism measures and other actions. As members know, one of the greatest threats facing democratic nations today is the threat posed by homegrown violent extremists, individuals who seek to harm others in pursuit of overtly political, religious or ideological objectives.

*Business of Supply*

There is real concern that new and evolving conflicts in the world might lure youth to engage in violent extremist activities at home and abroad. Canada, like all nations, has a responsibility to guard against its citizens travelling to areas of turmoil and participating in terrorist acts. That is why our government sought passage of the Combating Terrorism Act, the bill I just referred to, which makes it a criminal offence to leave Canada for the purposes of participating in or facilitating terrorist activity.

We must actively work to prevent individuals from being recruited overseas to learn a terrorist trade and possibly return to Canada or elsewhere to commit further acts of violence. We passed this bill. Again, it is beyond belief and beyond reason that the opposition did not support this initiative. Again, seeing what they are doing today, I guess it is clear that the opposition members are so out of touch with Canadians and what Canadians believe to be important that they spend their time on this kind of nonsense.

To move forward on both combatting terrorism and countering violent extremism, we also launched Canada's counter-terrorism strategy. The strategy is composed of four elements, to prevent, detect, deny and respond to terrorist threats. It sets out a clear approach for Canada to address terrorism with a focus on building community resilience.

We appreciate so much the input from communities across this country that want to see this kind of resilience built into the fabric of their communities. They want to see their young people growing up in Canada, being strong and successful, having families and jobs and not being radicalized by extreme groups. We appreciate so much their help in the work we are doing here in Canada.

A resilient society challenges and rejects the ideas and values associated with violent extremism, and works together to mitigate the impact of terrorist attacks. The success of our strategy relies on collaboration with Canada's international partners, security intelligence and law enforcement agencies, as well as all levels of government, industry stakeholders, civil society and, as I mentioned, communities throughout Canada.

International co-operation on counter-terrorism initiatives is a key component of Canada's counter-terrorism strategy. Since 2005, the counter-terrorism capacity-building program has provided training, funding, equipment and technical and legal assistance to other states. We can see how many great initiatives are going forward in this strategy.

We want to make them capable of preventing and responding to terrorist activities in accordance with international counter-terrorism standards and obligations. We also promote international co-operation in forums such as the G8 Roma-Lyon Group, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forums and of course the Global Counterterrorism Forum, just to name a few.

Here in Canada, much of our work focuses on research, community outreach, training and awareness, as well as engagement with key stakeholders.

As members can see, we are working hard to protect Canadians. We believe that is the job of a responsible government, which is what we are. The opposition members, on the other hand, are trying to manufacture a scandal, a crisis that just does not exist. I would

encourage them to respect the words and the office of the Auditor General and get back to the priorities of Canadians, if they can.

• (1345)

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the aisle spoke of spreading mistruths and misleading the public. She tried to attribute that to others in the House besides the government and the Conservative Party.

This is Orwellian doublespeak of the highest order. Everybody in this country knows that the government and the Conservative Party have mastered, as a high art, exactly what she accuses others of.

She also misquotes and quotes out of context the following from the Auditor General. He said:

We didn't find anything to give us cause for concern that the money...was used in any way that it should not have been. However...it's important for there to be...a way for people to understand how this money was spent and that summary reporting was not done.

The Auditor General has three scenarios about what happened to the money: one, the funding may have lapsed; two, it may have been spent on PSAT activities and reported as part of ongoing programs; but three, it may have been carried forward and spent on programs not related to the initiative.

Why would the government not want Canadians to know how \$3.1 billion was spent?

• (1350)

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the member reading that quote from the Auditor General.

Any Canadian listening, other than one with an NDP mindset, would understand that what the Auditor General said was the money was accounted for. It was horizontal money and there were better ways to report it. We agree with the Auditor General and we agree with the quote that there are better ways to report it. That is exactly the recommendation we will take.

It is very troubling that the opposition would purposefully mislead Canadians when it knows what it is asserting is completely false.

I would like to read what the Auditor General said again. He said, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that money was used in any way that it should not have been".

Here is another quote. This one is from committee when he was asked directly if he could confirm there was no money lost or missing. He said, "It means that we didn't see anything in what we were looking at that put any red flags in front of us that said we would need to do a lot more work on this".

The Auditor General has said the case is closed.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member finished saying that there might be a better way of doing it.

*Business of Supply*

One of the things we have done in the Liberal Party is make a suggestion. We would like to see the government get behind that suggestion. In fact, the former parliamentary budget officer also supports what we have advocated.

There is a need for us to change the way in which we report the estimates. We need to move toward program-based appropriations. This would prevent things of this nature from happening in the future.

Would the member commit that this is, in fact, what the Government of Canada is prepared to do? It is not only the Liberal Party saying it, even the former parliamentary budget officer, Kevin Page, is saying it as well.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, we have seen the Auditor General's report and we appreciate it. We have taken those recommendations and we will follow through because we believe the Auditor General is there to give advice. That is why I would encourage the opposition to support and to respect the office.

While I am on my feet, I have a question for the member from the Liberal Party. The Gomery Commission asked where the \$40 million were, \$40 million which were clearly missing. We have never heard that answered.

Could one of the Liberal members stand and answer where the \$40 million are, which the Auditor General and the Gomery Commission clearly said had gone missing? It has never been paid back.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time.

I would like to begin by explaining to taxpayers why I have a black eye. We were playing soccer yesterday, and although our wonderful pages are kind enough to bring us water here in the House, on the soccer field, things are quite different. Seriously, though, we had a lot of fun.

I would also ask the House to go easy on me today, because I am a little shaken up. I just learned today that a childhood friend of mine committed suicide. His name was Jean-Maxime Leroux. Mourning his loss are his two children, his family and friends. He will be sadly missed.

Now I would like to move on to the motion currently before the House. It has to do with the \$3.1 billion that the government seems to have lost. According to the government, however, that money was not lost; it simply does not know where it is.

That is a huge amount. In fact, \$3.1 billion would be enough to build the new Champlain Bridge in my riding. What is really unfortunate is the partisan rhetoric that the government continues to spew. I do not like using such strong words in the House, because it affects how people perceive us. However, everyone sees how partisan this is. When the government loses track of \$3.1 billion, questions need to be asked.

The government often quotes the Auditor General, but it does so selectively. What the Auditor General said was that they did not find anything to suggest that the money was used inappropriately and that

it is important for Canadians to understand how that money was spent, because the government did not report it properly. Again, this \$3.1 billion was for anti-terrorism efforts.

The government does not know if the money was misspent. It does not know if this is the sponsorship scandal all over again. It does not know if the money was misused the way the President of the Treasury Board misused money on gazebos. Nobody knows where this money went and therein lies the problem.

The Conservatives are saying that it is in the public accounts, but even the Auditor General cannot figure out what this money was spent on. When we asked the government to point to where and when exactly this money was spent, it could not. Unfortunately, the answer we got was that it has no idea.

The purpose of the motion is to call on the government to be more transparent and to hand over the documents. Why are we asking for the documents? We want to ensure that the money was spent wisely.

The government says that it gave all the documents to the Auditor General, but this is the same government that was found in contempt of Parliament, which was a first in the history of Canada. The Conservative government was found in contempt of Parliament for failing to do what Parliament asked it to do, which was to provide documents on the F-35s.

Despite the fact that the government's handling of the F-35 file was a real fiasco, he has the audacity to say that the NDP is incapable of running the government. I would like to remind the government that, according to the provinces, all political parties and the federal department's research, the NDP is the party that has the smallest deficit and that is the best manager of public money. The government should take lessons from the NDP. Instead of making empty promises and boasting about being the best manager, it should look in the mirror. It might see that it has a black eye like the one I am sporting this morning.

It really has set a bad example. It has spent \$113 million in pointless advertising. Furthermore, Canadians are tired of seeing the ads. We have to wonder: Is this money well spent? The government does not know what has happened to the \$3.1 billion. That money could have been used for other things.

● (1355)

We agree that fighting terrorism is important. However, we take exception to how the government fights terrorism, and particularly Bill S-7, which we oppose. This bill goes too far in that it attacks the rights and fundamental freedoms of Canadians by undermining the charter. Unfortunately, the Liberals supported it.

The events of September 11 were very serious. Nevertheless, we should have learned that Canada is safe. In order to ensure our safety, we have to better manage money earmarked for the protection of Canadians. Instead, the Conservatives are cutting funding for border services that keep us safe. That is difficult to understand.

In closing, we must remember that this government is a poor manager of public funds.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member will have four minutes to finish his speech when debate resumes after question period.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[Translation]***SEARCH AND RESCUE AND THE PERCÉ WHARF**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, once again yesterday, the Quebec National Assembly called on the federal government to reverse its decision to close the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre.

In addition, the mayors of 35 municipalities along the St. Lawrence River are also asking Ottawa to reconsider, because the closure would compromise marine safety. Today we learned that the government may have finally decided to abandon its dangerous plan. I am asking the government to confirm now that the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre will stay open.

The federal government must also take action on the Percé wharf. In light of Ottawa's failure to understand the importance of the Percé wharf, just when tourist season is starting, the National Assembly and the RCM of Rocher-Percé are demanding that the federal government take the action needed to restore the wharf and that the government reopen it as soon as possible.

The government must heed this unanimous call by the Quebec National Assembly.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

*[English]***BROOKS BANDITS**

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to stand in this place and express my excitement that the Brooks Bandits have advanced at the RBC Cup National Junior A Championship for the first time in franchise history. The Bandits earned the right to represent the west at the national championship after defeating the Yorkton Terriers of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League 1-0 at the Crescent Point Energy Western Canada Cup.

I would like to congratulate player Mark Logan for having won the Player of the Game Award. I would also like to congratulate the head coach, Ryan Papaioannou, as well as assistant coach, Brent Gunnlaugson, for their continued support and leadership.

The Bandits are no stranger to success, as the team was ranked the number one in the Central Junior Hockey League for 21 consecutive weeks, dating back to October 2012.

Five teams will compete in the 2013 RBC Cup, including the Brooks Bandits. It will be held in Summerside, P.E.I., from May 11 to 19.

I would like to congratulate the Brooks Bandits and I wish them all the best. Go, Bandits, go.

**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETIES**

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies annually celebrates Elizabeth Fry on this week. Based in communities across Canada, including Edmonton and Ottawa, they work to improve public awareness of the circumstances of victimized and criminalized women in the criminal justice system.

Their goal is to break down negative stereotypes that exist about women who are imprisoned and institutionalized. Their members regularly testify before parliamentary committees, supporting more humane justice measures.

Why is Elizabeth Fry Week held the week preceding Mother's Day? Tragically, the majority of women who are imprisoned are mothers, most the sole supporters of their family. Far too many are aboriginal. When mothers are sentenced to prison, their children are sentenced to separation and the tragedy multiplies.

Elizabeth Fry Societies challenge Canadians to reach out and bring women into our communities so they can take responsibility and account for their actions. Their expressed hope is that a more proactive focus will enable more community-based alternatives to costly incarceration.

Please join me in expressing our gratitude and support to these Canadians who dedicate decades to pursuing a path for a more humane and constructive judicial process.

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**DONCREST PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome to Parliament Hill today the grade eight students and teachers from Doncrest Public School.

Doncrest is a remarkable centre for learning in my riding of Richmond Hill. What truly sets it apart is the dedication of its staff and administration. In addition to its focus on the important academic skills, the school has developed a tremendous eco, arts and global citizenship focus. Students graduating from Doncrest Public School do so as well-rounded young adults, positioned for success in their secondary school careers and beyond.

This week's visit to Ottawa is providing these students with exposure to an immense wealth of knowledge about our country's parliamentary process and history.

I commend the Doncrest Public School community for giving these young people, Canada's future leaders, such an enriching experience at this important stage of their lives.

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**NATIONAL NURSES WEEK**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as one whose mother was a nurse for many years, I am pleased to rise on the occasion of National Nurses Week.

*Statements by Members*

First celebrated in 1985, it highlights the contribution of nurses to the health and well-being of Canadians. The International Council of Nurses designated May 12, which was Florence Nightingale's birthday, International Nurses Day.

Registered nurses, nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists champion principles of health, equity and social justice in Canada. They provide vital care to individuals, communities and populations in multiple settings across Canada by advancing principles of primary health care. Nurses are innovators, caregivers and educators who demonstrate leadership for transformative change in the Canadian health care system. Nurses play important roles in all levels of health care, from bedside to community and public health advocacy.

During Nurses Week, let us acknowledge and thank them for their dynamic contribution in improving the health of Canadians.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, twenty thousand Canadians from all walks of life gathered here today in front of the Parliament Buildings. They are asking Canadian leaders to end discrimination against women and girls occurring through global gendercide.

Female gendercide is the systematic killing of women and girls just because they are girls.

The UN says that over 200 million girls are missing in the world right now because of female gendercide. The Canadian Medical Association revealed that this barbaric form of discrimination is occurring in Canada. The statement "It's a girl" should not be a death sentence.

Gendercide is the ultimate form of discrimination against women and girls.

A huge thanks goes to the thousands across Canada standing up against all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

I also want to thank Lucky Gill with Global Girl Power.

\* \* \*

**TIFF KIDS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, *Iron Man 3* gets the box office bucks but the students of Bowmore Public School are attracting the critical acclaim.

Nine of the twenty-six Ontario finalists for the TIFF Kids International Film Festival are from Bowmore. Congratulations to: Umer, Delaney, Sean and Maija, Lora, Varina, Safa, Samantha, Mahfuza and Katie, Emma to Jack, Jack and Jason, Julia and Laura, Kayleigh and Allegra, Leanna and Siena, Emily, Willow and Estelle and Amy. I hope they continue to use their talents and refine their craft because if they do, Hollywood had better watch out because a Canadian wave of cinematic talent is coming to wash over it.

For Ms. Jarvis, Ms. Partridge, Mr. Davis, Mr. Sekdorian and Principal Sambrook, as the son of two teachers, I know how hard they work, how much love they share and how much they give of themselves so all of their students find their voices and are encouraged and empowered to share with us their perspective on this world.

My thanks to all.

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**NATIONAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG DROP-OFF DAY**

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I had the honour to join our Minister of Health and Canadian police chiefs to proclaim National Prescription Drug Drop-Off Day to be held for the first time formally this Saturday, May 11.

Prescription drugs are designed to help, not to harm. However, despite these good intentions, the sad reality is that too many Canadians suffer from the misuse of prescription drugs.

The creation of National Drug Drop-Off Day does not cost taxpayers money, but instead takes advantage of an array of committed people who can work together to resolve a growing problem.

I thank the Minister of Health and the Minister of Public Safety for their support, bringing to life an idea that was endorsed by constituents of mine over a year ago in West Vancouver.

Today's announcement is about people working together, including a government that listens and mobilizes its citizens. It is about doctors and pharmacists who help their patients use prescription drugs wisely. It is about educators and parents who work together for the safety of our youth. It is about householders working with police chiefs for safe communities.

I encourage all Canadians on May 11 to go into their medicine cabinets and take their unused drugs to the local pharmacy. As our Minister of Health said today, "Everyone must do our part".

\* \* \*

**ORGAN DONATION**

**Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past month I have had the opportunity to partner with the Amar Karma Organ Donation Society and founder Loveen Gill on a special campaign to highlight the need for organ donors across our country.

The Amar Karma Organ Donation Society is Canada's first South Asian non-profit organization that has pledged to provide education on organ donation and encourage Canadians to become organ donors.

More than 1500 people are on the transplant wait list in Ontario alone, and the need far exceeds the number of registered donors.

A single donor can save up to 8 lives and enhance up to 75 others.

*Statements by Members*

I would like to thank all of the Amar Karma volunteers who worked tirelessly to encourage Canadians to become involved in this extraordinary cause.

The success of this campaign has showed us all that together we can make a difference.

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**HOUSE COMMONS SOCCER GAME**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** I have to admit, Mr. Speaker, last night's level of violence by the youth of our country, meaning the pages of the House of Commons, to damage the nose of the member for Brossard—La Prairie and take out our best player of the soccer game was unbelievable. Our other better player had to take him to the hospital. We were down two people. It was unbelievable.

I do want to give credit to super page Sarah Brown, MVP for the pages and to the hon. member for Welland, MVP for members of Parliament.

Although we are now 11 and 5 for members of Parliament to the pages, the reality is that the pages did win the game because I, the member from Sackville—Eastern Shore, screwed up on the last penalty kick, and I humbly regret that.

Humble MPs wish to bow to the mighty pages this year and congratulate them on a fantastic victory.

On behalf of the House of Commons, I would like to thank them for their service, and God bless.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**PAKISTAN**

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to express our government's concern regarding the recent violence and targeted attacks in Pakistan in advance of this weekend's general election. Our sympathy goes out to the victims and their families.

The deliberate targeting of candidates by terrorist groups in Pakistan is an attack on the democratic rights of all candidates, democratic institutions and governance. Canada commends the commitment to democracy of the more than 4,600 candidates standing for office federally, the 11,000 standing provincially and the 86 million Pakistani citizens registered to vote. We express our unequivocal support for free, credible and transparent elections in Pakistan.

The 2013 general elections are an historic moment for that country where political authority is being passed from one elected government to another. We believe it is essential for Pakistan's continued democratic development that women and men in all parts of Pakistan feel safe to commit their energy to the democratic process by standing for election and voting without fear.

**WORKPLACE SAFETY**

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, 21 years ago today Canadians bore witness to one of our worst disasters in workplace history when an explosion ripped through the Westray coal mine in Plymouth, Nova Scotia. Like all workplace accidents, this tragedy could have been avoided. Instead, due to poor government oversight and corporate neglect, 26 men who went to work that day did not return home. Since that terrible day, many thousands more Canadians have lost their lives when they were simply trying to earn a living.

The recent events in Bangladesh serve as a poignant reminder of what is at stake.

In Canada we still lose an average of three workers every day.

Each and every member of the House has accepted the responsibility to do better. We cannot just lower our heads and remember those who have been lost. We must rise to the challenge and protect those who are still here.

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**EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA**

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and update Canadians on the status of the Experimental Lakes Area situated in the great Kenora riding.

Our government has signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Institute for Sustainable Development to take over as operator of the facilities.

This agreement is the result of many months of confidential negotiations led by the federal government and is a major milestone in the transition of the facility to a third-party operator. It also includes provisions to support scientific research at the facility through the summer during this transition to an operator.

Our government has been clear. We want to see the facility continue under a new operator and we are working hard to deliver on that commitment. IISD is well-suited to operate the Experimental Lakes Area with excellent capacity, expertise and international reputation to take on this important work. We understand that IISD will continue discussions with the province, the landowner, on an agreement to operate the site going forward and we hope these discussions are successful.

I want to thank the constituents of the great Kenora riding for their input and patience throughout this process.

\* \* \*

**EMMA VAN NOSTRAND**

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the passing of a young Cape Breton role model, Emma van Nostrand, who died suddenly while taking part in the Toronto Marathon.

### Oral Questions

An extremely focused and determined young woman, Emma put forth a passionate effort in whatever she took on. Whether it was her studies, her running or her family, she was always looking to the future. Being an honour student, she went to France where she studied this past semester before returning to Riverview High School, where she was to graduate with her classmates.

Riverview High School, with Principal Joe Chisholm, staff and students have a great spirit, but now that spirit is in mourning.

One can never begin to understand the tragedy of losing someone so young. It is hoped they can find some comfort in the positive impact she has made on many in her short life.

I ask the House to join me in extending our condolences to her mother Katherine, father Steven, sisters Katy, Alyssa, brother Daniel and to all her family and friends.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

### VETERANS

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it took three days for the leader of the New Democratic Party to remove socialism from his party's constitution and one day to kick the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North from his party for standing up for his constituents.

Veterans have been waiting 28 days for the leader of the NDP, who has not yet retracted his henchman's hurtful comments about Canadian World War I veterans. Instead of a retraction, he sent his Quebec MP to slam veterans by questioning the need to remember their sacrifice in the first place.

We are at 28 days. How much more do veterans, like myself, have to take?

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### CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we can see proof again of Conservatives' love for control of everything and everyone with the revelation today that the government has spent \$2.5 million keeping tabs on whom? Their members of Parliament. To quote the member for Barrie, "I am not sure why I would be followed or tracked". One would think that law-abiding citizens like my friend from Barrie should not have to worry about being spied on by his own government. Losing track of billions of dollars, millions of dollars in contracts being handed out in secret and a Senate that continues to rip off Canadians blind; no wonder Conservatives want to control the debate.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development tried to justify shutting down debate in Canada's Parliament for a record-breaking 33 times last night by saying "this motion does not shut down debate. It controls the debate". Thankfully, tonight the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development will face four hours of cross-examination by Canada's New Democrats. He cannot control this debate, he cannot shut down this truth and finally in 2015 Canada will get the government it deserves.

### NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during a time of global economic uncertainty, Canadians have placed their trust in our Conservative government to keep taxes low, balance the budget and create jobs, growth and long-term economic prosperity. It is clear the last thing Canadians need is increased taxes and spending. Unfortunately, this is exactly what the leader of the NDP proposes to do.

The NDP platform clearly demonstrates that the leader of the NDP wants to impose a \$20 billion carbon tax. This massive new NDP tax plan would increase the price of everything, including gas, groceries and electricity, while disproportionately targeting the poor, seniors and rural Canadians. It is shameful. If this massive new carbon tax were not enough, the NDP also proposes to bring in an additional \$56 billion in wasteful new spending. The last thing Canadians need are the failed socialist policies of the past.

It is time for the leader of the NDP to come clean with Canadians about his \$20-billion carbon tax and his \$56 billion of proposed wasteful spending. He can do it right now.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister may have been confused by this question yesterday, so let us try this again.

If he has nothing to hide, will he support the NDP motion calling for the release of all documents related to the missing \$3.1 billion?

[English]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course, that is not what the Auditor General said at all and that is obviously why we reject the motion. In fact, the Auditor General has made certain suggestions to the government, recommendations on how to improve reporting on this matter. The government will follow, and is following, those recommendations.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, at first, they tried to explain how they lost track of \$3.1 billion. They said that it was an internal matter. Then, they said it was a categorization error. The Conservatives definitely want to keep this internal categorization error a secret. If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, then he should come clean.

*Oral Questions*

How can Canadians trust the Conservatives and their government when they have not lifted a finger to try to find the missing \$3.1 billion?

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Auditor General himself has rejected the NDP leader's allegation. The Auditor General has made recommendations on how to improve reporting in the future. Clearly, the government will follow those recommendations.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy, Mac Harb and Patrick Brazeau are all very good friends of the Liberals and the Conservatives, and they were caught red-handed making dubious claims for hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money.

Once they were caught, their only punishment was to pay back the money. They did not receive any punishment for betraying Canadians' trust or anything that would deter them from doing it again.

If you want to commit fraud, all you have to do is get appointed as a Liberal or Conservative senator and you will not be punished. Is that the message the government is trying to send?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, external auditors and experts examined all these expenditures and said that the rules were not clear. However, the Senate decided that it expects better judgment from certain senators and that all of the money in question will be repaid to the government.

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, here is what is clear. Even the bogus investigation by his hand-picked cronies in the Senate found that Mike Duffy does not maintain a primary residence in Prince Edward Island. That means Mr. Duffy has not been a resident of Prince Edward Island in nearly 40 years, even though he was chosen for the Senate four years ago. The Constitution requires that a senator "be resident in the Province for which he is appointed". The Conservatives now admit, through their own bogus investigation, that Mr. Duffy is not a resident of P.E. I., yet still say that he is qualified to be a senator from P.E.I.

Why is the Prime Minister allowing this continuous fraud by the Conservatives in the Senate?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, an independent external auditor was brought in to examine all of these expenses. He looked obviously at the expenses of three particular senators who have had some difficulty. The auditor has concluded that the rules in place were not clear; however, the Senate itself has decided it expects better judgment from the senators. Senator Duffy some months ago repaid the money, and the Senate has decided that other senators will be expected to similarly repay those amounts.

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on another very serious matter, Jane Kittmer was diagnosed with breast cancer while receiving EI maternity leave benefits after the birth of her second child. Jane has beaten cancer, but for two and a half years she has had to fight the government for the EI sick leave benefit that she has paid into. Six weeks ago, the Prime Minister said this in the House, "the government is looking at a way to resolve this case". Nothing has been done so far. Can the Prime Minister please tell Jane why not?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me just remind members of the facts here, which is that the government has recently changed the law to deal with such cases in the future. This particular case is occurring under rules that existed under the previous government. However, as I said before in the House and I reiterate today, the government is committed to addressing and resolving that matter, and we continue to work on that.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while families are trying desperately to help their children find a summer job, the Conservatives' priorities are elsewhere.

Instead of helping youths and middle-class families, the Conservatives are wasting more than \$3,000 of taxpayers' money a day to spy on their own members in the media.

The question I would like to ask the Prime Minister is this: how many people asked him to waste the equivalent of a job a day to spy on his own Conservative MPs in the media?

• (1425)

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, to go back to the premise of the question, in fact, we just today announced the launch of Canada summer jobs 2013. It is a program that will create 36,000 jobs for young Canadians right across this great country. Not only will they get the experience that is so necessary for jobs in the future, but they will also get financial assistance to help pay for those careers so that they can develop the skills that are needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the U.S., Japan, Australia, Sweden and other countries are all expecting economic growth better than Canada. Young Canadians especially are falling behind. There are 212,000 fewer of them who are working today than before the recession, 404,000 are looking for jobs, and this paranoid isolated government wastes \$23 million, \$32,000 every day, to spy on the media and its own backbench. For that spy money, the government could have triggered 7,600 summer jobs. Why did it not do that?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, apart from the Canada summer jobs program that we launched today creating 36,000 jobs for young Canadians, this year alone we are helping 60,000 young people get jobs. Beyond that, since 2006, our government has helped over two million young people get jobs and get the skills and training for those jobs so they can contribute, participate and benefit from the workplace.

\* \* \*

## STATISTICS CANADA

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is wasting \$32,000 tax dollars every day to spy on the media and its own backbench. It wastes another \$95,000 in tax dollars on every government ad during hockey games. It vandalized the census and it now costs \$25 million more to get less data. In 43% of Saskatchewan, it is a total failure. They have lost the town of Davin altogether and so Davin loses its municipal funding. Will the government compensate Davin for this Conservative ideological stupidity?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, our government is committed to collecting statistical data while protecting Canadians' privacy. This is the principle.

That being said, the survey provides useful and usable data for communities, representing 97% of the Canadian population. More Canadians responded to this survey than ever before. Statistics Canada just said yesterday, "At the national, provincial level, all of this information is pretty solid. It's high quality."

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives still cannot tell us what the missing \$3.1 billion was used for. Where is that money? Is it under a rock, between the cushions of a couch or in the toilet of an embarrassed mayor's cousin?

The Auditor General's report is clear: the Treasury Board stopped tracking expenditures made under the anti-terrorism initiative in 2010. Yesterday, I asked the President of the Treasury Board what has been happening since 2010. He was unable to answer me.

He lost \$3.1 billion because he failed to track spending. How much more will he lose if he is still not tracking expenditures?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, all of the information for every year from 2001 to 2012 can be found in the public accounts.

The Auditor General clearly stated:

[English]

We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way it should not have been.

He went on to say that departments:

...are responsible for accounting and reporting their spending through the Public Accounts of Canada...

He said that departments would have undergone normal control procedures in those departments. So there are internal controls in departments about spending, and they would go through all of those normal processes.

Those are the words of the Auditor General.

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Give me a break, Mr. Speaker. Do we need to send the UPAC to search the President of the Treasury Board's office to get answers?

He still thinks that quoting the Auditor General out of context is going to convince people. Come on. The President of the Treasury Board lost track of \$3.1 billion. It is therefore up to him to answer to Canadians, in his own words.

His department maintains that a new expenditure monitoring system will not be implemented until 2014. That means four full years without proper monitoring.

Can the President of the Treasury Board tell us how much money has been spent on the anti-terrorism initiative since 2010?

● (1430)

[English]

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks whether I should be quoting the Auditor General. Who else should I be quoting?

He goes on to say:

We didn't identify anything that would cause us to say that we felt that anything was going on outside of these processes.

He is very clear that the opposition characterization of these funds as lost in any way is completely inappropriate. He indicated that there was nothing:

...that gave us cause for concern that the money...was used in any way that it should not have been.

Those are the words of the Auditor General.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board continues to simply choose the quotes he likes from the Auditor General. He keeps saying that public accounts has the money.

Here is what the Auditor General actually said:

The information reported annually in the public accounts was at an aggregate level and...not separately reported as a distinct (or separate) line item. Furthermore... much of that information is now archived and unavailable.

Why is the President of the Treasury Board claiming the money is in the public accounts when the Auditor General says no, it is not?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will remind the hon. member that the public accounts are tabled in this chamber each and every year from 2001 to 2009, or if he wishes, 2001 to 2012. These are a matter of public record.

Parliamentarians vote on the public accounts. This is part of our responsibility as parliamentarians. Those are clear. In fact, the Auditor General says that each department is responsible for its own spending and “normal control procedures in those departments”.

Again, the Auditor General said:

...so there are internal controls in departments about spending and they would go through all of those normal processes.

I rely on him.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, clearly the department of the President of the Treasury Board did not do those controls, or it would know where the \$3.1 billion went in the first place.

The government has abandoned accountability. The Auditor General said this money was not reported to Parliament, and contrary to what the President of the Treasury Board says, it was not even reported to cabinet, the Auditor General said.

Earlier today, the Conservative member for Nipissing—Timiskaming said the billions of dollars would be identified in “due course”.

Can the President of the Treasury Board tell us when “due course” will eventually find its way to this House?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I hate to disagree with the hon. member. I certainly do not want to be disagreeable.

However, again I will quote the Auditor General:

...[departments] are responsible for accounting and reporting their spending through the Public Accounts of Canada....

That is a direct quote from the Auditor General. He said that spending within the departments would have undergone normal control procedures in those departments. He concludes:

We didn't identify anything that would cause us to say that we felt that anything was going on outside of those processes.

These are the words of the Auditor General.

\* \* \*

#### **PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, here is a reason the government needs to find that \$3.1 billion.

This week the Ontario Superior Court ordered a further increase in the award of damages the government must pay Envoy Relocation Services, now over \$40 million in total.

In addition, it ordered the government to pay the full costs of \$4.7 million because, in the words of the court:

reprehensible...conduct of the...[Crown] supplemented and aggravated by...conduct during the litigation.

How can the government defend this reprehensible behaviour, leaving taxpayers to foot the bill?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will leave the characterization of the former Liberal government's actions to the member opposite.

However, as the member knows, these actions did occur under the former government. Since this is still before the court, I am not going to comment any further.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when I asked the President of the Treasury Board about the \$2.4 billion in consultation contracts awarded in secret, often without details and sometimes to companies with unknown numbers, he told me “I may be able to find other ways of achieving this transparency.” I should hope so. That is his job.

There is no information available on the awarding of 90% of the consultation contracts disclosed. Canadians have no idea how their money is being spent and who it is being given to.

Can the minister tell us what practical measures he intends to take to improve the management of the public purse?

● (1435)

[*English*]

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does make a fair point. I do not think it is too much to ask that when departments engage in management contracts for perfectly appropriate reasons, such as first nations health branch using nurses, for instance, that there be a line or two added for publication on exactly what the contract is.

I agree with the hon. member, and I think we should require this in the future.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives cannot even keep track of billions of dollars in contracts, but they are the champions of monitoring their own MPs.

We now know that they are going so far as to waste millions of taxpayers' dollars on media monitoring to keep tabs on their own backbench MPs.

We are talking about \$2.4 million of our taxes to track 65 of their own MPs. It is ridiculous.

Can the Conservatives explain how they could spend and waste so much of the taxpayers' money?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member might be disappointed to find out the media monitoring services are used and accessed by the government but that they are also used and accessed by the opposition.

*Oral Questions*

They are there because on this side of the House, we do want to be aware of all of the media reporting about our members of Parliament, because we are very proud of the work they are doing. They appear in many articles across the media, doing excellent work on behalf of the government, and we are happy to receive those clippings.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make it clear that the Conservatives spent millions spying on their own backbench while they lost \$3.1 billion. Then they funnelled another \$2.4 billion out the back door in contracts they cannot explain. Today, Conservative and Liberal senators are found guilty of ripping off the taxpayers.

The Conservative government seems to think it is above accountability. It is a simple question: When is the Prime Minister going to take responsibility for this staggering level of incompetence? Why are there no consequences?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the independent expert audit was tabled in the Senate.

Its principal finding was, of course, that the rules were not clear. The Senate has already actually taken action to strengthen and improve those rules. Of course, from our perspective, the government expects the Senate to act and I understand the Senate is acting to ensure a higher standard of judgment applies.

Thus, the senators in question are being asked to repay the sums that were claimed, which were deemed inappropriate by the Senate.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there they go again. The Senate was ripping off the taxpayers because they just were not very bright. How is that accountability?

We have Brazeau now, and Duffy and Harb who ripped off the taxpayers for close to \$200,000. We still do not know what Ms. Wallin ripped the taxpayers off for.

If an ordinary Canadian engaged in behaviour like that, they would call it fraud, and the authorities would be brought in. Even some of the senators think the cops should be brought in.

Where is the accountability? Will the government insist on accountability? Will it insist that documents are turned over to the police and that these people are held accountable for ripping off the taxpayers? It is a simple question.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the independent expert auditors actually do not agree with the assessment of the hon. member as to what took place. They indicated that the rules were not clear. As a result, the Senate is taking action to correct them, but certainly, the expert audit found no evidence of anything that would be approaching criminal activity.

That being said, the expectation of this government is that the spirit of the rules must be respected. For that reason, Liberal Senator Mac Harb and independent Patrick Brazeau are expected to repay the funds they claimed inappropriately, as was done by another senator some months ago.

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every month, this government wastes \$100,000 of taxpayers' money on media monitoring to track its own MPs. It is incredible.

In the meantime, it is eliminating jobs for our young students who are looking for work, putting a greater burden on the families that support them. This \$100,000 represents 30 students who will not have a summer job.

Why is this government wasting taxpayers' money in such a partisan way instead of finding jobs for our young students who so badly need them?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, maybe the member missed the announcement, but today we announced the launch of Canada summer jobs, which will be creating 36,000 jobs for students.

Beyond that, in budget 2013, our economic action plan, there is funding for the creation of 5,000 internships for graduates who have had trouble finding work. Unfortunately, the Liberals may bray about it, but they do nothing to actually help young people get jobs, because they are voting against that budget.

● (1440)

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, despite their self-congratulations, the Conservatives are supporting only half of the student summer jobs they used to. Meanwhile, they are finding \$3,300 a day for media monitoring of their own MPs. Each single day of monitoring would fund a student job for the entire summer. A day spent peering over MPs' shoulders is deemed more important than a student's job.

Will big brother please stop wasting taxpayers' money on monitoring its own members and hire a summer student to help figure out how to do free Google alerts?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on top of the 36,000 jobs being created this summer through the Canada summer jobs program, there is more to helping young people to get a job, like apprenticeships. In fact, through our apprenticeship incentive and completion grants, there are almost 400,000 of those that have gone out to young Canadians to help them prepare for the skills and jobs that are in high demand, jobs for these young people. That is really helping them.

The Liberals should have supported those initiatives.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, half as many summer student jobs now than when they took power is shameful.

*Oral Questions*

Let us put it in perspective. Conservatives spent \$3,300—three thousand three hundred taxpayers' dollars—every day just to monitor what their backbench MPs have to say, because they have to toe the party line. They have to make sure they regurgitate the PMO talking points.

It is shameful what they are doing over there. Every day, that is a summer student job that they are gassing. Why do they not back off on what they are doing with the monitoring and give summer students a job rather than looking after the parents at the PMO?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals truly wanted to help young people get jobs then they would want them to get the skills they need for those jobs that are in demand. That makes it pretty difficult to explain why the Liberals voted against the apprenticeship incentive grant for young people. Those 400,000 apprenticeship incentive and completion grants have been distributed.

They voted against funding for the pathways program that is helping 10,000 young people get the skills they need and get connected with the job market. They also voted against improvements to the Canada student loan program, expanding its eligibility. We are helping young people get the skills they need.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, information obtained by *Le Soleil* indicates that the Conservatives are preparing to backtrack on their irresponsible decision to close the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre.

Under the pretext of eliminating the deficit, the Conservatives wanted to close the only marine rescue sub-centre providing services in French and thus put lives at risk. This centre responds to more than 1,500 distress calls every year.

Can the minister confirm that there will be absolutely no changes to the activities of the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre now or in the future?

[English]

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have always been clear that safety is our number one priority, and certainly language capability is very important for the centre in Quebec.

We are not going to comment on speculation. The safety of mariners remains our top priority. The Canadian Coast Guard will delay consolidation of the eastern portion of the Quebec region until it is confident that a bilingual capacity is there in the system.

[Translation]

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we still do not have a clear answer. If they would talk to one another instead of spying on one another, we might not be in this predicament. We are talking about public safety. A responsible government must provide some reassurance and not leave the people who use the river and the

centre's employees and their families in limbo. Keeping the centre open is the right thing to do.

Can the minister confirm that he will not transfer the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre to Halifax, Trenton or Montreal, yes or no?

• (1445)

[English]

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are making: a responsible decision. The Canadian Coast Guard will delay consolidation of the eastern portion of the Quebec region until it is competent in the bilingual capacity of the system.

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Conservatives greatly reduced the search and rescue capacity in this country by also closing the maritime rescue centres, like the one in St. John's, Newfoundland. Massive protests and public outcries did not stop the Conservatives from shutting down the St. John's rescue centre, which received more than 500 calls for help a year. Now they are starting to see the impact of their irresponsible, unexplainable choices.

Will the Conservatives reverse their shortsighted decision to close the maritime rescue sub-centre in St. John's?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we closed the sub-centre in St. John's a year ago, and the facility in Halifax has been handling the work quite well. We have had no problems with the service at all.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that when it comes to listening to Canadians, the government has a tin ear.

The Kitsilano Coast Guard station was unceremoniously closed because the government wanted to save a buck. This closure is putting the lives of Canadians at risk. New Democrats have been fighting against these closures while local Conservative MPs have gone silent. Why will they not listen to their local communities and reopen the station?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong, as usual. We are confident that the changes in Vancouver have not had any negative impact. In fact, since the closure of the Kitsilano base on February 19, the Canadian Coast Guard on Sea Island has responded to 38 search and rescue maritime distress incidents in the greater Vancouver area. These incidents involved 48 lives at risk and the reaction time was less than 10 minutes in each of those incidents.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has been working hard to ensure that the Experimental Lakes Area facility is transferred to a non-governmental operator better suited to conducting the type of world-class research that can be undertaken at this facility. The federal government has been leading negotiations in order to secure an operator with an international track record. This matters so much to my constituents in Winnipeg South Centre.

Could the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans kindly update the House on the important milestone reached today for the Experimental Lakes Area?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank both the member for Winnipeg South Centre and the member for Kenora for their continued hard work on this file.

I am pleased to announce that we have just signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, an internationally renowned public policy research institute. This agreement is an important step for the future operations of ELA and will allow us to support research projects during the upcoming summer season. Our government looks forward to working with IISD on the future of this facility.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**STATISTICS CANADA**

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one more Conservative decision has turned out badly for Canadians: the decision to abolish the long form census. The data are of such low quality that Statistics Canada no longer has information on more than one-quarter of Canadian municipalities. Some 1,128 communities, mostly in rural areas, will not have the statistical data they need to plan their development properly.

The Conservatives do not believe that political decisions should be based on the facts, but why penalize the municipalities and their decision-making process?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is determined to collect statistical data and, at the same time, protect Canadians' privacy. That is a good principle. The current survey has provided useful and usable data representing 97% of Canada's population. There were more respondents to this survey than the previous one.

Once again, I want to point out what Statistics Canada said just yesterday about this, namely, that at the national and provincial level, all of this information is pretty solid and high quality.

• (1450)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, here is what Statistics Canada actually said about the household survey: "It will not, however, provide a level of quality that would have been achieved through a mandatory long-form census". Remember? That is the one the Conservatives gutted.

The data quality was so poor that they could not even report on 1,100 Canadian communities. In Saskatchewan, they reported on only 57% of municipalities. People in Saskatchewan want their tax dollars spent wisely, using the best information possible. Will the Conservatives now reverse their short-sighted decision to eliminate the long-form census?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to collecting statistical data while protecting Canadians' privacy, and this is a good principle. We know the survey provides useful and usable data for communities representing 97% of the Canadian population. More Canadians responded to this form than to the previous form. As recently as yesterday, StatsCan said that "at the national, provincial level, all of this information is pretty solid. It's high quality".

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, six weeks ago, the Prime Minister gave his word that he would resolve the case of the mother with cancer who was denied EI benefits, but as we have already heard, Jane Kittmer is still waiting, with no word from the government.

When are the Conservatives going to follow up on the Prime Minister's own commitment in this House? Will Conservatives drop the appeal and resolve this case? Is the government prepared to do the right thing for Jane Kittmer today?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should be aware that our government has changed the rules so that people who unfortunately find themselves in situations like this, going forward, will be taken care of through employment insurance. This particular case occurred under the previous government's rules. That being said, we are looking at ways to successfully resolve this situation.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have butchered the employment insurance program, and people like the mother with cancer are paying the price.

What disturbs me most is their twisted logic. When unemployed people want to claim benefits, they are asked to show proof that they have lost their jobs. However, when the Conservatives lose track of \$3.1 billion, which is a rather large sum, they tell us it is not important that there are no documents.

Why treat employment insurance claimants like criminals and let ministers off easy? Why is there a double standard?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, workers all across Canada expect us to respect the money they pay into the employment insurance system. That is why we take it as our great responsibility to protect the integrity of the system, in order to ensure that the money will be there for unemployed people who qualify, when they need it.

\* \* \*

[English]

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the democratic reform file is a mess. It took the Conservatives five years to seek the Supreme Court's opinion on Senate reform. The political loans accountability act is so bad that the Conservative-dominated committee refused to consider it for six months. They tried to table an electoral reform bill without consulting the Chief Electoral Officer.

With so many failures, will the Minister of State for Democratic Reform give his assurance that they will properly consult the Chief Electoral Officer before tabling their next bill?

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the audit that was recently released by Elections Canada highlights widespread errors in Elections Canada's operations in the last election. As I have indicated before, we will be bringing forward amendments to the law in the not-too-distant future.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in March, we found out that the Conservatives were fighting Jane Kittmer, new mother and cancer survivor, in court in order to avoid paying her sickness benefits. They were totally ignoring the umpire's decision in 2007 in the Rougas case, which showed that the government had been misinterpreting the law tabled by the Liberals in 2002.

When the Prime Minister was confronted with this disgraceful action, he said, "the government is looking at a way to resolve this".

Here is a simple question: Will the minister get Ms. Kittmer her benefits now, or do the Prime Minister's words mean absolutely nothing?

• (1455)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was our government that did change the rules so that individuals who find themselves in this unfortunate situation will have the support of employment insurance going forward. That being said, this case was under the old rules brought in by the Liberal government. We are looking for ways to resolve the situation.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in 2007, this House voted unanimously for Jordan's principle, ensuring that the care of first nations children would not get lost in

jurisdictional squabbling between different levels of government. However, the Conservatives are now breaking that commitment. They are appealing the Federal Court's decision that would actually force them to apply Jordan's principle to the case of a severely disabled teenager from Pictou Landing reserve.

Why is the government turning its back on its own vote at the moment it matters most?

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to ensuring the health and safety of aboriginal children. We have launched a new aboriginal health project and have designated new resources to improve the health of children on reserves. In this case, we believe we have met our obligations, and Canada has decided to appeal to ensure that individual cases are treated in accordance with provincial standards.

It is the opposition that should answer for opposing our matrimonial real property rights legislation that would protect aboriginal women and children on reserve.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, justice delayed is justice denied.

Aboriginal children in need deserve better, their families deserve better, and Jeremy and Maurina deserve better. The Conservatives' decision to appeal the court's ruling, when the government publicly declared it would respect Jordan's principle is downright shameful, especially when the amount of money spent on the appeal would pay for Jeremy's care many times over.

Why is the government opposing equality for aboriginal children?

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, we are absolutely committed to the health, safety and protection of children across Canada, but for these purposes, on reserve. That is why we have taken steps to make those investments in aboriginal health projects focused on children, and that is why we believe we must appeal to ensure that individual cases are treated in accordance with provincial standards.

On the matrimonial real property matter, it is time for the NDP to put down its talking points and support the protection of women and children on reserve.

*Oral Questions***MULTICULTURALISM**

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal Party critic for multiculturalism put out a shocking statement that has caused great offence among Canadians of Ukrainian origin. He insulted the memory of all those who fought for Ukraine's independence and died as a result of Communist oppression at the hands of Soviet Russia, by suggesting that the Brezhnev era holiday marking the unwelcome return of the Soviet domination of Ukraine should be celebrated.

Would the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism tell us why this is so obviously offensive to the Ukrainian community and why, unlike the Liberal leader, we condemn this ignorant statement—

**An hon. member:** Insulting. Insulting.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is right to point out that members of Canada's Ukrainian community were shocked to see the Liberal Party issue a statement celebrating the Soviet holiday created by Communist chairman Leonid Brezhnev, Victory Day, in Ukraine.

Let us be clear. We Canadians celebrate the victory of freedom over Nazi terror on VE Day, on May 8. However, for millions, Soviet Victory Day represents the moment when the Iron Curtain came down on the captive nations of Eastern Europe, beginning decades of Communist oppression. What kind of bizarre historical ignorance could lead the Liberal Party to tell Ukrainians in Canada to celebrate this Soviet holiday? I encourage the Liberal Party to retract this insensitive statement and to apologize.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a grave situation seems to be developing off the coast of Change Islands in Newfoundland and Labrador. The *Manolis L.* is a sunken large vessel 270 feet under water. It contains, currently, 460 tonnes of fuel oil and 60 tonnes of diesel. Two leaks have now been identified, and the situation with the leaking oil is getting worse. Fishermen along the entire coast are calling my office, witnessing this oil coming to surface.

So far, the solution is to patch the holes, but what if the situation gets worse? What is the minister prepared to do if the situation gets much worse than what we are seeing now?

• (1500)

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Coast Guard continues to work closely with its federal partners to address the threat of marine pollution from this particular wreck. The Canadian Coast Guard has been on scene since it was reported on March 31. The Canadian Coast Guard will continue to actively monitor the situation and is assessing the best approach for reducing the pollution threat.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Randle Reef in Hamilton Harbour is one of North America's most toxic sites. The deadline to sign a cleanup agreement between the federal and provincial governments and local Hamilton stakeholders is fast approaching. However, the Hamilton Port Authority has now raised last-minute liability issues that threaten to derail the negotiations.

Will the Minister of the Environment please inform the House and Hamiltonians what action he will take to ensure that this critical environmental cleanup takes place?

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a timely question.

Randle Reef is the largest contaminated sediment site in Canadian waters of the Great Lakes. Remediation is a priority of our government. Environment Canada is leading this project, moving forward aggressively to complete project implementation agreements with all participating organizations, including the port authority, to ensure that this important project continues to move ahead and not establish any schedule issues.

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**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians know and expect that we will always do our utmost to serve and help veterans, especially when they are affected by mental health issues.

Our government is keen to work with valued partners, like Steve Critchley and Jim Marland who run Can Praxis based out of Rocky Mountain House in my riding, who are helping to take our service one step further.

As we move toward the end of mental health week, could the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell the House about how our government is listening to veterans and launching exciting new partnerships to help veterans with mental health issues?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Wetaskiwin and all members of the House for supporting Korean War veterans day in the House.

I also want to thank the member for raising the question of mental health for our whole society and more specifically, veterans.

[*Translation*]

There were three announcements about partnership agreements this week. The first is with Ryerson University, where 150 clinicians will provide adapted care for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. Another partnership is with St. John Ambulance to provide animal therapy for our veterans in long-term care. The third agreement, with Can Praxis, in the hon. member's riding, will offer equine therapy to veterans with operational stress injuries.

## TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for years, the residents of Vaudreuil-Soulanges have been asking for better train service.

They are fed up with traffic jams on autoroutes 20 and 40 and construction on the Turcot and Saint-Pierre interchanges. Yesterday, the Agence métropolitaine de transport announced that new trains would not be available until 2015.

The NDP proposed a pragmatic infrastructure and transportation plan, but this government voted against it.

What do the Conservatives plan to do to relieve traffic congestion in the Montreal area?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, autoroutes 20 and 40, the Agence métropolitaine de transport and the Turcot interchange all have one thing in common: they all come under provincial jurisdiction.

My colleague does not understand federal and provincial jurisdictions. The hon. members on the other side of the House absolutely do not understand this.

We respect the provinces. We are going to continue working with the Province of Quebec and its representatives, and we are going to respect their choices.

\* \* \*

## 1982 REPATRIATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers want the truth about the repatriation of the Constitution and how it was forced on Quebecers.

Two-thirds of Quebecers are not buying the government's claim that this is an old debate, and they want Ottawa to open the archives and shed light on the serious irregularities alleged by historian Frédéric Bastien, in particular that Supreme Court judges allegedly violated fundamental democratic principles.

Instead of insulting two-thirds of Quebecers by saying that they are wrong to want to shed the light on these events, will the Prime Minister—

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member obviously wants Quebec to separate from Canada, but we want a strong Quebec within a united Canada. It is clear that we will not agree.

We are not interested in rehashing old constitutional squabbles, and neither are Quebecers, despite what my colleague says. The

## *Business of the House*

Supreme Court did its job and handed down a decision. We will continue to work on making Canada a strong and united country.

\* \* \*

## PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of a delegation from the National Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Tunisia, as part of the G8 Deauville Partnership.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** The member for Scarborough—Agincourt is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, Ukrainian Victory Day is a national holiday in the Ukraine. I have been in contact with the community. A letter has been issued, which says:

Thank you for your letter in which you expressed concerns with respect to my Statement on "Victory Day in Ukraine".

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I have not heard anything that would suggest that this is a point of order. It sounds like a continuation of debate, which the member is free to do, but not on a point of order. Perhaps he can do it in a future question period or maybe make a statement.

The hon. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, adding insult to injury, the member is referring to this proud and independent country as "the Ukraine". It is not a province of Russia or the Soviet Union, it is Ukraine.

**The Speaker:** That was also not a point of order.

I fear we are on the cusp of entering into an elongated debate on this. If members have points of order that they would like to address, I will hear them after the Thursday question.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is not a point of order, but it is accurate in that case.

[*Translation*]

I would like to ask the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons what is on the agenda for tomorrow and when we return after the constituency week.

[*English*]

Before doing that, I would like to go back to something that was talked about just prior to question period.

*Business of the House*

I would like to ask the House leader across the way if he agrees with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, who said just yesterday as his government was in the process of killing off debate yet again, for a record 33rd time, on a top-down paternalistic bill for first nations communities, that time allocation and the shutting down of debate is not a way of actually cutting off debate, it is just a way of controlling debate.

It is an astounding revelation coming from a Conservative minister, perhaps one that was too truthful for my friend across the way's own liking. The Conservative government is cutting off debate and abusing the basic democratic principles of the House more than any other government in Canadian history.

I look forward to the debate in the committee of the whole tonight to hear what the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has to say to defend himself.

[Translation]

I would also like the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to tell us when the next committee of the whole will be, when the Minister of Natural Resources will inform us of his spending priorities.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will continue the debate on today's opposition motion from the NDP. Pursuant to the rules of the House, time is allocated and there will be a vote after the two-day debate.

Tomorrow we will resume the third reading debate on Bill S-9, the Nuclear Terrorism Act. As I mentioned on Monday, I am optimistic that we will pass that important bill this week.

Should we have extra time on Friday, we will take up Bill C-48, the Technical Tax Amendments Act, 2012, at report stage and third reading.

• (1510)

[English]

When we come back from constituency week, I am keen to see the House make a number of accomplishments for Canadians. Allow me to make it clear to the House what the government's priorities are.

Our government will continue to focus on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. In doing that, we will be working on reforming the temporary foreign worker program to put the interests of Canadians first; implementing tax credits for Canadians who donate to charity and parents who adopt; extending tax credits for Canadians who take care of loved ones in their homes; supporting veterans and their families by improving the balance for determining veterans' benefits; moving closer to equality for Canadians living on reserves through better standards for drinking water, which my friend apparently objects to; giving women on reserves the rights and protections that other Canadian women have had for decades, something to which he also objects; and keeping our streets and communities safer by making real improvements to the witness protection program. We will of course do more.

[Translation]

Before we rise for the summer, we will tackle the bills currently listed on the order paper, as well as any new bills which might get

introduced. After Victoria Day, we will give priority consideration to bills that have already been considered by House committees.

For instance, we will look at Bill C-48, which I just mentioned, Bill C-51, the Safer Witnesses Act, Bill C-52, the Fair Rail Freight Service Act, and Bill S-2, the Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act, which I understand could be reported back soon.

[English]

I look forward also to getting back from committee and passing Bill C-60, the economic action plan 2013 act, no. 1; Bill S-8, the safe drinking water for first nations act; and Bill C-21, the political loans accountability act.

We have, of course, recently passed Bill C-15, the strengthening military justice in the defence of Canada act, and Bill S-7, the combating terrorism act. Hopefully, tomorrow we will pass Bill S-9, the nuclear terrorism act.

Finally, we will also work toward second reading of several bills including Bill C-12, the safeguarding Canadians' personal information act; Bill C-49, the Canadian museum of history act; Bill C-54, the not criminally responsible reform act; Bill C-56, the combating counterfeit products act; Bill C-57, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act; Bill C-61, the offshore health and safety act; Bill S-6, the first nations elections act; Bill S-10, the prohibiting cluster munitions act; Bill S-12, the incorporation by reference in regulations act; Bill S-13, the port state measures agreement implementation act; Bill S-14, the fighting foreign corruption act; Bill S-15, the expansion and conservation of Canada's national parks act, which establishes Sable Island National Park; and Bill S-17, the tax conventions implementation act, 2013.

I believe and I think most Canadians who send us here expect us to do work and they want to see us vote on these things and get things done. These are constructive measures to help all Canadians and they certainly expect us to do our job and actually get to votes on these matters.

I hope we will be able to make up enough time to take up all of these important bills when we come back, so Canadians can benefit from many parliamentary accomplishments by the members of Parliament they have sent here this spring.

Before taking my seat, let me formally designate, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), Tuesday, May 21, as the day appointed for the consideration in a committee of the whole of all votes under Natural Resources in the main estimates for the final year ending March 31, 2014. This would be the second of two such evenings following on tonight's proceedings.

## POINTS OF ORDER

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, about a month and a half ago, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development had referred to a letter of support written by me on behalf of a company with regard to supporting an application for temporary foreign workers. I asked the minister to table the letter. In absence of her tabling the letter, I brought it forward to the House leader. This will be the third occasion that I have brought it to the House leader. He assured me that he would bring forward the letter, so hopefully, third time is the charm. Is he able to table the letter now?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was never my intention to table the letter. It was my intention to encourage the minister to assist the member, since he had trouble finding the letter in his records, by providing to him the date and subject matter of the letter so he could find it in his own records, because he apparently had not.

I did talk to the minister and I did see it. He did write a letter asking for more temporary foreign workers for his constituency, notwithstanding that it is an area of high unemployment for Canadians. He instead wanted to see more foreign workers brought there. I trust the member has been given the date of the letter he sent.

• (1515)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, the House leader assured me the last time that he would bring the letter forward. That is what took place last time and I would appreciate it if he would bring the letter forward because there is no sign of it. Maybe he cannot find it either. Maybe it is in the file cabinet with the \$3.1 billion. Maybe he could check that cabinet and bring the letter forward. It is very simple.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, regarding the comment that was made about a statement I issued, and the community brought this to my attention. I issued a letter to them. I would like to read the letter or seek unanimous consent to table the letter in the House. It addresses the matter of the question that was raised.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt have the unanimous consent of the House to table the letter?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, a letter was conveyed to me. I addressed it for the community and I asked for their apology if there was any misunderstanding. This is a national holiday in the Ukraine. There is a division within the community. I totally understand, and if my action brought any division to the community, I have addressed it with it.

Now do I have unanimous consent to table the letter?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has already asked, but I will check again just in case anything has changed. Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent to table it?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*Business of Supply*

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—2013 SPRING REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, accountability is the reason why we are debating this motion on this NDP opposition day.

The official opposition is asking the government what happened to the \$3.1 billion that the Auditor General could not find in the review he conducted of expenditures related to the fight against terrorism.

Accountability is something that is extremely important to Canadians, particularly after what happened in the mid-2000s.

The Gomery commission sought to shed light on certain instances where the Liberal government at the time was not accountable for expenditures made in promoting national unity. At the time, it became clear that accountability was a priority for Canadians when electing a government. A government had to be accountable to the Canadian public and to Parliament with regard to its spending.

As a result of a finding in the Auditor General's report, which is the subject of the motion we moved and are debating today, we are calling for a justification for this missing \$3.1 billion.

I would like to go back in time. I know that this has been done several times, but I would like to put things in context. From 2001 to 2009, \$12.9 billion was budgeted to combat terrorism. This amount was allocated to 35 different departments. Different amounts were allocated to different departments depending on their responsibilities.

Following the events of September 11, even the Treasury Board Secretariat at the time was given \$2.5 million over a period of five years to implement accountability mechanisms for these new initiatives. This would allow the Treasury Board to account for expenses and ensure that the money was well spent.

In the Auditor General's report, we learned that only \$9.8 billion of the \$12.9 billion allocated from 2001 to 2009 is accounted for. There is still \$3.1 billion missing. I am talking about the period ending in 2009, not 2012, and I will tell you why.

Was this money spent? We do not know. Was it not spent and lost because it was not spent? We have no idea. That is the real problem here. That is what members should find worrisome, and not just opposition members either, but government members as well.

*Business of Supply*

I am blown away by the fact that members, including Conservative backbenchers and members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in particular, are not curious about where the \$3.1 billion has gone. It is a substantial amount.

It is worth noting that problems with anti-terrorism funding were raised in 2004, in a report by the Auditor General at the time. That 2004 report was already sounding the alarm about accountability issues regarding money spent.

I will summarize the recommendations made by the Auditor General at the time.

The government as a whole failed to achieve improvements in the ability of security information systems to communicate with each other...deficiencies in the way intelligence is managed across the government. A lack of coordination has led to gaps in intelligence coverage...gaps and inconsistencies in the watch lists used to screen visa applicants, refugee claimants, and travellers seeking to enter Canada...No one monitors delays in the entry or the quality of the data on watch lists...criminal intelligence data are not used to screen applicants for clearance to restricted areas at airports...

There were also deficiencies in funding evaluations, the reporting process, and the list goes on.

As early as 2004, just three years after the anti-terrorism measures were put in place, there were problems with how the funding for the fight against terrorism was being used.

● (1520)

These measures were originally adopted under a Liberal government. We know today that in the 20 months of Liberal governance and seven years of Conservative governance following the release of the Auditor General's 2004 report, the Auditor General's recommendations were not implemented and these governments also failed to keep track of the equivalent of 25% of the money allocated to anti-terrorism initiatives.

That is why we are talking about accountability. The government manages this money. It is supposed to report its expenditures to Parliament. As the President of the Treasury Board mentioned, Parliament, through its committees and the House as a whole, is responsible for considering the public accounts and then adopting them. However, it is clear that there is no way to trace the use of this \$3.1 billion in the public accounts reports from 2001 to 2009. It is simply impossible.

The Auditor General tried and was unable to trace the money. That was his conclusion. If the Auditor General was unable to determine how \$3.1 billion out of a \$12.9 billion budget was spent, despite all the resources his office has available, members of Parliament will obviously not be able to make a decision based on the information we have.

This specific situation illustrates a major problem when it comes to accountability. However, the government's entire approach to accountability is being called into question here. That is the primary reason why we have always supported and have always tried to strengthen the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That is why we need officers who have access to all the information, in order to help the House. I am not talking about just the opposition here, but the entire House.

I am sure there are Conservative supporters, people of principle who are Conservatives—if not the Conservatives here in the House—who do not understand how the government can lose track of this money and deny that there is a problem.

I can guarantee that if it were an NDP government across the way that lost \$3.1 billion, that party would have a field day with this, not just in the House, but also during fundraisers in their ridings. However, since they are the ones across the way, it is no big deal.

In 2006, when Canadians elected this government for the first time, they were voting for accountability and transparency. That is what the government promised and that is what Canadians have been waiting for for seven years.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Auditor General for undertaking this initiative. He will have to keep going, though, because we still do not know what this \$3.1 billion was used for. Regardless of the quotes taken out of context by the President of the Treasury Board, some things in the report are clear.

In this House we have the right to ask questions, and that is what we are doing right now. We are entitled to do so. The government should recognize that and agree with the NDP's request to find this \$3.1 billion. What was it spent on? Where are the documents?

If the money was not spent and ended up back in the consolidated revenue fund, then they should just say so and that is where we will look for it. This morning, a member told us that it will come out in due course. That is not good enough. We want accountability right now. The best quote in the Auditor General's report is as follows:

The Secretariat also said that it would provide direction to departments and agencies on requirements for reporting to Parliament.

That was in 2004, and that has not been done. This time the Auditor General is saying that:

It is important that government knows whether the funds allocated to protect Canadians and fight terrorism are being spent to achieve the PSAT objectives.

If the Auditor General cannot figure out whether the funds were spent according to the objectives set out by the government, we have no way of knowing either.

Once again, the question is: where is the \$3.1 billion that cannot be accounted for? Why is the government not making an effort to provide these reports to the House?

If that is not the case, not only must the government take the blame for this, but it must also support our motion.

*Business of Supply*

• (1525)

[English]

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech, which highlights the lack of accountability of the government in any way, shape or form for money. This is not the first time that there have been money issues with the government. I believe they were found in contempt of Parliament in the last Parliament over money issues.

The Conservatives have misled the Canadian public—I was going to use a different word I am not allowed to use in the House—over the cost of the F-35s, which is far more than \$3.1 billion, yet the government seems to take it so nonchalantly. That is a lot of Canadian taxpayers' money, \$3.1 billion. That is not something to sneeze at. That is an enormous amount of money that has been spent in good faith by Canadian taxpayers. They deserve to know, and parliamentarians deserve to know, how it was spent. That is all we are asking. How was that money spent? Would he agree?

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, I agree completely.

The government is constantly asking Canadians to blindly trust it. We should trust the public accounts, which are very general and extensive. Generally speaking, they consist of three large volumes containing 10-digit numbers. They are extremely complex, but they make for a very interesting read. As an economist, I love these books. However, with an MP's resources, it is extremely difficult to really be able to identify how funds are used.

That is why we asked for accountability, among other things, from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who does an excellent job. He noted that what the government was saying about budgetary expenditures and accountability was not accurate when it came to the cost of our intervention in Afghanistan or the F-35s.

We need accountability. This government claims to be accountable and transparent. The Treasury Board President said that his government was one of the most transparent in Canadian history. On the contrary, it is one of the least transparent, and we are seeing more and more that it is one of the least accountable, too.

• (1530)

[English]

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the motion moved by the hon. member opposite regarding chapter 8 of the Auditor General's report on public security and anti-terrorism, the PSAT initiative. I have reviewed the NDP motion, I have read the Auditor General's report and I have heard the AG's testimony on this chapter. After all this, I must reject the premise of the NDP motion.

The Auditor General and his office had full access to all documentation from the PSAT initiative and they were left with a specific conclusion: that the reporting process was not as exhaustive as it should have been. However, the AG said that he “did not find anything that gave cause for concern that the money was used in any way that should it should not have been”.

The government takes Canada's national security very seriously. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, we have been actively involved in protecting our citizens.

Recently, our government introduced and passed Bill S-7, the combatting terrorism act. This bill proposed to create new substantive offences that would make it illegal to leave or to attempt to leave Canada to knowingly participate in or contribute to any activity of a terrorist group for the purpose of enhancing the ability of any terrorist group to facilitate or carry out a terrorist activity, knowingly facilitate a terrorist activity, commit an indictable offence for the benefit of a terrorist group and commit an indictable offence that is also a terrorist activity. Our government has been unwavering in its commitment to protect Canadians and support the global fight against terrorism. That is why we work closely with international partners to combat terrorism and its perpetrators.

The proposed new offences would send a strong deterrent message, strengthening the hand of law enforcement to mitigate threats and increase the penalties for this type of conduct. Putting in place safeguards to protect Canadians as they go about their lives in safety and security is not a new focus for this government. That is why the public security and anti-terrorism initiative was put in place to fund measures to enhance the security of Canadians. This initiative involved funding allocated to departments and agencies government-wide to implement a variety of anti-terrorism measures. These measures focus on air security, emergency preparedness and military deployment, intelligence and policing, screening of entrants to Canada, border security and facilitation, and border infrastructure.

Funding for the public security and anti-terrorism initiative rolled out before the end of 2001. It has been scrutinized by parliamentarians according to the proper procedures for examining and reporting on the spending of taxpayer money. As members know, each department must table in its public accounts each item of spending. This is a legal obligation, and that is exactly what has been done.

Moreover, the Auditor General has found nothing in his examination of the spending on this initiative to suggest anything that was done improperly. All the funds are accounted for in public documents presented to Parliament, including the public accounts. There is no indication that any dollars are missing, misappropriated or misspent. The process that departments follow for reporting to Parliament and to Canadians on their spending and results were respected for every year of the initiative.

For its part, the TBS established an annual reporting framework to monitor the implementation of these initiatives. Key components of this annual reporting approach included: funding allocations; progress indicators; emerging issues; challenges and risks; horizontal issues such as capacity, interoperability and partnerships; and audit and evaluation information.

*Business of Supply*

When submissions related to PSAT funding were considered, approval was provided based on two conditions.

One condition was that existing and established reporting and evaluation requirements were respected, and that funding was used for public security uses.

• (1535)

The intent of this condition was to ensure that departments complied with reporting requirements and evaluated security programs to confirm that the implementation of the initiatives was creating the right results.

The second condition helped ensure that funding was used for security purposes while providing the flexibility to reallocate funds if necessary to respond to evolving risks.

Canadians can be assured that government funding tagged for security initiatives was used for that purpose. This was among the conditions for the PSAT funding, and deputy ministers attested that the funding would be used for security-related purposes. Members do not have to take my word for it. The Auditor General of Canada has said that his office, “didn’t find anything that gave [them] cause for concern that the money...was used in any way that it should not have been”.

I do not think the Auditor General could be any clearer than that.

What is more, the Auditor General's audit acknowledges that deputy heads, as departmental accounting officers, are responsible for accounting and reporting their spending through the Public Accounts of Canada. These reporting requirements are in addition to the internal reporting requirement imposed under PSAT.

The Auditor General has been clear that departments had an internal control and due diligence process in place to ensure spending was conducted according to the rules.

The prime concern since September 11, 2001, has been the security and protection of Canadians. We have no more fundamental duty than to protect the personal safety of our citizens and defend against threats to our national security. This has been our objective with regard to this spending. So far, we have been remarkably successful, transparent and accountable to the citizens of this country.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member did not do very much, aside from quoting the Auditor General partially and out of context. Talk about bad faith.

I do not understand why the Conservatives were screaming so much when the Liberals used the same strategy. The Liberals lost three times less money than the Conservatives, who are now saying that it is no big deal and that they are good fiscal managers, even though \$3.1 billion is missing.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the function of Her Majesty's loyal opposition is to shine a light on government and make sure that everything is in order. However, this particular motion is clear.

I have to say that either the opposition has not read the Auditor General's report from which I quoted, which is so obviously clear that there are no misappropriated funds and no money that has been hidden and that this is clearly a case that can be explained. Or my only other conclusion would be that if the opposition has read the report, then its members are misinforming the public and deliberately trying to create a situation that is not there, which causes confusion.

Therefore, I would throw that right back to the opposition members and ask them this. Why are they doing that when they have the same report, the same information, the same facts and should be drawing the same conclusions?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have to agree to disagree with this particular member with regard to his thoughts on what the Auditor General is saying.

However, let us try to move forward in terms of how we prevent these type of events from occurring in the future.

The Liberal Party has been suggesting that we need to look at ways to move toward program-based appropriations, something our former parliamentary budget officer, Kevin Page, suggested we move toward and something we want to propose as an amendment to the motion itself.

My question to the member is this. From his perspective, or in his own personal opinion, does he not believe that at the very least we should be sending a very strong message today that we need to look at the way we are reporting and move toward program-based appropriations? Would the member agree with that?

• (1540)

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:** Mr. Speaker, I would agree that as a Parliament it is our job to do these things. It is our job to look for problems and collectively look for solutions. We might not agree on what that solution should be, but that is how Parliament works, and I would agree with the member that looking for solutions should be the focus of this whole exercise.

We recognize we could have done things better, and we state that as well. The government's response to the Auditor General is that we recognize the recommendations that were made and that we will endeavour to improve. I think it is incumbent upon us all to work toward a way to make this situation better and subsequently make government that much better.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on the subject of the funding for Canada's public safety and anti-terrorism initiative.

As we know, the hon. opposition is calling into question the government's accounting for the money used to fight terrorism both at home and abroad. We have indicated that all funds in question have been accounted for in public accounts, and those are available to Parliament.

*Business of Supply*

What is more, there is no indication that any money is missing or that any money has been poorly used or wasted, and that is also the opinion of the Auditor General of Canada. He gave the government's accounting for these expenses a clean bill of health. He did so after reviewing all available documents during the course of his audit. In fact, he confirmed at committee that the anti-terrorism funding he was reviewing was purely an internal government reporting process. The Auditor General clearly said that his office did not find anything to indicate that the money was used in any way it should not have been.

We understand the priorities of Canadians, and our priorities are aligned with theirs. We understand that there is no duty more fundamental than protecting the personal safety of our citizens and defending them against threats to our national security. That has been our objective with regard to spending on anti-terrorism measures at home and abroad. To this end, the Canadian Forces have played an essential role in recent years.

We continue to face a wide range of complex and unpredictable threats that, as we know, can emanate from anywhere from down the street to the other side of the globe. These threats can take on many forms, and the government bears the responsibility to protect and defend the individuals, institutions and infrastructure of our nation against all dangers.

Now, as our defence community shifts its focus away from Afghanistan, it is looking closely at that environment, an environment that poses challenges ranging from cyberthreats, piracy, illicit trafficking and arms proliferation to fiscal crises that persist around the globe to changing regional dynamics in Asia and the Arab world. These challenges, paired with the end of our long mission in Afghanistan, give us clear impetus to make sure that the Canadian Forces are ready to meet today's needs.

Indeed, the readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces to react to any eventuality will be an area of continued effort in the post-Afghanistan era. The Canada first defence strategy outlines the government's commitment to give the forces the resources they need to carry out their work on behalf of Canadians in a volatile world.

In keeping with this commitment, we have increased defence spending by about a third since 2006. We have invested in critical military capabilities by acquiring transport aircraft, upgrading armoured vehicles, modernizing warships, and launching Canada's first military satellite.

The government has made significant investments since 2008 in reviewing military infrastructure across the country. We have provided new resources to care for our troops and their families.

I would like to mention at this point that at 8 Wing in Northumberland—Quinte West, this commitment has never been greater. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being invested in the infrastructure there so that we can accommodate Canada's elite anti-terrorism squad.

The results are clear. The Canadian Armed Forces have been able to maintain the highest operational tempo since the Korean War, ranging from Afghanistan and Libya to floods and fires across Canada. All these investments and others like them will leave the

forces well equipped to handle their current and future operations, including protecting us at home right here in Canada.

Other investments are being made to ensure that firefighters, police, medical professionals and military personnel are supported with the right resources, knowledge, tools and training to stay ahead of the curve. To support this vital work, the Minister of National Defence announced the establishment of the Canadian safety and security program in 2012.

With an annual investment of some \$43.5 million, this comprehensive program identifies and funds innovative scientific and technological solutions to address the full array of public safety and security challenges. It promotes collaborative efforts because no single department, agency or organization is equipped to tackle all of the desperate dangers in today's world.

● (1545)

In March, the Minister of National Defence announced an additional \$20 million for 26 science and technology projects that aim to make Canada more safe and more secure. These projects help address Canadian vulnerabilities in the face of some of the most pressing threats to public safety and security today. For example, Transport Canada will work with the Canada Border Services Agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and industry partners to enhance the X-ray capabilities used at airports and border crossings for baggage and cargo screening.

Natural Resources Canada will lead an effort with Parks Canada, the B.C. Ministry of Environment, and the University of British Columbia to develop a better system to predict and track smoke from forest fires to assist with emergency evacuation decisions.

Defence Research and Development Canada, partnering with Laval University and the University of Western Ontario, will lead a project to develop critical technical capabilities to identify, locate and mitigate potential wireless security threats and enhance the resiliency of digital infrastructure and response effectiveness. The examples go on.

As recent events in Canada and the United States have shown, Canada must continue to be on guard against terrorism. Terrorism threats are real problems that have to be dealt with, and we are getting the job done with continued investments.

I urge the members of this House to focus their energies and their efforts on the real problems we face and to work together to defend our citizens against terrorism.

The Auditor General found that the deficiencies in the PSAT reporting process did not prevent the programs from achieving their objective, which is keeping Canadians safe and secure.

The Auditor General reviewed all available documents and concluded, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money...was used in any way it should not have been".

*Business of Supply*

With a conclusion like that from the Auditor General himself, I cannot support this motion.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments, and I have to say before I begin my question that I know this member from the public safety committee. I know him to be diligent and I know he is very concerned about how money is spent, so I know he would be concerned about the accounting behind this particular issue.

My office spent a number of days and weeks trying to find out exactly how public safety money was spent. In this particular case, it was money from the border infrastructure fund that the President of the Treasury Board used on some projects in his riding during the G8 summit. By the way, none was spent in my riding, and no one showed up at my door either.

My final accounting, and there might even be more, is all listed, and with the unanimous consent of the House I would be happy to table my findings today.

• (1550)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the documents?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** There is no consent.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

Order. Could the member please move to his question?

**Mr. John Rafferty:** Mr. Speaker, I am getting to my question.

My accounting comes to a little bit over \$45 million. I wonder if the member would say whether or not he is concerned that \$45 million of public safety money was spent—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. The hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on the across-the-bow shots that may occur here because to my constituents and to me personally, and as the member has just said, to his constituents and to him, we want a government that has the accounting practices that the Auditor General says that are sufficient so he feels secure in telling Canadians that on viewing the government operations, they are being done in a manner that he thinks is appropriate.

In this case, the Auditor General has said that there is no money that cannot be accounted for and that there has been no funnelling off to any enterprise. In fact, we have repeated in the House ad nauseam, that the Auditor General said, “We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way that it should not have been”.

What am I saying? I would agree with the Auditor General that he needs to be satisfied in order to satisfy my constituents and that we need to be a little more diligent and in some cases perhaps much more diligent in identifying specifically. Therefore, we have agreed as a government to take his suggestions and recommendations and we will implement them.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is also very important we recognize that the Auditor General was not able to indicate where the \$3.1 billion in allocation went to. He was not able to provide assurances, for example, that portions of the money or all of the money was in fact spent. Nor was he able to provide any tangible proof or evidence that all of the money was spent on what it was allocated for. He could not give that 100% assurance.

Is the member prepared to give the House of Commons that assurance today. Could he stand in his place and say 100% that the \$3.1 billion has actually been fully expensed? Could he indicate that it has been fully expensed in the appropriations it was designated for?

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** Mr. Speaker, I think I did say that during my speech and in my response to the hon. member of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

However, to the third party question, I put my trust in the Auditor General of Canada and the Auditor General of Canada said that the money was not spent in any way that it should not have been. When in committee, he went on to say that government departments were responsible for accounting and reporting spending through the Public Accounts of Canada. He confirmed:

The spending within the departments would have undergone normal control procedures in those departments; so there are internal controls in departments about spending and they would go through all of those normal processes. We didn't identify anything that would cause us to say that we felt that anything was going on outside of those processes.

What is the opposition worried about? What is the concern? In its vain attempt to throw mud and hope that some of it sticks, the Auditor General has said that it will not to stick because everything is accounted for in Public Accounts.

• (1555)

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the opposition day motion with really a sense of sadness, sadness because as the finance critic for the official opposition, I have sadly had a front row seat in watching the greater opacity, the greater lack of information by the government when it comes to financial matters. From its omnibus bills to its time allocations to its silencing of opposition testimony, it has become frankly a bit of a chill in Ottawa.

Now I think we get a sense of why some of that is. What we are debating now with this opposition day motion by our party, the NDP, is the misplacing of \$3.1 billion contributed to the coffers of Ottawa by Canadians across the country. It is not just any amount of money. This money was put in the hands of the government in trust to be spent on public security and anti-terrorism measures. The fact that the government cannot account for this money, as witnessed by the Auditor General in his recent report, is frankly shocking, but it is in keeping with the general lack of reporting, the lack of transparency by the government.

*Business of Supply*

It is a government that forced the Parliamentary Budget Officer, which was a position created in fact by the Conservatives and an officer who was put in place by them, Kevin Page, to go to court to try to get some of the information from budget 2012 in terms of how government was spending and which departments, programs and services were being cut by the government. Now we find that even the government does not seem to understand, or know, or be able to find monies that were put in its trust and for which it would be responsible.

Before I continue, I will be sharing my time with the member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

The motion we are debating today is really calling on the government to issue documents from 2001 to the present, to account for this money on natural security. That is when these funds were initially allocated and that this public security initiative was created. What we are calling for is all of the public security and anti-terrorism annual reports that were submitted to the Treasury Board Secretariat, all the Treasury Board submissions made as part of the anti-terrorism initiative, all the departmental evaluations of the initiative, all the Treasury Board database information established to monitor the funding, all of these records be public and made available to the House, in both official languages, by June 17.

That is all we are asking for, that this basic information about the dollars given to Ottawa by Canadians across the country for a very serious purpose, the anti-terrorism public safety initiative, that this money be made available and that the Auditor General be given the necessary resources to perform an in-depth forensic audit to find the \$3.1 billion that is unaccounted for by the government.

At the same time as this money has gone astray, no one can find out where it is. Under budget 2012, the government has made significant cuts to public safety. A total of \$687.9 million will be cut from public safety by 2015. To outline some of these cuts, \$143 million to the Canada Border Services Agency, the CBSA, will mean the elimination of 626 full-time equivalents, including about 325 front-line officers. A further 100 positions may be affected in the CBSA.

●(1600)

To put this into perspective, I come from the city of Toronto, the largest city in the country. Like other communities across the country, we have concerns about handguns that are illegally smuggled into our country and fall into the hands of youth, especially, as well as others. Far too many young people in our communities have died because of the illegal use of handguns that were smuggled into the country.

To think that the Conservative government would cut over 600 border security guards from patrolling our borders and at the same time it cannot account for if, whether or how it spent \$3.1 billion is frankly shocking and I know it is unacceptable to the constituents in my riding of Parkdale—High Park and to Canadians right across the country.

The government is also cutting intelligence agents from the CBSA and sniffer dog units. Under budget 2012, it scrapped the Inspector General of CSIS, who was put in place to ensure accountability there. The government is also cutting almost \$200 million from the

RCMP. While it is making what I would call reckless cuts to public safety measures, at the same time it seems to have misplaced over \$3 billion that was allocated to protect our public safety.

While we are hearing a lot of stonewalling from the other side on this issue, what we are calling for with this motion is for the government to stop playing politics with our public safety and our hard-earned tax dollars and just give the Auditor General the information that he needs to fully account for where this money has gone.

Was it properly spent or improperly spent? Let the Conservatives give us the documents so all Canadians can find out what happened to the money. That is all we are asking for. It is very simple and straightforward.

We are hearing a lot of stonewalling on the other side of the House. We are hearing that the Auditor General did not find that any money was misappropriated. He did not find that any money was misappropriated because there were no documents saying where the money was. There were no documents to tell if it had been spent, not been spent, if it had been turned back into a previous budget, put forward into a future budget or spent on public security. Did it go to the President of the Treasury Board's gazebo? Did it go to a fake lake in Toronto?

We do not know where this money went. It could be lost in loose change down sofas across the country. We have no idea. However, there are clearly some serious spending problems with the government and with the public safety and anti-terrorism initiative because the money was not monitored properly, may not have been spent properly and clearly has not been properly accounted for.

The Auditor General needs the documents to be able to track the money and to find out on behalf of hard-working Canadians. They do not get to say "I just lost a third of the money I was supposed to report" when it comes to tax time. They have to account for every penny. Therefore, the Auditor General has to get the documents he needs to properly account for \$3.1 billion in missing funds.

We urge the government and all members in the House to support this New Democrat opposition day motion to give the Auditor General the information he needs and do the job we were elected to do on behalf of all Canadians.

●(1605)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech.

The President of the Treasury Board and other Conservative cabinet ministers keep saying that this is merely an accounting problem and that all of the information is available in the Public Accounts of Canada.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

The problem is that we know that the Auditor General did not have all of the information from the Public Accounts of Canada.

*Business of Supply*

Now we are asking the government to produce those public accounts so that the Auditor General can really verify if the money was spent, and if so, how it was spent. That is all we are asking.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives quote something, they take only a little sample of the quote. The rest of the Auditor General's quote was: "It's important for there to be a way for people to understand how this money was spent. And that summary reporting was not done".

I was here during the days when Jane Stewart was the minister of HRDC, and many Conservatives were sitting right where I am now, yelling out "boondoggle", right across the country, over the so-called billion dollar boondoggle. In fact, the member for Calgary—Nose Hill was on her feet literally every day for months on end over an issue that ended up being not much at all. However, now we have \$3.1 billion and another \$2.4 billion gone off to numbered companies without proper phones and stuff, from what we are hearing.

The reality is that this is fiscal mismanagement at its very worst. Therefore, I would like my hon. colleague, the finance critic for the NDP, to elaborate and elucidate just a bit more on why this is so bad for Canadian taxpayers and how we in the NDP, when we are in government in 2015, would change everything.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, the quote my colleague cites is certainly an important one: "It's important for there to be a way for people to understand how this money was spent. And that summary reporting was not done".

This is what the Auditor General has said. Clearly, what we are seeing here is a shocking, government-wide lack of monitoring on the progress of public security funding. This is at the same time the government is bringing in a variety of laws that infringe upon our civil liberties. If public security is so important to the Conservatives, they should be able to account for this money.

Under a New Democratic Party government, there will be accountability. There will be a greater sense of responsibility for the hard work Canadians put into earning their tax dollars. The Conservatives do not do the job. We will make sure that we are representing the interests of Canadians.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently when the member was talking about illegal guns in Toronto. I read a statistic the other day that 70% of those guns come through the United States. Of course, border security money goes missing and is spent on other things. I wonder if she would like to comment on the \$45 million, give or take a couple of dollars, that the President of the Treasury Board used from border infrastructure money in his riding, when it could have been used to patrol the border and stop some of those illegal guns.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, there are far too many parents in the city of Toronto who have seen their children murdered by illegal guns. The fact that border security services that could track down those guns are being cut is shocking. Even more shocking is to think that money that should have been allocated to track those guns down and stop them in their tracks at the border may have been spent

elsewhere and could have, perhaps, saved some of those young lives. That is shocking.

• (1610)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the motion by the member for Pontiac asking for action to be taken to address the missing, remarkably, \$3.1 billion.

Canadians expect their government to be good public administrators of the public purse. They expect their elected representatives, regardless of party affiliation, to carefully scrutinize spending and to hold the government accountable. Canadians expect responsible and sound fiscal management. In turn, Canadian taxpayers expect their government to use their money to provide the critical services we all rely upon.

In every circumstance, it is unthinkable that a government would be irresponsible in tracking and reporting 100% of its spending. This is all the more the case when it involves the commitment to spend \$12.9 billion on public security and anti-terrorism. I feel confident in saying that Canadian taxpayers share the concerns raised by the Auditor General in his spring 2013 audit report regarding \$3.1 billion of that amount not yet accounted for. This will, in all likelihood, be of concern to Canadians, as the very services they rely upon are hindered by the cuts to front-line services, including pensions and the tracking of tax fraud, for example. This is particularly galling when the government is asking Canadians to do more with less.

Some have suggested metaphorically that the Conservatives could take another look between the sofa cushions to find the misplaced \$3.1 billion. All joking aside, the failure to account for this amount of taxpayers' money is a very serious matter. Contrary to what the government has alleged, the Auditor General has expressed concerns.

First, this is what he and the Assistant Auditor General had to say at the public accounts committee a week back, after determining that \$3.1 billion was missing between 2001 and 2009. When asked what happened in 2010, he advised, "Our audit only went up in this time period and at the end of this time period this method of reporting was stopped".

The Assistant Auditor General then added that "the Treasury Board Secretariat has stopped collecting data from the departments in terms of the annual reports and are in the process of putting together another framework that they hope to have in place by, I think, some time in 2014".

That is an incredible gap in accountability.

In the text of the Auditor General's report, he stated, at point 8.24:

In 2010, the Treasury Board approved the Secretariat's request to end the government-wide reporting requirements on Initiative spending. The last reports entered into the database are those related to the 2008–09 fiscal year. The Secretariat stated that it would develop a new mechanism for managing and collecting performance information on the Public Security Initiatives. At the time of the audit, a project was in the pilot stage, but a new mechanism was not yet in place.

*Business of Supply*

That is not terribly reassuring.

Treasury Board has allowed a gap of four years in tracking spending by departments, and in such a serious and important area. The President of the Treasury Board has tried to pass the buck to the departments, saying that it is their duty to report, and besides, reports can be found in the public accounts. Perhaps he could show Canadians where, since neither we nor the Auditor General can find the \$3.1 billion reported as spent or for what purpose. He has alleged that the Auditor General found no fault in the monitoring and reporting of this total committed \$12.9 billion for public security spending, yet the Auditor General's report is quite clear. The Auditor General did find problems. Let me share this quote from his news release on his report. He stated:

The Treasury Board Secretariat was required to prepare summary reports for Treasury Board. The audit found that these reports were not provided. Though the Secretariat was the only department collecting detailed performance information on public security investments, it did not use this information to generate a government-wide perspective of PSAT spending and results, nor did any other federal department or agency. In the absence of any sort of overall monitoring and reporting, information to explain the difference of \$3.1 billion between the funding allocated to departments and agencies and the amount reported spent was not available.

● (1615)

He further stated:

We believe that the government missed an opportunity to use the information it collected to generate a picture of spending and results under the Public Security and Anti-Terrorism Initiative across departments.

He then added:

The government recognizes that it needs to improve the way it reports financial and non-financial information for future government-wide initiatives.

Why is the apparent loss somewhere, possibly, of these billions an issue? As my colleagues have mentioned, there are many ways these monies could have been spent to benefit Canadians and protect our security.

There is no suggestion that addressing terrorism or ensuring national security is not important. It is important, as elected officials, that we are responsible for ensuring that once dollars are committed for that purpose, they are used for that purpose.

The government does have the power to redirect budget allocations, which they regularly do through supplementary estimates. However, there is no evidence that this has occurred in this instance.

Even more troubling is the apparent lack of policy supporting revenue sources. For instance, perhaps thought could be given to reversing the staffing cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency. As my colleague has raised numerous times in the House, we have been seriously concerned that there is \$29 billion missing in uncollected taxes. Just a fraction of the missing \$3.1 billion could restore the Conservatives' cuts to that agency.

We are reassured that finally, after our raising this concern several weeks in a row, the minister has agreed to restore some dollars to the agency. We are not totally sure yet whether the Conservatives have restored the audit and compliance staff. Certainly it is an important matter. Where is the action and accountability on that?

The Conservatives do not seem to be worried about money that slips through the cracks. They are more interested in cutting from

programs that support the vulnerable in our society. For example, my colleague from Laval—Les Îles has brought forward Bill C-480, which would allow seniors to withdraw money from their RRSPs to advance pay their funeral expenses. The government claws that back from the GIS payments. We are talking about seniors who are living on the poverty line. That is why they need to receive a GIS. We have been proposing that at a mere \$132,000, all seniors would be covered.

The government shows very little concern when it says that it is only \$3.1 billion. We are very concerned about the lack of tracking of the spending of this money in the same way we are concerned that it gives short shrift to the potential for revenue generation, such as collecting taxes that have not been paid and putting proper charges on those who exploit our resources.

One area we are particularly concerned about is aboriginal affairs. In thinking that it would increase accountability, the government decided to pick on two segments of our society. They are picking on unions and first nations by telling them that they have to be more accountable and report over and over again to be accountable for every cent they spend, yet here is the government saying that it is only \$3.1 billion and it is not a big deal. We might eventually find it if we pore through the public accounts.

There just seems to be an incredible degree of hypocrisy. Nowhere is that hypocrisy greater than when we come to youth.

Every member of Parliament has the privilege of taking a look at what the government will allocate for summer jobs. I have to say that it was painful this year, because more than half of those Canadians who offered jobs to students were turned down, and the government cannot be bothered to find \$3.1 billion. It broke my heart to sign off on a report saying which groups would get student jobs, and all these fantastic organizations that would like to hire students, such as aboriginal organizations, the University of Alberta, and I could go on, would not. That is a whole lot of students in my riding who will not get summer employment and may not be able to continue their education.

● (1620)

Just in closing, I find this issue absolutely critical to our job as members of Parliament. All of us in this House, whatever our partisan affiliation, are elected to hold the government accountable for spending. I expect the Conservative members to be equally astonished and upset with the apparent lack of care and attention to \$3.1 billion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her remarks, which I found very reasonable in view of what has been requested. I think her speech was just as reasonable as the motion by our colleague, the hon. member for Pontiac.

*Business of Supply*

Really, we are not asking for the moon; we are simply asking to have everything we need in order to understand what happened to the \$3.1 billion that has been lost in the files somewhere. That \$3.1 billion is quite a large amount of money. I will talk about that in my speech later. Many families would be searching for that money and turning over the mattresses and shaking out the pillowcases to find it.

In view of the reasonable nature of the request and our experiences on different committees—my hon. colleague has seen more than I have, and it must have sometimes been hard to take—what does she think of the government's lack of transparency in this kind of situation? How far will the government go to hide questionable operations of this sort?

[*English*]

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. It is an absolute pleasure working in this place with him. It is an equal honour to work with the member for Pontiac on the OGGO committee.

Something that is so distressing about this discovery that \$3.1 billion is missing is that we in the OGGO committee, where I work, issued a report, on which we spent months upon months consulting with renowned experts from around the world on how we can make sure elected members can hold the government accountable on spending.

We made a series of recommendations on how that could come about. Mechanisms are being implemented around the world in other democracies.

What was the response of the government? Essentially it just threw the report back in our faces. It is absolutely reprehensible. This was sincere work on the report, cooperatively carried out by all parties in this House.

The response the government is giving to the missing \$3.1 billion is essentially the same. It is by the same minister, the President of the Treasury Board. It is just reprehensible. This is not a small amount of money, and it was allocated for a very serious matter.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat amused by the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou's use of the expression, "we are not asking for the moon" because that is exactly what I said to myself.

We are simply asking that the Auditor General have the tools to do his job. I do not see how anyone can oppose such a motion. Therefore, I hope all members of this House will vote in favour of the motion.

My question is about transparency, which was so dear to the hearts of the Conservatives before they came to power. We have also learned recently that they have spent millions of dollars to spy on each other, because they are simply unable to talk to each other. That is the answer we got a little while ago. If they want to know exactly what is going on, they should talk to each other.

I would like my colleague to tell us more about transparency, which the Conservatives once loved so much, and about the complete lack of dialogue within the Conservative caucus.

[*English*]

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, it is a bit of a complicated question.

I will speak to the first part of his question, which has troubled me from the day I entered this place in 2008. The government ran on a platform of open, transparent, participatory government. In the time it has been here, it has shredded every policy and practice that could provide that. It has made the institution of government incredibly undemocratic.

If there is one obligation that it has that we had hoped it would stick with, it is the responsibility to be accountable—

**Some hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, it is like a youth Parliament. I am getting reprehensible comments over here.

Every single one of us elected to this office has a main responsibility in this place to hold the government accountable for spending. What we are asking today is reasonable. What the Auditor General has asked for is reasonable. We can only hope that the government will finally respond with respect.

● (1625)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to address the motion put forward by the New Democratic Party. I will indicate upfront that we recognize the value of the motion and therefore will be voting in favour of it.

I hope New Democrats will see the benefits of the amendment that we tried to move earlier today. The NDP motion could be made better and stronger if that party were open to accepting our amendment. I would encourage those members to think about this.

The Liberal Party has two primary concerns. The first is, of course, the \$3.1 billion. The second is what we can do to fix the situation. Our amendment deals with the second one. I would encourage NDP members to look at that.

I want to start off by indicating what the Auditor General of Canada has suggested, in its entirety, with respect to this specific issue. This of course is in the 2013 audit report:

Our analysis showed that departments and agencies reported about \$9.8 billion in spending by 2009, about \$3.1 billion less than the amount allocated for PSAT activities. Our review of the financial and non-financial information reported by departments and agencies showed that projects were consistent with the announced objectives of the Initiative. However, information to explain the difference of \$3.1 billion between the funding allocated to departments and agencies and the amount reported spent was not available.

That is a critical component of what was being stated by the Auditor General.

We need to keep in mind that we are talking about a timeframe of a number of years leading up to 2009. It is actually a total of \$12.9 billion. Out of that \$12.9 billion, the Auditor General was able to look at \$9.8 billion. He felt 100% confident with respect to what happened to that \$9.8 billion.

*Business of Supply*

Then there is the \$3.1 billion. Treasury Board officials would tell the Auditor General it was one of three possible situations, but we do not know for sure. One situation is that a portion of the money could have lapsed. I have asked members about that and they do not believe it lapsed. There was no 100% assurance, or even close to 100% assurance, that the money was lapsed. The government is trying to give the impression that the money was spent, but we do not know that.

The person with the best access to that information is the Auditor General. If the Auditor General concludes that he cannot find the receipts and other items that he looks at, then it would be fair to believe and acknowledge that not enough information was available for the auditor. It does not necessarily mean that the auditor did not have access to all of the information. It means that the information was not there and available for the Auditor General.

We are talking about \$3.1 billion. What are the other two possible situations? The second situation is: Was the money spent on public safety activities but not accounted for? That is quite possible, but again, we do not know for sure. The third is: Was the money carried forward and spent on activities that were not related to the initiative?

• (1630)

Again, we will not see the Prime Minister stand in his place and give us the guarantee that, no, that was not the case. He will not stand in his place and do that because he is not in a position to really know, I believe, or he is hiding a lot of information from Canada's Auditor General, which would raise a whole new area of discussion and debate that would need to take place.

We need to recognize that we really do not know how that \$3.1 billion was actually spent or if in fact it was spent.

At the end of the day, how much is \$3.1 billion? When I was first elected, that almost made up the entire budget of the Province of Manitoba. Today, we would find that it does make up and exceed some provincial budgets. If we want to talk about health care services and the costs of health care, \$3 billion is more than the transfer payments toward social programming that Manitoba would receive. It is a lot of money.

We are talking about tens of thousands of jobs that could have been initiated, tens of thousands good quality jobs. Three point one billion dollars is a great deal of money.

When I ask questions with respect to that or if we listen to some of the speeches given from the Conservative benches, what we will often hear is, "Don't worry. Trust us. It will materialize".

That is not good enough.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Why not?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Someone said "Why not?" Trust me. There is already a high sense of distrust of the government, for good reason. Have members ever heard of the F-35 and the disaster that has turned into? It is truly amazing.

Again, we are not talking about millions or thousands or hundreds. We are talking about billions. The government has to understand that we have good reason not to trust and wait for the money to materialize.

Think of it in terms of a small businessman who, let us say, sells bicycles. He might be a little depressed because of the tariff increases, a tax increase from the government this year. However, let us say that he sells bicycles and wagons. He has a good-sized business. He has allocated \$100,000 in his budget to purchase bicycles and red wagons. He is anxious. Summer is coming round the corner. He knows there will be sales. He has allocated \$100,000, but he finds out that only \$75,000 is accounted for.

I suspect that any of the Conservative backbenchers, and possibly many of the ministers, would recognize that there is something wrong. He will want to know what happened to his \$100,000 because he is dependent upon that for the future income of his business. He has an assessment, in terms of the number of bicycles that is going to be required, and little red wagons and so forth, and is expecting to be able to meet that market. There is a sense of accountability. If his accountants were to say, "I'm sorry. It's been spent, but we're not too sure exactly where" and if they cannot show the receipts for where it has been spent, I suspect that someone is going to be let go. There is no small businessman, I suspect, running a credible business in any part of Canada, from coast to coast to coast, who would accept that type of behaviour coming from his own employees.

So, why the difference? Why should the Government of Canada be treated any differently?

If we talk to our constituents, as I am sure many of us do, there are some things they have very little tolerance for. They do not like it when we waste tax dollars.

• (1635)

That is why the leader of the Liberal Party and many of my other colleagues have been on their feet in question period in the last couple of days, talking about things like the middle class, the number of tax increases and wasteful spending. Look at the amount of money that is being spent on advertising. People are enjoying watching a hockey game and they see one of those "blank" ads, I do not want to use any unparliamentary words so I will use the word "blank" in its place, and recognize that \$90,000 is being spent on that. As an assignment over the break week we can find out if our constituents believe that spending that kind of money is in Canada's best interests.

Previously, the NDP member talked about her summer jobs program. We had our list in Winnipeg North and I went through the list. There were 60 employment opportunities for students, but there are probably another 60 that we could not give because the resources were not there. Give us a couple of those ads and all those summer students would have been employed.

That is one of the things that makes taxpayers irate, our constituents, the middle-class people who are working day in, day out trying to make ends meet, when they see that sort of an expenditure. We can understand why they would be upset at the government.

*Business of Supply*

The other thing that upsets Canadians is when they feel there is no true sense of accountability, when the government says it is going to need  $x$  amount of tax dollars and the amount of tax dollars then increases. In the last four or five budgets we have seen a net increase in taxes being collected by the government. That is the reality. Conservatives can spend and pay for their advertising using tax dollars all they want, but we are seeing more and tax dollars being collected.

Canadians want to see their tax dollars are being spent smartly and that they will receive services. They want to have confidence that the government is doing a good job in spending those tax dollars. We have had ample examples over the last number of years of how the government has demonstrated its inability to be able to spend smartly. That has caused a great deal of concern for our constituents.

I made reference to the F-35. It was originally supposed to cost \$9 billion, I believe. The government went out of its way to try to sell it to Canadians. I remember it becoming an election issue in my area. The Liberal Party consistently argued that yes, we do need to replace the CF-18. We recognized the importance of having equipment for our men and women in our forces. In fact, I believe Pierre Trudeau purchased the last series of F-18 aircraft, and brought that into being.

• (1640)

In the last federal election, we were campaigning, and we were being told that this was what was happening, that it was this number of dollars being spent. We challenged the government on that. We did not believe the Conservatives were being honest. Whether it was the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the Auditor General, all the different stakeholders came in and ultimately the government had to recognize that it had messed up.

Now we do not know where we are. Years have been lost. What is going to happen with our air force and the ultimate purchasing? Hopefully, the Conservatives have learned something from it. Canadians expect accountability. We know that there is \$3.1 billion that the Conservatives need to explain.

The Liberals want to see this motion improved, and we are asking for the Conservatives to support this motion. We are also asking the New Democrats to support the amendment because we believe it would go a long way to preventing this from happening in the future. The second issue that I wanted to raise was that we want as much as possible to prevent this. What we are suggesting is something that we know Kevin Page, the former parliamentary budget officer, did support.

Without further ado, I am going to move, seconded by the member for Sydney—Victoria, that the motion be amended by adding the following. I move that, in order to avoid losing funds in the future, the House request that the government take all actions necessary to transition to program-based appropriations according to the timeline provided to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The amendment is in order.

It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. In the case that he or she is not present,

consent may be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the Whip or the deputy Whip of the sponsor's party.

Since the sponsor is not present in the chamber, I ask the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour if he consents to this amendment being moved.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, let me say that I appreciate the co-operation that has been exhibited by the Liberals, in that they are supporting our motion and they would like to try to make any changes to improve it. We are continuing to have those discussions, but unfortunately at this point we still have not reached that stage. However, I want to assure them that we are prepared to continue to have those discussions and, while we are not prepared to accept this amendment, we are hoping that, as we go forward in debate, we will be able to find wording that will be acceptable to both of us.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Obviously, there is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Joliette.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our Liberal colleague always makes fiery speeches. I would like to ask him some questions.

Why did the Liberals not take action when they were in power, after the Auditor General's 2004 report? What did the Liberals do, in 2004, to prevent the situation we are in now?

How can the member have any credibility in condemning the waste of \$3.1 billion by the Conservatives, when the previous Liberal government left the poisonous legacy of its \$1 billion HRSDC boondoggle, revealed by the Auditor General in 2000? Does the hon. member have an answer?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opposition deputy House leader's comments, and I hope that we will be able to work something out. If we want to send a positive message, we in the Liberal caucus believe that this is a message that is very important for us to send. Let us hope that we do not lose that opportunity.

In terms of the question that has been posed by the member, it was a significant amount of money that she referred to. The Conservatives at the time in opposition referred to it as \$1 billion. However, at the end of the day, it was around \$40,000 that was not accounted for. This is one of the reasons why I think it is important that we recognize where we want to go, forward from here.

We do not know what will ultimately happen with that \$3.1 billion, or to what degree it will come out clean. Will it be \$3.3 billion or \$1 million? We really do not know yet. The Liberals would love to see it broken down at some point, the sooner the better, but at the end of the day, we have to break that into two issues.

I want to see us make sure that it does not happen in the future, which is why we put forward the amendment.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the intervention by the member for Winnipeg North, as I often do. However, it must confound him that when the Auditor General found the missing \$1 billion in HRDC when the Liberals were in government, the opposition of the day, the Conservatives, pounded them relentlessly about it being a \$1 billion boondoggle, and taxpayers rightly took their vengeance out on the Liberal Party in the subsequent years. Now, here we have the Conservatives lose \$3 billion, and they are trying to pretend that nothing happened.

I wonder if the member would give me a sense of his reaction or what he must perceive as the unfairness that the Liberals got chastised so badly, frankly, pounded relentlessly, for having lost \$1 billion, when the Conservatives think they are going to get off scot-free in losing over \$3 billion.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things I am very much aware of is the need to focus the attention on that \$3.1 billion. There are some who might have an objective to try to keep down the Liberal Party. Why, I have no idea, but at the end of the day, the Liberal Party will rise.

On the \$1 billion that was referred to, when it was broken down, it turned out to be around \$40,000, which is still a significant amount. At the end of the day, we believe that every tax dollar is an important dollar, and we should be striving to make sure that it is being held to account for.

However, let us not lose focus of the issue today, which is to try to hold the Conservatives accountable for that \$3.1 billion and to try to prevent this from happening in the future. That is what the debate today should be about.

• (1650)

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that it was not \$1 billion, it was not \$1 million, but at the end of the day it was in the thousands, and that was rectified.

However, my question is on what this \$3 billion, when it is spread out, could do for health care. Right now we are seeing many of the hospitals having to charge more and more for parking to pay their bills. How could that money, which could be allocated to health care, help people who cannot afford to pay for parking when they visit their loved ones when they are sick?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague brings up a great point. It is one of the issues that came up.

It is another one of those tax increases from the government. This one was put on so that when a person visits someone in the hospital and has to pay a parking fee, it will be taxed. It is part of the tax cash grab from the government.

No doubt the Conservatives would not require that in the face of \$3.1 billion. That is the point the member is trying to get across, which is that \$3.1 billion is a lot of money. We need to recognize the value. What could be done with \$3 billion? In some provinces, it would run the entire health care system. In some provinces, it would not only run the health care system, it would also provide all of the policing requirements.

It is an incredible amount of money. That is the reason we need to do as much as possible to find out where the money was spent and to confirm that it was spent in the areas to which Parliament allocated it. All of these are very important points.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Winnipeg North. I think it is reckless of him to talk about certain issues, such as the F-35 file.

I would like to remind my colleague of the fiasco of the four used submarines that cost much more than just their price tag. It was a boondoggle. Furthermore, it resulted in a man's death. That was serious.

What is more, in 2004, under a Liberal government that was a pro at flying by the seat of its pants, the Auditor General's report examined the management framework for the PSAT initiative, including all funding and expenditures. She identified weaknesses in the way Treasury Board evaluated departmental funding proposals. The Liberal Party of Canada is in no position to preach to the government, let alone the NDP.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. Is he not embarrassed to boast about things he has no business bringing up in the House at this time?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I would suggest it is a little off focus, but I appreciate it.

One of the things that the member does not necessarily appreciate is that I was an MLA prior to coming here. I spent many years in opposition in Manitoba when the NDP was in government. I can tell the House that the Auditor General in Manitoba was exceptionally critical of certain budgets and accused the NDP government of actually hiding a deficit.

Where the NDP has been in government, and let us hope that it does not ever form government here in Ottawa, it has not been good. It really has not. If we want to do a true comparison in terms of governance, we will find that quite often the NDP has very strong ties that keep it down.

We will also find that it has no problem with taxation. We might talk about huge taxation coming from the Conservative government, but the NDP in Manitoba just increased the provincial sales tax from 7% to 8%. If it moves, the NDP taxes it in the province of Manitoba. We do not want to talk about—

**Some hon. members:** What is the small business tax?

• (1655)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, they say this is about Ottawa and they are right, but the NDP has never been in government in Ottawa. That is why we have to look at the NDP in other provincial jurisdictions. People should be careful if they are going to throw rocks in a glass house.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, nearly one million Canadians rely on food banks each month. Schools on native reserves are underfunded. Employment insurance claimants are being tracked as though they are criminals. We are pulling out of international treaties such as the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, supposedly to save \$150,000 a year.

Meanwhile, we have no idea where \$3.1 billion has gone. Members opposite are telling us not to make too much of it, that it is not that serious. I am sorry, but it is very serious.

Members opposite are telling us that the Auditor General said there is nothing to prove that the funds were poorly used. What they do not seem to understand and are forgetting to say is that there is also nothing to prove that the funds were properly used. That is the main issue.

Let us take a look at what the Auditor General said about the possible scenarios that Treasury Board helped identify:

The funding may have lapsed without being spent. It may have been spent on PSAT activities and reported as part of ongoing programs spending. It may have been carried forward and spent on programs not related to the Initiative.

He did not add that the money may have been spent on gazebos, for example, or other such things. In short, absolutely crucial information is missing. \$3.1 billion is not a trivial amount. It represents 25% of the program budget and there is no transparency or accountability.

During that time, the Conservatives passed ineffective and unnecessary bills that violate our civil liberties. However, they cannot clearly explain how and on what programs the \$3.1 billion was spent.

I truly believe that the Conservatives should do some book-keeping and be accountable. That would be a change. That is not all. As if that were not enough, there are even problems with the amounts that the Auditor General was able to trace.

After examining funding for the public security and anti-terrorism program compared to funding according to program objectives, the Auditor General concluded the following:

PSAT objectives were broadly stated, and we found that activities proposed by departments and agencies to address them were equally broad. Departments and agencies spent funds on...the services of a security expert to advise a host country on security matters related to the staging of an international sporting event. Nevertheless, activities were deemed to be within the Initiative objectives.

Is that shocking? I find it very shocking. Even worse, that is not all.

In light of the fact that they had trouble keeping records and accounting for expenditures, what brilliant solution did the government find? I will be blunt: the brilliant solution was to stop

keeping track and being accountable. No sooner said than done. It is that simple.

• (1700)

This attitude may explain why, when my colleague said a few minutes ago that the opposition's role is to hold the government to account, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages looked at her with contempt and arrogance, as if to say, "try and see".

I think Canadians should be seriously concerned about this kind of attitude.

That said, the idea of just giving up on keeping track of funds or being accountable, because it is simply impossible to do so, is not the right way to do things. That is not what we would do, nor is it what Canadians want. As we have seen over the past couple of days and weeks, Canadians want to know and they have every right to know. In fact, this government has a duty to do whatever it takes to ensure that Canadians know.

In order for the Auditor General to be able to provide Canadians with the information they need, it is important that he get the necessary documents to properly account for how that \$3.1 billion of public funds was used.

Those documents must include all annual reports on public security and anti-terrorism that were submitted to the Treasury Board Secretariat, all submissions to the Treasury Board Secretariat established under that initiative, all departmental assessments of the initiative, and the database created by the Treasury Board to monitor funding.

The NDP is calling on the government to table those documents in the House by June 17, 2013, in both official languages, of course. We want the Auditor General to have not only all necessary documents, but also all the resources needed to conduct a thorough forensic audit until the \$3.1 billion is found and can be justified.

As I was saying earlier, Canadians have the right to know where their tax dollars are going, especially since those dollars are often so hard earned. I do not understand how some members of the House could possibly oppose this search for the truth. I strongly believe that the House should support our motion. However, I would like to put forward the following amendment:

[English]

I move that the motion be amended by adding the following:

...and that in order to avoid losing funds in the future, the House request that the government take all actions necessary to transition to program activity base appropriation according to the timeline provided to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in response to their seventh report, tabled on June 20, 2012.

• (1705)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion is in order.

It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion, or in the case that he or she is not present, consent may be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party.

Since the sponsor is not present in the chamber, I ask the acting whip, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, if he consents to this amendment being moved.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was on my feet earlier in response to an amendment from the member for Winnipeg North. I indicated at that point that we are agreeable to heading in the direction the members were proposing but that we were a bit concerned that the wording needed to be tightened up in order to achieve what I think we both wanted to have.

I thank the member who moved the amendment and we will support it. I certainly hope all members would find it likewise agreeable.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the member for Winnipeg North.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in following the amendment, I had a bit of a flashback to a time in I was in the immigration committee, not that long ago. I moved an amendment on behalf of the Liberal Party and then the government kind of agreed, then moved the same amendment. I said that was fine, it was the idea. I see the idea has not really changed. It is great. I applaud the member for recognizing that what we have suggested is valid. I believe it makes a better motion.

I would like to see a member from the Conservative stand so they too can be counted, at least on that point. I can appreciate they could be sensitive to the first part of the motion, but I would be interested in hearing what the Conservative Party has to say about the amendment. I wonder if the member might want to provide some comment as to how the Conservative Party could, at the very least, support the amendment. Ideally it would be nice if it supported the whole motion plus the amendment.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question.

As I mentioned earlier, not just about the amendment, but basically about the substance of the motion, I have a great deal of difficulty believing that members who represent their constituents can refuse to shed light on a matter that all Canadians are concerned about.

I am sorry, but I do not understand their logic and reasoning.

•(1710)

[English]

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, for clarification, we are not debating the motion with the amendment. We are debating the main motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** At this point we are doing questions and comments on the main motion.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to ensure that I was speaking to the right issue.

I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech. We talk about the fact that the Conservatives hold themselves out as being great financial managers and then all of a sudden where is this

### *Business of Supply*

money? There is the issue of where the money is, but there is also the issue of what else could it have been spent on and are there problems here?

What if the money had been spent on something like the eco-energy home retrofit program at \$934 million? However, it was not spent there because that program does not exist, but that might resonate with folks. However, if they found out that the \$23 million had been spent on media monitoring of Conservative backbenchers, I do not think Canadians would actually accept that this was an appropriate way to spend the money. Therefore, it is really important that we know where this money went.

[Translation]

I want to ask my colleague a question.

When the Auditor General appeared before the committee, he was asked whether it was possible that the \$3.1 billion might not necessarily have been used for programs approved by Parliament. The Auditor General responded that he thought he should say that there was a chance of that because he did not have enough information to answer the question fully.

I think this is an important point. There is not enough information to respond, to know what is happening with the money.

[English]

I wonder if my colleague would agree with that assessment of the Auditor General at committee.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question, which was excellent as always.

Two main points were raised here. One of them is vital, and that is knowing what could have been done with that money. I mentioned that we could have helped close to a million people who rely on food banks every month, continued to participate in international efforts or participated in programs such as the eco-energy program. I am also thinking of the fight against homelessness, which is an extremely important issue that affects my riding in particular.

However, we do not know what could have been done with the money because we do not know where the money is. The Auditor General made that very clear. Of course, we cannot say that the money was misspent but nor can we say that it was well spent.

Why is the government refusing to get to the bottom of this? Is this an indication that the money was in fact misspent? If the Conservatives are so confident that the money was well spent, why not simply agree to get to the bottom of things?

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on his amendment, which changes the wording of the Liberal amendment a bit but is based on the same principle.

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

I know we need to point some fingers about this very large amount of money that we do not know how it was spent. However, a very important outcome of this debate and the amendment, which I hope the government will support, is a reform of how Parliament approves the spending of money when the government asks Parliament for permission to spend it. This is very important for the future of the country and the importance of that fact should be recognized.

It would be a very good outcome of this debate if the House of Commons approves the motion and indicates its willingness to go to a program-based approval of spending requests from the government.

• (1715)

[Translation]

**Ms. H el ene Laverdi ere:** Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental roles of Parliament and the opposition is to scrutinize and examine budgets and expenditures.

All the necessary tools must be made available to MPs so that they can do their job on behalf of the people they represent. This includes various measures. It includes the budget office. It also includes having the time to thoroughly examine budget bills. All the tools must be made available to MPs so that they can perform this essential role.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

The hon. whip of the official opposition.

**Ms. Nicole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I request that the division be deferred until Tuesday, May 21, 2013, at the end of the time provided for government orders.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 21, 2013.

[English]

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that you see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**DISCOVER YOUR CANADA ACT**

The House resumed from March 27, 2013, consideration of the motion that Bill C-463, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel expenses), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this legislation, which, I would suggest, would be very costly and is very poorly thought out.

It is really a novelty proposal from the Liberal Party for a new taxpayer-funded travel subsidy. There are numerous flaws with this Liberal proposal, but unfortunately the 10 minutes allotted for my speech are not nearly enough to explain them all. However, before I address them in detail, let me briefly explain what this Liberal proposal would actually do.

This costly bill would give a very generous tax deduction of up to \$2,000 for certain types of travel across at least three provinces by bus, train or airplane or, for short, the *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* subsidy. Unlike the 1987 comedy by the same name, with the great Canadian actor John Candy, there is nothing funny about this Liberal proposal, especially for the Canadian taxpayers who would be asked to fork over hundreds of millions of their hard-earned dollars to pay for it. Indeed, for Canadians watching at home, today's Liberal proposal is a perfect example of what our Conservative government means when we say that the opposition is fiscally incompetent.

In an era when governments are trying to get back to balanced budgets, I ask Canadians why a party with any sense of fiscal responsibility would suggest that a new novelty subsidy with a price tag of over \$200 million each year be a sound idea. More importantly, why do the Liberals think it is the responsibility of government, which is taxpayers, to subsidize personal travel? That kind of big government thinking is a relic of the 1960s and 1970s. Respected *National Post* columnist Kelly McParland provided commentary on this Liberal proposal in a recent article. She wrote, in part, "...the shrunken little Liberal caucus is pumping out silly ways to spend even more borrowed money trying to manipulate Canadian behaviour, just like the old days".

*Private Members' Business*

What's worse, this bill would not even accomplish what it sets out to do, and that is according to the Canadian tourism industry itself. The head of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada said directly, "...we don't think this is a particularly useful mechanism because Canada's challenge is not a lack of domestic travel".

In the remainder of my time here today, I will address the flaws of this proposal in greater detail. These flaws include its unfairness to Canadians across the country, its sizable cost to taxpayers, and its inability to actually increase domestic travel.

After that, I will present our Conservative government's constructive, effective and more fiscally responsible approach to promoting Canadian tourism.

First, let us examine the issue of fairness—or unfairness, in fact—as it relates to this proposal. For instance, let us consider the modes of travel that are available: buses, planes and trains. What about boats? What about cars? What about motorhomes? Why would some be excluded? Why would some be included? It seems to be completely arbitrary.

What about the fact that eligibility would be tied to travel crossing three provincial boundaries? This would mean that some Canadians would benefit more than others, given the shorter distances between provinces in certain areas of the country.

Second, let us remember that this costly subsidy would not even accomplish what it sets out to do. As I noted before, the Canadian tourism industry itself has already dismissed today's Liberal proposal. It has done so for the good reason that it is clear this proposal would do very little to actually encourage interprovincial travel within Canada.

For that matter, even a basic analysis quickly reveals that it would carry a significant cost. Specifically, according to the Department of Finance and based on existing travel patterns and expenditures, preliminary estimates suggest that this proposal would cost at least \$215 million each year.

I should note that is a conservative estimate based solely on existing travel patterns. If Canadians were actually motivated to change their travel plans to qualify for this costly subsidy, as is the stated intent of the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, this proposal would cost taxpayers even more.

● (1720)

I know the Liberal Party might not think that \$200 million a year is a lot, but Canadian taxpayers know it is a lot of money.

We can think of it another way: over the first five years alone, it would cost, at the very least, \$1 billion—not \$1 million, but \$1 billion. When politicians propose \$1 billion in new spending over five years, Canadian taxpayers expect and demand that they also explain how they are going to pay for it. Canadian families working on their household budget around the dinner table know that if they add new spending, they had better know how they are going to pay for it. Even though the Liberals have come here today with a plan for new spending, have they told us how they are going to pay for it? Would they cut government services? Would they cut government programs? Would they cut health care transfers, as they did in the 1990s when they were in government? Would they just hike taxes,

such as income taxes or the GST? Maybe they would simply add to the government debt.

We do not know what they would do, because the Liberal Party and the member did not think about those questions. That is the very definition of fiscal irresponsibility.

It is little wonder that many Canadians have given a thumbs-down to this proposal already. Indeed, here is what some everyday Canadians said when asked by *Global News* about this proposal. One man said, "It reduces tax revenue to the government, which means government has less money to do other things that I might value more." Another added, "We are in financially tight times right now, and letting our country go further into debt for that sole reason seems like a bad idea to me."

It is comforting to know that these everyday Canadians have more wisdom and more fiscal responsibility than the Liberal Party. It is no wonder more and more Canadians are turning their backs on the Liberals. By rejecting this costly Liberal plan, our Conservative government is standing by the existing support that we provide to Canada's tourism industry.

This government recognizes the importance of the tourism industry to this country. It contributes about \$80 billion to our economy. It creates jobs for 600,000 Canadians and is an industry that touches all regions of the country. It is important to all regions and to all our constituencies.

That is why, in October 2011, we brought forward our federal tourism strategy. It is a whole of government approach. It reaches across 20 different departments or agencies and touches on 31 different recommendations across those 20 different agencies and departments.

It is centred on four key areas. The priorities are, first, increasing awareness of Canada as a premier tourist destination; second, facilitating ease of access and movement for travellers while protecting the safety and integrity of Canada's borders; third, encouraging product development and investments in Canadian tourism assets and products; and fourth, fostering an adequate supply of skills and labour to enhance visitor experiences through quality of service and hospitality.

One of the biggest things it does is pull together all those departments for the first time. It does so by bringing together a steering committee. The steering committee takes the plans and priorities we have for tourism, pulls them all together and gets all the departments and agencies thinking about the importance of tourism and the effect they have on tourism. For the first time, we are including the tourism industry in those consultations and meetings and making sure their voices are heard at the government table.

We are making a difference. If I had more time, I would like to share all the great things we are doing for tourism. Unfortunately, time runs short in the House, so suffice it to say that we are very excited about the future prospects of the tourism industry.

*Private Members' Business*

As a government we are committed to fiscal responsibility, and for this reason we will be voting against this proposal. That is also why we are supporting effective programs to boost tourism rather than the costly novelty of the Liberal proposal for a taxpayer-funded travel subsidy.

● (1725)

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this bill is truly based on good intentions, to encourage tourism in Canada by Canadians. Of course, taxpayers are in favour of more tax credits, especially when this would enable them to reduce the cost of their family vacations by a considerable amount.

However, before saying that this deduction would be good for both families and businesses, we should look closely and weigh several factors, including the cost of the bill itself, and thus its consequences for the government's revenue, Canadians' expected participation rate, the real effects of such a deduction on Canada's tourism industry and the additional complexity of the tax system.

The cost of this bill was estimated by the former parliamentary budget officer, Kevin Page. He responded to a request by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance for an estimate of the lost revenue to the government if such subsidies were granted. His conclusions were not really surprising.

Since no revenue source was proposed to counterbalance the expenditures related to this bill, Bill C-463 would result in reduced tax revenue.

Thus, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the net impact of Bill C-463 on federal tax revenue would be between \$90 million and \$120 million in 2017, in constant 2013 dollars.

Yet the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel claims confidently that the economic spinoffs from this bill would be sufficient to cover the cost of these deductions or, in the worst case, would be revenue-neutral for the government.

It is undeniable that such a bill would generate economic spinoffs. How big will they be? That is the question. If the hon. member has some calculations or more information on this, it could be interesting to hear about them, because even the Parliamentary Budget Officer was not able to establish an estimate.

We must determine how much use the taxpayers would make of this tax credit and what impact it would have on tourism. Will there really be new travel? Will people simply change their means of transportation or decide to go across one more provincial border in order to claim the tax credit? If they lengthen a planned trip in order to cross three provinces instead of two, only one part of the trip should be counted.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer added that he made his calculations based on the assumption that the proposed deductions would not cause carriers to increase prices, since if that were the case, a corresponding decline in induced demand could be expected.

It is a matter of aligning complex calculations with behavioural factors that are rather subjective. As it stands, we do not really have

any credible figures, except those from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Those are the figures we will use to make a decision.

It is not enough to simply bring in this measure. The public must know that it exists to be able to take advantage of it.

The costing of the bill is based on the assumption that all those who are eligible will use the tax credit. We know that is not true, but we have no choice but to take that into consideration. However, that assumption skews the figures in favour of the proposal.

On the one hand, travellers who do not use the tax credit will save the government money by not claiming the money they are owed. On the other hand, their travel cannot be included in the statistics used for costing Bill C-463, since they would have travelled anyway.

Something really bothers me about my colleague's logic. He claims that the bill is meant to encourage Canadians to explore, appreciate and discover their country, to meet other Canadians and experience culture. He said the following when he introduced the bill:

We should remove some of the financial barriers that stop them from exploring this great land and tell them to go out and discover your Canada...

With all due respect, I do not see how families with financial struggles would prioritize travel across the country. They may want to, but times are tough for many people.

My NDP colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue also questioned why the member chose the rule of crossing at least three different provincial boundaries, and she did so very eloquently. I agree that if we want Canadians to travel more within the country, they should be able to choose their destination. In her example, she explained that someone who crosses three provincial boundaries does not necessarily travel further than someone who goes from the far north of the Northwest Territories to southern Saskatchewan.

Acknowledging the limitations of his bill, the member said that the main reason for his bill was as follows:

Canadians have to start getting to know one another and discovering Canada. The only way to do that is to get them to travel as far as possible in the regions. When I talk about the regions, I am not talking about going from an urban area to a rural area. I am talking about travelling to eastern, western and central Canada. That is how people can get to know one another.

● (1730)

To be honest, I do not see the difference. In fact, from what I understand, Canadians will prove they want to visit Canada and get to know their fellow Canadians by travelling across three provinces. That is rather ridiculous. He spoke at length about Canadian tourists who buoy up American tourism, so he should be happy simply that someone decides to travel in Canada.

*Private Members' Business*

After looking at the tax credit requirements, it is clear to me that the three-province rule was put in place to try and restrict accessibility and eligibility in some way. According to statistics from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, 92% of trips within Canada are taken by plane, train or bus, and the vast majority of those, 88%, are not work-related and would therefore be eligible for the tax credit proposed in Bill C-463.

However, as far as the distance criterion is concerned, travellers cross at least three provinces in only 23% of travel by airplane within Canada. That being said, people who can afford to travel in three provinces are, for the most part, relatively well off. What is more, to benefit from this tax credit, a person would need a high enough income to pay taxes and for this non-refundable credit to make a difference in the taxable income. This is an important aspect of the bill that, I hope, in no way reflects what the member was getting at.

Travel, within the meaning of this bill, is considered a luxury for many Canadians. Many do not have the means to travel very far, or at least not far enough to benefit from the tax credit. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, a maximum of 10% of tax deductions for travel would come out of this bill, which is equivalent to roughly \$110 million out of \$1.1 billion.

Is it worth the trouble? There may be less expensive and more sustainable ways of encouraging tourism and helping people to travel. I am not sure this is the best way to go about it, especially at a time when we are trying to have the government simplify the tax system and reduce economic inequality. I think it would be hypocritical to encourage a new tax credit that goes against the primary goal of the tax system, which is to distribute wealth, and makes it less progressive.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that when he said that “the benefits of tax measures proposed under Bill C-463 are anticipated to concentrate to higher income earners”. I am not necessarily talking about this credit in particular, but the direction of the tax policy in general. To be more progressive and more effective, the tax system has to remain as simple as possible.

To conclude, despite what the hon. member thinks, I believe that many trips that do not follow the three-province rule contribute just as much to helping people learn about socio-cultural differences. As a result, I do not see why they are completely disregarded. If the intent really is to have people travel and discover Canada, simply travelling from one province to another should be enough. Whether a person leaves from downtown Toronto or from Calgary to get to Chaleur Bay, the trip will be no less memorable.

With that thinking, the member is minimizing the unique character of each province and is reinforcing certain cultural stereotypes, like the idea that western Canada is all the same, regardless of the province, when that is not true. I truly hope that everyone has an opportunity to travel; not only is it pleasant, but it is also enriching. However, I am not sure that it should be a government priority, quite frankly. I think the \$200 million or thereabouts could be better invested right now.

In short, I understand the member's intent, which is commendable. It is very important to encourage Canada's tourism industry. We support the intent of the bill. My riding in particular, Rimouski-

Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, depends largely on tourism, an important industry. However, the bill and its tax credit will do nothing to achieve the objectives or to help Canadians get to know each other better. This bill creates a tax credit that will benefit the wealthy more than everyone else.

● (1735)

[*English*]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and close the debate on my private member's bill, the discover your Canada act.

I outlined previously to the House why we should send the bill to committee. I spoke about why I believe this legislation is important for building Canada's unity. I was very clear that this legislation is an initiative to encourage Canadians to travel within Canada, period. I have produced figures, testimonials and polling data. I have even shared personal insights to help my colleagues better appreciate my reasoning for introducing this bill. I do not intend to spend the little time I have today restating what I have already said. I will instead use the limited time I have to address some of the criticism brought forward by members, because I am disappointed by the pessimistic tone and the calibre of debate.

Our duty as members of Parliament is to assess the merits of legislation. In order to do so we must have accurate and detailed data to make better-informed decisions. However, many members are obviously not using accurate information. I heard the remarks made on March 27 by the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who said that the bill is really just a novelty, a gimmicky distraction that would cost taxpayers more than \$200 million without really encouraging tourism within Canada. I have problems with this statement that go beyond its non-collegial tone. Accusing me of imposing a gimmicky distraction upon Canadians is bad enough, but I dispute the claim that the discover your Canada act would cost over \$200 million a year. It is a little exaggerated.

When researching where this number came from, I realized it was based upon a number that the Department of Finance came up with. To this date, the department has yet to provide me with a breakdown on how this number was arrived at, so I am not sure how credible this number is.

However, the independent Parliamentary Budget Office has provided everyone here with a full-blown detailed analysis of this legislation so they can better understand the fiscal implications of what they would be voting on. The PBO calculations determine that the discover your Canada act would have a fiscal cost of \$90 million, but at the same time, it also says there will be a revenue windfall of as much as \$110 million due to the increase in tourism spending. If I were to use industry standards, which are quite conservative, every \$1 spent would generate \$5 of economic spinoffs. Members can see that the cost is not even a factor, contrary to what some Conservative and NDP members have said, who have used this as an argument to speak against the bill.

*Business of Supply*

Therefore I am left to ask the question: What passes for solid evidence on the government side and on that of other members of the House, when time and time again the PBO has put out estimates more accurate than the government's? This happens when the government is more interested in partisanship than pursuing the best interests of Canadians. It is shameful. It is ongoing. It has to stop.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately, I was also disappointed with the NDP's arguments against this bill.

My colleague for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup read the report by the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, but he does not seem to have understood it very well.

He seems to think that we are milking the Canadian tourism industry. If that were the case, why would the Parliamentary Budget Officer state that the measure will have \$110 million in tourism spinoffs? It seems that there is some milk left.

My colleague also talked about potential fraud that the bill could encourage. For example, people could claim that a business trip was a vacation. As an accountant, I am very familiar with taxation. Business deductions are far more generous than the proposed measures in this bill.

In short, a business person who tries to claim a business trip under the provisions of this bill will pay more taxes because this deduction is less advantageous.

[*English*]

The bill may not be perfect. I accept that, and I am ready to work on it at committee. However there appears to be no desire by some Conservative or NDP members to work with me on the bill, which has the support of 70% of Canadians and would come into effect in 2017, in time to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday.

The PBO's estimate of \$110 million in economic spinoffs is another piece of information that my colleagues have failed to mention in their haste to discredit the bill by claiming it would not encourage tourism within Canada, which is totally false. An independent Harris/Decima study confirmed that four out of ten Canadians surveyed would be more than likely to travel within Canada if the bill were passed.

[*Translation*]

I am asking all my colleagues to set aside partisan politics and vote for this bill so that we can study it in committee and improve it.

[*English*]

I will close by simply stating that we should vote in favour of the bill, which 70% of Canadians support in its current form, so we can send it to committee, work collaboratively to improve it and pass an even better version at third reading, so that even more Canadians will approve. We owe it to Canada to support the bill, which is good for national unity.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 22, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

• (1745)

[*English*]

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso not being present to raise, during the adjournment proceedings, the matter for which notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the House will now go into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering votes under Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2013–14

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the main estimates, Mr. Joe Comartin in the chair)

**The Chair:** I would like to open this committee of the whole session by making a short statement on this evening's proceedings.

Tonight's debate is a general one on all of the votes under Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Each member will be allocated 15 minutes. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government and then the Liberal Party.

*Business of Supply*

After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation. Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used both for debate and for posing questions. Should members wish to use this time to make a speech, it can last a maximum of 10 minutes, leaving at least 5 minutes for questions to the minister.

When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used; in other words, what portion will be used for speeches and what portion for questions and answers.

Members should also note that they will need the unanimous consent of the committee if they wish to split their time with another member.

[Translation]

When the time is to be used for questions and answers, the Chair will expect that the minister's response will reflect approximately the time taken by the question, since this time will be counted in the time originally allotted to the member.

Though members may speak more than once, the Chair will generally try to ensure that all members wishing to speak are heard before inviting members to speak again, while respecting the proportional party rotations for speakers. Members need not be in their own seats to be recognized.

[English]

As your Chair, I will be guided by the rules of the committee of the whole. However, in the interests of a full exchange, I am prepared to exercise discretion and flexibility in the application of these rules.

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, ministers and members should be referred to by their title or riding name and, of course, all remarks should be addressed through the chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

At the conclusion of tonight's debate, the committee will rise, the estimates under Indian Affairs and Northern Development will be deemed reported and the House will adjourn immediately until tomorrow.

• (1750)

[Translation]

We may now begin tonight's session.

The House in committee of the whole pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), the first appointed day, consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

[English]

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I will be using my full 15 minutes for questions.

I would like to begin with the main estimates where the department is asking for \$262 million for aboriginal economic development. However, the information from the PBO's integrated

monitoring database shows that the department only spent 50% of its allocated funding in the first three quarters of the last financial year. What is the most recent financial data that the minister has on this line item and does he expect the unused funding to be carried over into the estimates currently before the House?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, when we talk about economic development there is no question that our government recognizes that the most effective way to address the gap in socio-economic conditions that are faced by aboriginal Canadians remains increasing their participation in the economy. As all members will agree, all Canadians benefit from strong, healthy, self-sufficient aboriginal peoples and communities.

The historic Crown-first nation gathering reaffirmed the Government of Canada's commitment to creating conditions to accelerate economic development opportunities and maximize benefits for all Canadians. The funds that are allocated in the main estimates for economic development are in line with what was done in the previous fiscal year, which will ensure that we can continue to make progress on that front.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, in the main estimates, the department is asking for \$11 million for Metis rights management. However, the information from the PBO shows that the department only spent 38% of its allocated funding in the first three quarters of the last fiscal year. What is the most recent financial data that the minister has on this line item?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, again, the hon. member will have observed that in the program architecture of that specific program there have been changes. As a result, the estimated amounts budgeted in the estimates for Metis can be found under program 1.

It is important that we continue to work with Metis people to improve their quality of life. As a matter of fact, I had a good meeting with the president of the Métis National Council the week before where we renewed and signed the protocol to ensure that we can—

**The Chair:** The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, my understanding is that the time allotted for the question and the time allotted for the answer are supposed to be roughly the same.

**The Chair:** You are correct. I would direct the minister to try to restrain his answers to roughly the same length of time as the question. We will go back to the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

• (1755)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, after two fiscal years of higher spending, why is the government only planning on spending \$9.7 million in the coming year on emergency assistance when we already have high flood forecasts in much of northern Canada?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, emergency preparedness for first nations is a serious concern of the department. That is why I was recently in western Canada where I visited other communities that were affected by the 2011 flood. I had meetings with the leadership of the first nations where we discussed emergency preparedness.

As a matter of fact, I will meet with the minister of Saskatchewan in the next few weeks to ensure that emergency preparedness is effectively implemented on first nations not only in Saskatchewan but throughout all of western Canada.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, has a performance measurement strategy been prepared for the emergency measures assistance program of the department?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, at all times the department monitors the activities that it carries. We want to make sure that the taxpayer dollars that we invest in whatever program are spent in the best interests of taxpayers. Of course, emergency preparedness, just like any other program, is delivered with this principle.

**Some hon. members:** Time.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, could the minister please indicate where in the estimates the additional funding required by first nations to implement all aspects of Bill C-27 is?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, if the member looks carefully throughout the estimates she will not find it because it does not result in increased costs for first nations.

I want to remind the member that the first nations had to produce the consolidated financial statements before.

**An hon. member:** Time.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Answer the question. Answer the question.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, since there is clearly no money to implement Bill C-27, why did the government change the most recent contribution agreements to tie the implementation of Bill C-27 to the funding agreements?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, it is simply so that such agreements conform to the law as it stands now.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, is the department demanding that all first nations send letters stating that they did not sign this year's contribution agreements under duress?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the fact of the matter is that indeed some first nations were taken aback by the short period of time within which they received the funding agreement this year.

Upon my arrival, I instructed officials to make sure that next year these funding agreements are provided to first nations with a longer period of time so that they may consider those. That is what will happen.

**An hon. member:** Ten seconds.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order. As you have said from the outset, if we are to have a thoughtful discussion and debate this evening there are a couple of things we would do.

First, we would conduct ourselves in a manner that is consistent with the rules of the standing committee.

Second, with respect to time allocation, we were to leave it in your very capable hands to decide when. We do not need the chirping stopwatches we are hearing across the way interrupting questions and responses.

**The Chair:** That was more of a speech than a point of order. We shall go back to the process. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, will the minister announce a joint process with first nations to develop next year's contribution agreements?

• (1800)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, what we will do, and what we have undertaken to do, with first nations concerning the next round of funding agreements is to provide them long in advance so that they may have proper time to consider those.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** You have slightly less than six minutes.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, how many specific claims claimants are still waiting to hear if the government will accept their claim for negotiation?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I thought she was going to congratulate the government on the speed with which we have been able to clean the bundle of claims that had not been addressed. In 2012, we have, as a result of the Justice at Last policy implemented by this government, been able to solve I think over 97 special claims, at a cost of some \$1 billion. Not only does it settle a wrong for these first nations communities but it allows these communities to pursue economic development—

**The Chair:** The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, that actually was not the question.

My next question is, is the Kelly Lake Cree Nation claim one of the claims the government is still deciding on?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I did not hear the question.

**The Chair:** Would the hon. member repeat the question, please?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, is the Kelly Lake Cree Nation claim one of the claims the government is still deciding on?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, all of the comprehensive claims that are being negotiated are on the website. It is easy to find out.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, has NunatuKavut Community Council land claim been accepted by the department?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, is the question about NunatuKavut's claim?

*Business of Supply*

This claim, as she may know, was presented a long time ago. This is a claim that is still being considered and no decision has been made.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, what is the status of the Labrador Inuit land claims agreement, in principle?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the agreement in principle, I believe is still being discussed and has not been concluded.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, the government keeps talking about willing partners.

What is the government's plan to work with unwilling partners since the government has a constitutional obligation to do so?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I could simply say it takes two to tango.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, have all the government bills tabled in this Parliament that affect aboriginal peoples' rights met the legal requirement for consultation and accommodation, as defined by the courts?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I would like to correct the record. I referred to solved specific claims earlier. There were 93 that have been solved under that last policy.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, I suppose my time does not get extended.

Have all the government bills tabled in this Parliament—I am sorry, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** It has been extended.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Have all the government bills tabled in this Parliament that affect aboriginal peoples' rights met the legal requirement for consultation and accommodation, as defined by the courts?

• (1805)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, Canada takes its legal duty to consult very seriously. We not only acknowledge that duty, we implement it. Every activity or conduct that may adversely affect inherent aboriginal rights or potential rights or title to land is, of course, done through the duty to consult.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, did the department recommend or undertake consultations with aboriginal peoples regarding the Canada-China FIPA agreement? There is a court challenge pending.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Since the matter is before the court, I think we will leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, how can the federal government justify increasing operating expenses for AANDC while simultaneously reducing the funds allocated to grants and contributions for first nations communities?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the operations seem to be inflated, simply because it is not only about operations. There are other items that come under vote 1. It does not all go to operations.

**The Chair:** Resuming debate. The hon. minister of Indian affairs.  
[Translation]

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, first, I am pleased to be

here today to discuss the 2013-14 main estimates for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

I welcome this opportunity to bring all my honourable colleagues up to date on activities in this very important file. I had the honour of being appointed to this portfolio on February 22 of this year. Since then, I have made it my priority to meet with first nations community members, elders, leaders and youth across Canada in order to advance dialogue on our shared priorities and establish a new relationship with aboriginal people and northerners.

Whether it is through settling land claims, reaching self-government agreements or increasing economic development opportunities both on and off reserve, we are creating the conditions for aboriginal people to participate more fully in Canada's social and economic life.

While we are making progress, we know that more work remains to be done. Our government is also working to modernize legislation in order to allow aboriginal people to benefit from a framework of rights and standards comparable to those all other Canadians enjoy.

Take for example the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, which received royal assent on March 27. It responds to calls from first nations community members for greater access to the same basic financial information about their leadership that other Canadians expect of other levels of government.

Specifically, it requires first nations to publish a statement of remuneration and expenses paid to their chief and council, as well as their audited consolidated financial statements. This act provides first nations community members with the information required to make informed decisions about their leadership, and it provides investors with the confidence they need to enter into financial partnerships with first nations. This will contribute to greater economic opportunities for their communities.

• (1810)

[English]

The government is, of course, committed to advancing the outcomes agreed to at the historic Crown-first nations gathering on January 24, 2012. In trying to find practical solutions, work continues with willing partners to renovate programs and develop approaches, including new legislation that would improve the lives of first nations members across Canada.

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The government is committed to working with willing partners in addressing elements of the Indian Act that are barriers to first nations governance. For example, we have expanded the First Nations Land Management Act to enable first nations to manage their own reserve land and resources so that they can operate at the speed of business. The government is also improving the process for adding lands to reserves.

On January 11, 2013, the government and the Assembly of First Nations agreed to establish two senior, high-level forums for promoting high-level discourse and co-operative approaches to address the historic treaty relationship and claims issues.

On April 12, I announced the government's commitment to the review and renewal of the Government of Canada's comprehensive claims policy to expedite the resolution of claims in a manner that is fair and that enables economic development for first nations.

We have also, and I referred to it briefly, taken historic steps to speed up and improve the resolution of specific claims. In the past, these claims dragged on for many years, but our reforms have led to real progress. I am proud of how our government has tackled this very important issue. We have cleared up the backlog of more than 540 claims at the assessment stage and have settled, through co-operative negotiations with first nations across the country, more than 90 specific claims, valued at more than \$1.5 billion, since forming government.

As I said earlier, these settlements not only correct a wrong; they create certainty and provide resources so that first nations can target economic development initiatives that their communities, and indeed Canada, can benefit from.

We will continue to take the steps required so that first nations, Metis and Inuit can take advantage of the great opportunities our great country offers. This is clear in my department's 2013-14 main estimates, which I am here to speak about today.

The 2013-14 main estimates forecast departmental expenditures of approximately \$8 billion. That is a net increase of \$178 million above last year's main estimates. As we know, the main estimates do not provide a complete picture of the government's investment. Since the main estimates were tabled, the budget was laid before Parliament. Economic action plan 2013 adds an additional \$390 million to the department's budget for programming, job training, education, important community infrastructure and family violence prevention.

Together, these investments demonstrate our government's unwavering commitment to improving the quality of life of aboriginal people and northerners and to creating jobs and economic growth. Last year's economic action plan included increased funding for priorities our government shares with first nations, such as first nations education and the first nations water and waste water action plan, among others.

Our government's goal is to provide first nations students with a quality education that provides them with the same opportunities and choices as other Canadian students. By improving graduation rates, we will help ensure that first nations students have the skills they need to pursue additional education or skills training or to enter the

labour market and enjoy the dignity of a good job and the freedom and independence that go with it.

I could go on and talk about all the other good things the estimates reveal, but I guess my time is up.

• (1815)

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister for his remarks. I have a few tough but fair questions for him.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I am particularly pleased to be here tonight to speak to the 2013-14 main estimates for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. I am proud as someone who has spent a professional lifetime living in first nations communities and working with them in a variety of different capacities.

We are seeing an improved quality of life and improved opportunities to get a good education and to create jobs and economic growth for first nations Canadians and northerners. We are also committed to supporting these reforms with the necessary resources in a way that is strategic and targeted. I believe this is evidenced once again in this year's main estimates and in this year's budget.

Could the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development describe how these investments in the main estimates and the budget demonstrate our government's commitment to creating the conditions for aboriginal people to achieve healthier, more self-sufficient lives and communities?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank my parliamentary secretary for his great assistance. He referred briefly to his vast experience in this matter and I will share with all members of the House that being a newcomer in this position, I greatly appreciate the experience and the knowledge of my learned friend.

As he knows and as I said earlier, these main estimates forecast expenditures of about \$8 billion. That is a net increase over last year of \$178 million. This includes funding for the Indian residential school settlement agreement, for the first nations water and waste water action plan and also for investments to improve first nations education.

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As I am sure my learned friend knows, the mains do not provide a complete picture of the government's investment. Since the mains were tabled, economic action plan 2013 has added \$390 million to our budget for programming in job training, education, important community infrastructure and family violence protection.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** For my second question, Mr. Chair, I want to talk about Canada's economic action plan 2012, which included increased funding for priorities our government shares with first nations, such as first nation education. Economic action plan 2012 committed \$275 million in additional investments over three years.

As a result, as the minister mentioned in his remarks, this year's 2013-14 main estimates include \$115 million toward improving first nations education. A portion of this year's funding will go toward early literacy programming, for example, and other supports and services, such as administration, to first nation schools and students to strengthen their relationships with provincial school systems and improve outcomes.

Could the minister describe how these investments will contribute to better opportunities for first nation students to get a good education that will in turn equip them with the skills they need to enter the workforce and participate in Canada's economy fully?

• (1820)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, whether it be in Kashechewan or in B.C. or Atlantic Canada, all the youth, chiefs and councils I have met with agree that education and skills training is vital to filling the gap in between the graduation rate, for example, at the school level of aboriginal students versus non-aboriginal. All of the investment we are making in education has the main objective of improving these graduation rates, of improving the outcomes, so aboriginal youth in our country, which is an enormous wealth of human resources, can be assisted so they can become full participants in our economy. That is the objective and the reason why these investments are so important.

**The Deputy Chair:** Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. Paul's. I would appreciate it if the member could inform the Chair how she would like to apportion her 15 minutes in terms of questions and answers or a speech.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, we will be doing questions and answers. I understand that it means they are the same length of time.

I want to follow up on the minister's statement about first nations, Inuit and Metis in Canada fully participating in the economy. Could the minister tell us what percentage of high school students living on reserve graduate from high school every year?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, unfortunately the rate of graduation is not similar to that of non-aboriginal Canadians not living on reserve. That is why it is about 35%. It is important that we invest in what we have proposed as a result of the work we have done with the Assembly of First Nations, which is to introduce a national education act. We are consulting on this at this moment with first nations and Canadians and stakeholders.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, the minister should know the rate has not changed in the seven years that the government has been in power. In some years it has gone backwards.

The government set a goal for an 8% improvement over the next five years, which people find disappointing. Does the minister believe this goal is good enough? What investments is he putting in to improve the number of students finishing high school?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I am surprised the member is complaining about the rate not having changed. For the 13 years her party was in office prior to 2006, it did not change either.

If the Liberals are concerned about education and investments into education, maybe they could explain to first nation people and Canadians why they vote against every investment we have proposed to make into education.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, a real strategy is: what, by when and how? When does the minister expect that the on-reserve graduation rates for aboriginal students will arrive at the national average? What investments is he prepared to put in to make that happen? In what year will they be the same as all Canadians?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the reforming first nations education initiative, which was launched in 2008, includes the first nation student success program and the education partnerships program.

In budget 2012 we committed, in response to a report by the National Panel of First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education, jointly undertaken by the Government of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations, to introduce a first nations education act to explore new mechanisms to ensure stable, predictable and sustainable funding. If we can achieve that, we will see the results and the graduation rate increase.

• (1825)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, the Conservatives have decided that they want to have a look at the history of Canada, yet in the proposal there is nothing there on indigenous people. There is a chapter on Canadian history that Commissioner Sinclair has called "the secret of shame".

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has said that it needs more time and more money to complete its work. It also needs the documents not only from the minister's department, but from all of the other departments, particularly the RCMP.

Will the minister be giving the Truth and Reconciliation Commission the time and money, as well as organize the documents so this chapter in Canadian history can be properly dealt with in truth and reconciliation?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I have met twice, and no longer than two days ago, with Justice Sinclair and the other commissioners. When the member claims it needs more time, my discussions with the commission were with respect to implement the agreement that is court supervised. We are working together and I have committed to working with the commission to ensure that we fully respect the obligations of Canada under the settlement agreement that is court supervised. This is a continuing conversation and dialogue I will have with the commission in order to ensure the objective of the agreement is attained.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, the commission is supposed to finish its work next year. Could you tell us how you are complying with the court order that said you were to turn over all documents requested by the commission? When will you comply with the court order?

**The Deputy Chair:** Before I go to the minister, I would just remind all hon. members to direct their comments, questions and responses through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, we will work diligently with all the parties. This is not just about the Government of Canada. This is an agreement to which there are many parties. It is court supervised and we alone cannot change the terms of a court settlement that is court approved. Maybe the member does not get that.

We will continue working to implement our obligations under the settlement agreement. We have committed to that.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, what I do get is that the commission had to go to court to get the documents.

Budget 2013 says that it will invest \$24 million over two years through the family violence prevention program for first nations to contribute to improving safety on reserve. How can the minister justify cutting the funding by \$7 million from last year, while repeatedly talking about the government's commitment to combating violence against aboriginal women?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, with her experience, the member should know the difference between cutting expenditures and/or a sunset program. There have been no cuts to this program. In fact, the budget has increased the amount of funding for this prevention program. As a result, we will be able to continue spending even more this year than last year.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, the Department of Justice has been reducing the funding for the aboriginal justice strategy. A review of the program by the department in 2011 noted the capacity to expand this strategy reaching into additional communities is currently limited and that there are large geographical gaps in the access to community-based justice programs.

Given this, would the minister agree that he should be cutting funding to this program?

• (1830)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, these are the estimates of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, not justice.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, our government had an aboriginal affairs committee of cabinet where we dealt with these

things together in order to make things happen, like the Kelowna accord.

Over the past six years there have been programs to build, operate and maintain infrastructure on reserves. There is no Canadian watching tonight who has not seen the scenes from Attawapiskat and 100 other communities in that shape, which received an average of \$1.2 billion annually, but budget 2013 allocates \$7 billion over the next 10 years.

Why has the minister decided to cut approximately \$345 million per year from the 2012 funding levels and \$500 million from the six-year average for first nations infrastructure programs?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I thought the member was going to congratulate me. I announced this week that we were going to spend a further \$2 million for housing needs on Attawapiskat. Now she is trying to picture this as no efforts being made on our part.

If we look at the last budget, we committed to infrastructure investment in first nations communities all across Canada for the next 10 years at a rate that would see real progress in the infrastructure needs of first nations.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, the cut to community infrastructure is also impacting water and waste water, which will lose \$200 million in funding under the government by 2015.

How can the minister justify this when his own department's national assessment on first nations water and waste water estimated an urgent and immediate funding shortfall of \$1.2 billion and an additional \$4.7 billion that was necessary over the next 10 years.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the fact is that the investment in water and waste water that has been made from 2006 to 2013-14 is over \$1.3 billion. It is important to understand, and I know Liberals do not operate that way, that this investment is part of a comprehensive long-term plan to improve on reserve water and waste water founded on three pillars: enhanced capacity building and operator training; enforceable standards and protocols; and infrastructure investments.

I was in a community where the government had invested a lot of money on a system and it had no operator. We are now training these operators so these investments can be protected.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, as the minister knows, three-quarters of first nations communities have water systems that are at high or medium risk.

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I want to know how long the government anticipates it would take at the current funding levels to deal with at-risk water and waste water systems identified in that national assessment. In a strategy of what to buy and when and how, when does the minister expect that 100% of families in 100% of communities would have access to safe drinking water in Canada?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, since the 2009 and 2011 national assessments, the percentage of first nation drinking water systems that have certified operators has increased from 51% to 60% and the percentage of waste water systems that have certified operators has increased from 42% to 54%.

If the member wants to give me more time, I could talk about the water systems and their risk levels, but I know my time is up.

•(1835)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, the minister's own February 2011 evaluation of first nations housing concluded that the housing shortage on reserve is severe and getting worse. About 20,000 to 35,000 new units are needed to meet the demand.

We want to know how the minister can justify the department's plan, as found on page 42 of the report on plans and priorities for 2013, to cut approximately \$20 million over the next two years from first nations' community infrastructure for things such as on-reserve housing when the minister well knows there are 99 other Attawapiskats.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, this is, if not incorrect, misleading.

The fact of the matter is that between 2007 and 2012-13, our department provided approximately \$1.2 billion in on-reserve housing support to first nations communities. According to the first nations' report, not ours, the Government of Canada's investments have contributed to an average of 1,750 new units and 3,100 renovations annually over the past five years.

Access to safe, sustainable and affordable housing is of course essential to improve economic and social circumstances and to support healthy, sustainable first nation communities. However, the fact of the matter is that the provision and management of housing on reserve lands is primarily the responsibility of first nations, with support from the Government of Canada, which we are providing.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I would like the minister to explain why the 10,000 units the government claims it has built on reserve over the last six years is approximately 3,800 units fewer than what would have been built during that same period at the 2005 funding levels.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the fact of the matter is that the numbers I have quoted come from the first nations' report, and again, there is no cut from the previous year in the assistance that will be given for housing units.

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I will be using the first 10 minutes of my time to speak and the last 5 minutes to pose questions for the minister.

Before I begin, I would like to congratulate the minister on his position. As a northern member of Parliament, I have had numerous opportunities to speak directly with the minister and I thank him for

his availability to his northern MPs and for his willingness to work on northern issues directly with me and my other colleagues.

I also appreciate this opportunity to take part in today's debate. I would like to discuss Canada's northern strategy, its achievements and its benefits to residents of our north.

Since the government's 2007 Speech from the Throne, we announced Canada's northern strategy, which outlined an overarching vision for the north. It focused on four priority areas: strengthening Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development and improving and developing governance.

The north is a special and iconic place for Canadians, majestic in its vast geography and magnificent in its wildlife. It is a homeland for many aboriginal people and possesses world-class natural resource wealth.

Northerners are at the heart of the northern strategy. Our government is committed to ensuring that a strong and prosperous north helps shape the future of our nation. Every Canadian can take pride in the progress we continue to make on issues of importance for people living in the north and for the future of our country.

Since 2007, Canada has made significant investments to improve social and economic development in the north, one of the key pillars of the northern strategy. Today I will touch on a few of the significant achievements that allow us to achieve our full potential.

The northern jobs and growth act would contribute to the Government of Canada's plan to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity by making improvements to the review process for major resource projects. The overly complex regulatory environment in the north has been repeatedly identified as a major source of frustration for those invested in our resources. Northern regulatory processes have often resulted in delayed regulatory decisions. These delays have discouraged new investors and undermined the economic viability of major projects. To be globally competitive, northern regulatory processes need to provide for timely, efficient and effective project reviews. At the same time, these processes also need to ensure strengthened environmental protection and respect aboriginal consultation obligations.

For residents of Nunavut, the northern jobs and growth act would mean improvement to the regulatory regime, which would provide a highly efficient single-entry system and would enshrine the concept of a one project, one review approach for major project proposals. These improvements would add clarity and predictability to the land use planning and environmental assessment process in Nunavut.

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In the Northwest Territories, the northern jobs and growth act would mean a new Northwest Territories Surface Rights Board. It would have jurisdiction throughout the Northwest Territories to resolve disputes over the terms and conditions and over compensation for access to land when an agreement cannot be reached by the parties through negotiation or mediation, thereby providing predictable conclusions to reaching those agreements.

The northern jobs and growth act would also respond to the call for action from resource companies and Canadians asking for better coordination and clearly defined time periods for project reviews, more streamlined and predictable review processes, and improved regulatory approvals. Bill C-47 would help make these a reality and in turn would contribute to resource wealth and create economic opportunities for individuals and communities that would benefit not only northerners but all Canadians. Our government's aim is a northern regulatory regime that would be more effective and predictable, while safeguarding the environmental health and heritage of the region and including meaningful aboriginal consultation.

The northern jobs and growth act is an important part of moving forward with the Government of Canada's northern strategy. It would support social and economic development, it would protect the north's sensitive environment, and it would uphold Canada's responsibilities under modern land claim and self-government agreements. With an improved regulatory regime, northerners would have an efficient and effective system now and for future generations.

• (1840)

I would now like to touch on the important work being done by CanNor, the economic development agency for Canada's north. It is also supporting the social and economic pillar of the northern strategy. CanNor works with its many partners to develop a diversified, sustainable and dynamic economy for northerners and aboriginal people across Canada's three territories. It does this by delivering programs, building partnerships and incorporating the activities of other federal departments, particularly as they relate to resource development in the north.

Our government is also continuing its important work under the Arctic science and technology pillar of the northern strategy by demonstrating leadership in Arctic science. As part of his northern tour, the Prime Minister, visited Cambridge Bay, site of the Canadian high Arctic research station, and remarked:

The north is a fundamental part of Canada's heritage, future and identity, and we must continue to assert our sovereignty over Canada's Arctic. This new station will undertake science and technology (S&T) research that will support the responsible development of Canada's North, inform environmental stewardship, and enhance the quality of life of Northerners and all Canadians.

It is estimated that the construction of the station will generate up to 150 jobs locally, across the north and in more specialized sectors in other parts of Canada.

As a part of the governance pillar of the northern strategy, our work in the Northwest Territories over the course of the last year has resulted in the successful negotiation of a consensus agreement on the terms for the devolution of lands and resource management from

the Government of Canada to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The Prime Minister said:

Our Government recognizes that Northerners are best placed to make the important decisions about how to run their economies and how to maximize use of their resources. Once finalized, this historic agreement will provide the Northwest Territories (NWT) with greater decision-making powers over a range of new responsibilities which will lead to jobs, growth and long-term prosperity across the Territory.

Devolution in the NWT will mean the transfer of decision-making and administration for land and resource management from the Government of Canada to the Government of the Northwest Territories. The territorial government will become more responsible for the management of onshore lands and the issuance of rights and interests with respect to onshore minerals and oil and gas. It will also give it the power to collect and share in resource revenues generated in the territory.

With the conclusion of negotiations, the Government of Canada has engaged in a second round of consultations to gather input from aboriginal organizations in the NWT that will lead to a final devolution agreement.

At this time, I would like to speak of yet another example of our government's commitment to our northern strategy. The nutrition north program provides northerners with greater access to nutritious perishable food, such as fruits, vegetables, bread, meat, milk and eggs.

Recently the Arctic Co-op Ltd. announced how nutrition north Canada has enabled them to provide direct 767 super freighter service from Winnipeg to Iqaluit. Duane Wilson, vice-president of the merchandising and logistics division at Arctic Co-op, recently noted that this change represents improved efficiency, innovation and collaboration in the supply chain.

Early efficiencies under nutrition north Canada have seen prices in communities fall and stay below where they were under the former program. Nutrition north Canada benefits 103 remote northern communities in Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon, Nunavut and Northwest Territories. It is more focused and transparent than the outmoded program it replaced.

What is more, northerners have a direct impact on the new program by voicing their opinions and suggestions for improvement in the way it works. I have certainly been advised on some of those, and we have had direct contact and communication with the first nation communities that are working under and with the nutrition north program in my riding.

Nutrition north Canada is also guided by an advisory board, the members of which represent a wide range of northern perspectives and interests. They provide information and advice to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development on the management, direction and activities of the program.

*Business of Supply*

Our government has made the north a top priority, placing it higher on the agenda than it has been in many decades. This government has a clear vision for the north as a healthy, prosperous region within a strong and sovereign nation.

I would like to end by thanking all of our partners who contributed to our significant achievements under the northern strategy. I look forward to continuing our work on jobs and growth across the north.

• (1845)

**The Deputy Chair:** Does the hon. member for Yukon have a question for the minister?

**Mr. Ryan Leef:** Mr. Chair, I do. I have a few questions, and I am not sure how much time I have left for those. I have five minutes? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, our Conservative government has just announced a historic agreement for devolution in the Northwest Territories. This is an outstanding achievement. Once finalized, the agreement would provide the Northwest Territories with greater decision-making powers, which would lead to jobs, growth and long-term prosperity in the territory and indeed across Canada.

As the member of Parliament for the Yukon, I can speak first-hand to the benefits of devolution. Our government knows that it is northerners who are best placed to make decisions to manage their economy, contrary to the position taken by the member for Western Arctic on the devolution agreement.

I would like to ask the minister this. What do northern regulatory improvement initiatives mean for devolution in the Northwest Territories?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for Yukon for his good question. He referred to the Prime Minister's visit to Yellowknife on March 11 to announce that consensus had been reached on the terms for an agreement. This is indeed a historic accomplishment.

On the regulatory front, we will soon launch consultations on additional improvements, particularly in the Northwest Territories, where we want to ensure that an effective and efficient regulatory system for the benefit of all Northwest Territories residents is in place prior to the devolution of the responsibilities for the management of lands and resources to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

It is important that these regulatory regimes in the north work right to create the predictability and certainty needed to attract investment and create jobs in the north. This, of course, advances the objectives of the northern strategy and builds on our government's commitment to jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

• (1850)

**Mr. Ryan Leef:** Mr. Chair, obviously we know no government has done more to advance the interests of Canada's north than we have. I know we will certainly continue to do so. We introduced the northern jobs and growth act to allow northerners to benefit from projects in mining, oil, gas, transportation and other businesses across the north and across Canada.

Could the minister tell us briefly how Bill C-47 fits into the broader northern regulatory initiative and what this means for the future regulatory improvements?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the northern jobs and growth act, as members may know, would fulfill obligations flowing from land claim agreements, and it would respond also to economic development and needs of northerners, and it would build on our government's commitment to create jobs, new wealth and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

Bill C-47 would establish in legislation the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Nunavut Planning Commission, which we know stem from those land agreements, as well as systems for environmental assessment and land use approaches in Nunavut. The bill would also establish the Northwest Territories surface rights board act, which would resolve disputes in cases of access to the land.

Importantly for the member asking the question, because it touches his homeland, Bill C-47 would amend the Yukon Surface Rights Board Act, advancing the objective of the northern strategy. A more predictable regulatory regime would allow northerners to benefit from 24 major resource projects worth more than \$38 billion. That is huge. There is a lot of potential there and, with the government as an ally of the north, we will see that development occur.

**The Deputy Chair:** Resuming debate with the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay. Would he like to tell the Chair how he would like to spend his time?

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I have a number of questions to get through, so I would like to follow the standard of keeping the questions and answers to roughly the same length.

I would like to begin by congratulating the minister. This is the first chance I have had to officially congratulate him in the House on being chosen for this very important role.

I would also like to note that we are coming up to the third anniversary of the death of Shannen Koostachin, the youth activist who fought so much for education. I will be focusing my questions tonight mostly on the issue of education.

Can the minister tell me what the total funding envelope is for instructional services within the elementary and secondary education file under aboriginal affairs?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, it is \$27 million. In the main estimates there is not a detailed answer for that question because over \$1.55 billion will be invested in education. As the estimates indicate, there are no specific numbers, but what is important to realize is that when we look at the investment in education that is made throughout the—

**The Deputy Chair:** Order, please. I want to stop the clock for a second. I want to remind all hon. members that an attempt will be made to keep the length of the answers similar to the length of the questions. The Chair will try to keep to that. Sometimes I recognize it is difficult for that to happen.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

*Business of Supply*

●(1855)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, I understand what the estimates provide, but any school board in the country will be able to say what is in the funding envelope for education. How much is in the instructional funding envelope for elementary and secondary education?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the Government of Canada invested \$1.55 billion in first nation education for about 117,500 students. This represents an average of about \$14,000 per full-time equivalent student in 2011-12. According to these instructional services, that is the cost for 2011-12. Since there are no reductions in the estimates for that envelope, it will be about the same amount this year.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, this is a big issue. I was a school board trustee, so I am a little hung up on this.

In the school boards, provincially, the funding envelope comes with the students per capita, and one knows what it is. It is ring fencing. The envelopes are specific, so this is a specific question that the minister does not seem to be able to answer. He does not seem to be able to tell us if he knows what is going in for instruction, not in terms of what is being spent by the bureaucracy, not what is being spent on all manner of other things.

What is being spent in terms of the instructional envelope?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, for instructional services, it is \$1.3 billion.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, if he wants to put that on the record, he can. I do not think he understood the question. I am not going to make this hard for him. He is the education minister of one of the largest school systems in the country. These are things that are fairly straightforward.

What is the backlog of schools on reserve right now that need to be replaced?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, in the last few budgets and again this year, in the estimates, we are investing over \$115 million for schools throughout all of the reserves in Canada. In action plan 2012, we had invested \$175 million over three years to build and renovate schools and—

**The Deputy Chair:** Order. Once again, the member for Timmins—James Bay is asking questions in the range of about 20 to 35 seconds. I appreciate they are complicated, but I would ask the minister respectfully to try to keep his answers to something similar to that.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just asked what the backlog of schools is. How many schools need to be replaced? What is the plan? How many?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the schools are being replaced according to a system that analyzes which school is in need of being replaced in order to protect the health and safety of the students. That is the ranking that decides which school is done.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, then the minister does not know how many schools need to be replaced. Again, we are talking about children here. This is an issue on which he has a responsibility to

understand the importance of protecting the health and safety of children. I am surprised that he does not know the number. I could give him the number 48. Maybe that would help him.

I would ask him how many schools on reserve have been listed as substandard or condemned.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, if the member has the answer then why does he ask the question?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, I was asking the question because I was hoping the minister understood his portfolio and was able to see the importance of making sure the children are able to go to a school with quality education. If the minister does not think it is important or thinks maybe it is a joke, that is unfortunate.

I would like to continue on.

Since he does not know what the instructional services envelope is, we know that under the provincial system there are specific funding envelopes for libraries, computers and extracurricular school activities. Will the minister tell us if there are any specific funding envelopes that exist for those services? If not, why not?

●(1900)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the member is comparing this education system among 633 first nations in Canada to a school board in downtown Toronto. I mean, this is not the same thing at all.

I indicated earlier that the overall investment is \$1.3 billion for instructional services. He is not satisfied with the answer, but that is the fact.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, it is not just the school board in Toronto. These are school board standards in every jurisdiction in this country. He should understand whether or not there is a funding envelope. I would like to tell him that there is no funding envelope for libraries. Is he not aware of that? I find that very surprising.

I would like to continue on with the importance of post-secondary education.

How many students who were eligible to receive post-secondary funding support were not able to receive it this year? What are the numbers?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, access to post-secondary education is key, of course, to ensuring that first nations have every prospect for improvement, with access to post-secondary education and opportunities. We provide \$320 million yearly in post-secondary funding to students. In budget 2013, the government announced an additional \$10 million to support bursaries for first nations and Inuit students through Indspire. We have also allocated \$5 million for the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies and a new aboriginal bursaries search tool with close to 700 links—

**The Deputy Chair:** Order. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, I am not trying to be rude here, but he did not answer my question. I wanted to know if he knew how many students who were eligible for post-secondary education were unable to receive it. He does not seem to know that either, so I will ask him another question.

Will he confirm that money that should have been used for students to go to post-secondary education under the first nation funding envelope was reallocated for internal use by INAC and Indian Affairs? Will he confirm that?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the Government of Canada's commitment to post-secondary education is also reflected in a suite of programs that do exist and are available to both aboriginal and non-aboriginal students. When we talk about education at the post-secondary level, I would remind the hon. member that not only does this department invest about \$320 million of our funding, but there are also other programs in place that they can access.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, the question was whether they have taken money that should have gone to students for post-secondary education and spent it on their bureaucracy. That was the question.

The minister will not answer it. I think that is a very important issue, given that we have so many first nations young people who struggle so hard and have such high dropout rates. For the minister to not take responsibility or even think it is an issue that they are taking money from post-secondary education and are spending it on their bureaucracy I find pretty shocking.

I would like to continue. Would the minister tell us how much the department spent fighting the equality in child welfare case at the Human Rights Tribunal and at the Federal Court? How much money have they spent?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the Department of Justice could best answer the question, because it is the one carrying the case.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, I find it surprising that he would not know that either, because we are talking about first nations children. The number is in excess \$3 million.

The federal government's departmental directive 20-1, which the government's own records describe as creating a dire situation, is driving children unnecessarily into foster care, when many could stay at home if there were proper family support services provided. Would he agree with the government assessment that its plan for dealing with children is leaving families and children in a dire situation?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as a matter of policy, we are funding or reimbursing first nations or other service providers for administrative protection and prevention services. We also fund the direct cost of placing first nations children ordinarily resident on reserve in temporary or permanent care out of the parental home.

We have introduced an advance protection program such that we now have agreements with six provinces where the care is delivered in the best interests of those children.

● (1905)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, the question was on the government's own report that these children are being left in a dire situation under this minister's watch.

I would like to carry on, though. Many of our first nations children have to leave their reserves and end up in a provincial system. What standards does the minister have for the children under his watch who are under the provincial system? What methodologies and what accounting do they have to ensure that the provinces are providing the kind of support they need?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the new enhanced prevention-focused approach provides funding for additional support for these children and provides tools that allow parents to better care for their children. When we talk about aboriginal children who are not on reserve, they are under provincial jurisdiction, and they are dealt with by the provincial systems.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, how much did the provincial jurisdictions bill for services for students who had to go off reserve?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the fact of the matter is that in terms of funding, over the last 16 years the funding has grown from \$193 million a year to \$626 million in 2012-13. In 2012-13, \$626 million was invested in child care services.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, I was actually talking about what the government is being billed by schools for education. The minister said that once they are off reserve, it is not his responsibility.

It is his responsibility. In terms of the standards they have for the children who have to leave their reserves to be educated, are they meeting the quality of education and meeting their needs? They are his responsibility.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I will ask the member to repeat his question.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, when a student has to leave a reserve and go to the provincial system, there is a funding agreement in place. There is also the obligation to ensure that since they are reserve students, whoever is educating them has a standard. There has to be a protocol.

I am sorry I am hung up on this. As a former school board trustee, I would be shocked that there would be no standards in place to ensure that there was some level of accountability. What is the protocol?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, we invest close to \$394 million in provincial schools to ensure that these protocols are respected.

**The Deputy Chair:** Order, please.

The time for the member for Timmins—James Bay is expired.

Next is the member for Brampton West. How will he be splitting his time?

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I will be 10 minutes and then will allow five minutes for questions for the minister.

I am proud to stand today and talk about what our government is doing for first nations with respect to providing improved water and waste water services to their residents. Our government engaged in the largest comprehensive study of water and waste water systems this country has ever seen, identifying and going through every water and waste water system so that we could prioritize how we could improve water and waste water.

The Government of Canada and first nations have shared the goal of ensuring that first nations have the same access to safe, clean drinking water in their communities as all other Canadians do. Access to safe drinking water, the effective treatment of water and the protection of sources of drinking water in first nations communities is critical to ensuring the health and safety of first nations. I want to assure all members in this House tonight that this is an area of great concern for our government.

We are targeting three key areas to ensure that residents of first nations communities can readily access clean and safe drinking water, like all Canadians. The three things we look at are enforceable standards and protocols; infrastructure investments in specific projects; and enhanced capacity-building, operations and training for those treatment systems.

In the area of enforceable standards and protocols, I have to say that we have made significant strides. On February 29, 2012, after significant consultation with first nations, Bill S-8, the safe drinking water for first nations act, was introduced in the Senate. This is enabling legislation. If passed, it would make it possible for our government to work with first nations, and not just first nations but also other stakeholders, to develop regulations comparable to those that safeguard drinking water in other places across Canada.

Currently, legally enforceable protections governing drinking water and waste water do not exist on most first nations lands. It is our government's view that anyone committed to better safeguarding water quality on first nations lands should see the importance of supporting this legislation. Of course, I urge my colleagues on the other side of the House to support this legislation when it comes back for a vote. It is now moving to the committee. This legislation would clearly lay out the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in drinking water in first nations communities.

I want to underscore that the proposed legislation is the product of engagement between the government and first nations on safe drinking water legislation and enforceable standards over the last seven years. That is how long this consultation has been going on. There have been numerous recommendations concerning federal water regulations, including reports by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Office of the Auditor General, the Expert Panel on Safe Drinking Water for First Nations, and the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. There was also the "National Assessment of First Nations Water and Wastewater Systems", which is the study I referred to at the beginning of my speech.

First nations have also supported the concept of water regulations. When the proposed legislation was first introduced, Chief Lawrence Paul of the Millbrook First Nation, who is also the co-chair of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs Secretariat, spoke to the potential of the bill for first nations communities. He said:

First Nations will be able to look forward to having the same protections that other Canadians have around the provision of drinking water, water quality standards and the disposal of wastewater in their communities. This is not only an important health and safety issue, but will help build confidence in our infrastructure and help create a better climate for investment.

Should the proposed legislation be passed, further engagement with first nations on the development of federal regulations would follow. This would support the development of federal regulations that would be tailored to the unique circumstances of first nations. However, the opposition has indicated yet again that they will not support this important legislation for first nations. I do not understand this opposition. The time for this legislation is now.

Creating federal regulations will take time, and they would be implemented over a number of years. This would allow the government and first nations to bring water and waste water infrastructure and capacity to the level required to meet those very regulations.

• (1910)

Our government's vision for supporting first nations to improve water and waste water services for the residents also includes capital investments. Between 2006 and 2014, the federal government will have invested approximately \$3 billion in water and waste water infrastructure and related public health activities to support first nations communities in managing their water and waste water systems. That is a significant investment.

Economic action plan 2012 also included an additional \$330 million over two years to help sustain progress made to build and renovate water infrastructure on reserve and to support the development of a long-term strategy to improve water quality for first nations. More specifically, this money is going towards training for operators of water and waste water systems on reserve, operating costs of water and waste water systems and capital investments for the highest-risk systems.

Because of the comprehensive study we did, the first of its kind, we were able to prioritize water and waste water systems that are in need of immediate help. That is what we are doing with those funds.

*Business of Supply*

With the new funding last year, the government was able to prioritize investments to high and medium-risk systems in over 50 first nations communities, including Canoe Lake First Nation, Tallcree First Nation and Nazco First Nation. These estimates include \$137.4 million for the first nations water and waste water action plan. Again, these are additional funds being invested in water and waste water.

This funding will be allocated in 2013 and 2014 in three areas of planned expenditures. Operations and maintenance will receive \$46.1 million, \$30.2 million will be for training for first nations and \$50.8 million will go toward capital investments. However, that is not all. Health Canada is also supporting first nations with an investment of \$54.8 million committed through economic action plan 2012, which is for water-related public health activities.

The federal government recognizes that in some first nations communities, there are issues regarding in-home access to water and waste water services. Manitoba's four Island Lake first nations are one such example. I am pleased to say that this government invested \$5.5 million in 2011 to bring running water to 100 houses in that community.

I want to underscore the fact that our government is committed to ensuring that first nations have the same access to safe, clean drinking water in their communities as all other Canadians. This means not only setting our sights on reducing the number of medium and high risk systems, but also directing investments to capacity and training to operate and maintain those systems. The 2011 national assessment results underscore the critical importance of having trained and certified operators to reduce the risk and help ensure that the drinking water in first nations communities is safe. Operation and maintenance, operator qualification and record keeping account for 60% of the risk measured.

As I outlined earlier, the federal government's economic action plan 2012 year one investment includes more than \$30 million for training first nations. Our government provides funding for operator training courses and for operator certificate training and registration costs in all regions. Training helps to ensure that operators have the level of training and skills required to operate and maintain the water and waste water systems.

I want to take a moment to highlight another important program. That is, of course, the government's circuit rider training program. The program, for those who do not know, is a specialized training program that provides first nations operators with ongoing on-site training and mentoring on how to operate their water and waste water systems. We invest approximately \$10 million a year into the circuit rider training program across the country.

It is clear that this government has made working with first nations partners to improve on reserve water and waste water a priority. Through progress on enforceable standards and protocols, through sustainable capital investments and by supporting enhanced capacity building and operation training, we are delivering on those results.

•(1915)

I am confident we will continue to deliver results and make progress on this important issue.

**The Deputy Chair:** Does the hon. member have a question for the minister or the parliamentary secretary?

**Mr. Kyle Seeback:** Mr. Chair, between 2006 and 2014, including the budget 2012 investment, the Government of Canada will have invested approximately \$3 billion to support first nations communities in managing their water and waste water infrastructure and related public health activities. The government is prioritizing these investments to high- and medium-risk systems to address factors that are the greatest contributors to risks such as capacity and training in operations and maintenance.

In 2011-12, the government supported 402 major and minor first nations water and waste water infrastructure projects and 286 are currently planned for 2012-13. Could the parliamentary secretary please inform us how Bill S-8 will help protect Canada's substantial investments in first nations' water and waste water systems?

•(1920)

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Brampton West for his pertinent question. Access to safe and effective drinking water, potable water and responsible waste water protection is a top priority for this government. Over the past seven years we have, through a very rigorous consultation process from coast to coast to coast, participated in that consultation. In fact, I was involved with the consultation in my previous life as a legal counsel on behalf of first nations members in some communities.

Born from that consultation were three principles. One, the capacity; reporting, monitoring and maintenance of these facilities which the member alludes to as being one of the factors with respect to the national assessment that finds the lifespan of these water treatment facilities to be much shorter, in addition, the harsher environments. Our focus with respect to the infrastructure and with respect to this legislation is to do these three things synchronously. They are not mutually exclusive of each other. We cannot build or rehabilitate these facilities without having properly certified workers to operate them.

**Mr. Kyle Seeback:** Mr. Chair, in January, the former minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development announced the government's plan for new investments in first nations water and waste water systems. The government will invest \$330.8 million over two years to sustain progress made to build and renovate water and waste water infrastructure and support the development of a long-term strategy to improve water quality in first nations communities. Funding is also provided to support the circuit rider training program, which I just mentioned. This is a long-term capacity-building program that uses travelling trainers called "circuit rider trainers".

*Business of Supply*

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development please tell us what else our government is doing to improve water quality in first nations communities across the country?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Chair, in 2009, the government had initiated the national assessment of first nations water and waste water systems. It was the most rigorous and comprehensive independent assessment of its kind, surveying 97% of drinking water and waste water systems in first nations communities and first nations reserves.

In 2008, our department completed a series of workshops with first nations across the country to obtain feedback from the department's water protocols and based on this in 2010, updated and replaced its previous protocol with the protocol for centralized drinking water systems in first nations communities.

Over the course more recently of 2011-12, we are working to address 47 water systems identified as both high design and high overall risk.

Again, with respect to the training programs the member is talking about, I would invite him to come out to the great Kenora riding where we have seen significant investments in certification. We thank Northern Waterworks and Confederation College for their important work in ensuring that the facilities themselves, the infrastructure, can be reported, monitored and maintained with appropriate certified workers in those respective isolated first nations communities, in particular.

**The Deputy Chair:** That concludes the time for the hon. member for Brampton West.

Next, the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I will be taking my 15 minutes to ask questions and hopefully get answers from the other side. My theme for these questions is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in particular. I will not have any difficult or easy questions. I just want to ask some important questions on this file.

I know that the minister referred to the tango just a while ago and it takes two to tango, but I also know that to dance the tango, there is only one person who leads the dance. On that account I would like to say that I prefer the round dance because it is a more inclusive dance.

My first question for the minister is, have historical files pertinent to the Indian Residential School System been destroyed by the Government of Canada?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** To my knowledge, no, Mr. Chair.

• (1925)

[Translation]

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, does the minister deny that documents were destroyed over concerns about lawsuits?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I was not around in the 1940s, or the 1930s, or the 1920s. To my knowledge, no documents were deliberately destroyed simply to have them destroyed.

[English]

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, I would like to know if the department has commissioned an internal analysis outlining the potential consequences of the destruction of documents.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the government made a commitment.

[English]

The government is committed to an agreement that has been reached, which is court approved and court supervised. In that settlement agreement, Canada has committed itself to remitting the relevant documents so that an archive could be built whereby the legacy of the residential school system could be studied. We will abide by the commitment of Canada.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, I have the analysis here that was requested and I would like to know from the minister who asked for this internal analysis to be done. Were senior staff or legal counsel involved in this analysis?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, identifying and disclosing over a century's worth of relevant Indian residential school documents held at the Library and Archives Canada presents a massive challenge. I discussed these challenges with the commission this week, two days ago, as a matter of fact, and we are working together diligently to implement our obligations.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, in an Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision, the court said, at paragraph 29, "While its scope is disputed, the legacy mandate of the TRC is clearly an important part of its work".

Following the analysis of the Auditor General of Canada's recent report, can the minister tell me what the current timeframe is to transfer all of the requested Indian residential school records to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, we are actually working diligently with the commission and we are scoping a bunch of documents that are at the National Archives to determine how we can, as rapidly as possible, remit the relevant documents to the commission, which we are committed to do.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, has the department estimated the financial and human resources that will be required in order to hand over to the TRC all of the relevant documents requested?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, this is the process that is taking place right now. When we have that information available, we will be able to provide it.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, one of the issues, of course, was what constituted relevant documents in this case. After three years, can the minister confirm to us today that there is a common understanding or agreement on what constitutes relevant documents?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** The department is working, Mr. Chair, in collaboration with the commission, Library and Archives Canada and the Department of Justice to develop a plan to identify and disclose the remaining relevant Indian residential school historical records held at Library and Archives Canada. That is taking place as we speak.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, I know that this case was heartily disputed by the Government of Canada. I know that the minister responded to my colleague from St. Paul's just a while ago about this, but how much has the department spent fighting the TRC in court on this issue?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, the legal cost is an issue that he should raise with the Minister of Justice.

• (1930)

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, does he not think that it is important for the minister of Indian affairs to know how much it costs to fight aboriginal rights in the country?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, what I know is that Canada is committed to a court settlement that is court-approved and supervised by the court. We are committed to respecting our obligations under the agreement.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, if that is the case, is there a common understanding with the TRC about timeframes in this case with respect to what documents would cover and what format would be used?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I previously answered the hon. member that the timing and scope of the necessary documents that will be disclosed is something that is being worked on as we speak, among the commission and the department and Library and Archives. As soon as that process is terminated then we will know what the timeframe is.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, you and I know, and all members in the House should know, that other survivors, first nations, Metis and Inuit, attended provincial or privately run residential or day schools in sanatoriums. Will there be further funding to compensate other survivors like those?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the agreement that has been reached was reached with a host of parties who were party to a class action. The court-approved settlement implicates and brings all of the parties. All of the terms of that settlement are very clear as to who the persons are to whom it applies. That court-approved settlement will be implemented as per the agreement of all parties.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, my question was whether or not the department is open to these other cases that are as dramatic and as tragic as the other ones? Will the department now give further funding to compensate other survivors in other social experiments, like experimental Eskimos for instance, the children of the sixties who have been fighting for recognition and compensation?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, Canada has accepted responsibility in the class action for those students who attended residential schools that were under the supervision and or the aegis of the federal government. This is the extent of the obligation of Canada that has been accepted and that is reflected in the settlement agreement.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, I know that these issues are important. I would like to know how much the government has budgeted for this fiscal year, since we are discussing the budget here, to continue to fight against the recognition and compensation of survivors in the courts.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the investments that are outlined in the estimates for the settlement are intended to respect

Canada's obligation under the settlement agreement. Again, these funds will be spent to meet our obligations.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, I know that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is fully aware of the fact that there are many cases before the courts. I am not asking him to talk about those cases, since they are in court, as I guess he would say. I was wondering about his opinion on whether or not he thinks it is a good use of taxpayers' money to continue to fight against survivors in the courts and aboriginal rights in general before the courts.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, again, Canada is party to a settlement agreement which is court supervised and court approved. Canada is committed to meet its obligation under the agreement.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, since he did not seem to understand the question, I will repeat it.

The minister is aware that there are many cases before the courts and that taxpayers' money is being used to fight against recognizing aboriginal rights before the courts.

My question is simple: does the minister feel it is a good use of taxpayers' money to fight the country's first nations?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the member is playing politics when he implies that Canada should not protect taxpayers' interests.

As the government, we have an obligation to respect taxpayers. We must also ensure that all Canadians' rights are defended. At the end of the day, it is up to the court to make a decision. Canadians' interests are protected, and that is our primary concern.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, we are not playing politics when we are talking about the fundamental rights of Canada's first peoples.

The issue arose when the minister went to the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. He left in a hurry, probably because he was afraid to answer any more questions.

My question is quite simple. The government is not apologizing to aboriginal peoples for what they went through in the residential schools, and it keeps fighting against aboriginal rights. Is the minister okay with that?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the member's characterization of Canada's position is absolutely false.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Harper, was the first and only government leader to give victims of this dark chapter of our history an apology on behalf of all Canadians. As representatives of all Canadians, we concluded an agreement. I will say again that we will meet all our obligations under the agreement that was concluded.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Chair, on this side of the House, our approach to this serious, relevant and important issue is to move toward reconciliation with Canada's first peoples.

*Business of Supply*

Yes, bravo, he apologized, but it was at the insistence of our former leader, the late Jack Layton.

My question was very simple. Does he condone the fact that the government apologized, but it keeps fighting against first peoples' fundamental rights?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the member's statement is totally false. It is a fabrication.

The fact is that under the agreement in question, as of March 31, 2013, 97% of the 105,510 applications received had received \$1.6 billion from Canadians, and 78,859 had received the common experience payment, which represents 99% of the 80,000 former residents who are entitled to the program. We concluded an agreement, we are honouring it and we will continue to work diligently with the commission to meet all of Canada's obligations.

• (1940)

[*English*]

**The Deputy Chair:** Before we resume debate with the hon. member from Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, I just want to remind all hon. members that references to colleagues by their given names is not acceptable in the House.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar. Could the member tell the Chair how she will be using her 15-minute time slot?

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I rise to speak to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's main estimates for 2013-14. Before I begin, I would like to indicate that I will use the first 10 minutes of my time to speak and the last 5 minutes to pose questions.

These main estimates reflect the Government of Canada's continued commitment to improving the quality of life for aboriginal people and northerners. Through targeted investments, this government is helping build the strong foundations of governance, human capital and infrastructure, which are the basis for healthy and prosperous communities.

Bill C-27, First Nations Financial Transparency Act, which received royal assent this past March, is one such example of our government's efforts to promote greater transparency and accountability. This, in turn, will create the conditions that encourage investment, economic development and growth, building a foundation for long-term prosperity in first nation communities across the country.

The passage of this legislation into law represents a milestone for those first nation communities, members and leaders who have been calling for this change. As I have said before, all Canadians, including first nations, want and deserve transparency and accountability from their governments. I am proud of our work with grassroots first nation members to have this legislation passed into law.

Until this legislation was passed, first nation governments were the only level of government in Canada that did not have some form of legislation to enhance or ensure accountability and transparency. Now the roughly 580 first nations operating under the Indian Act can benefit from more accountable, transparent governments.

Phyllis Sutherland, member of the Peguis First Nation and president of the Peguis Accountability Coalition, has said:

Bill C-27 will lead to big changes in accountability and transparency in First Nation communities...People at the grassroots level will be able to access information about their community without fear of intimidation or reprisal.

Colin Craig, prairie director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said:

We pushed for this new law for over three years so we're ecstatic it has passed. We commend the government for acting on concerns raised by taxpayers and whistleblowers living on reserves...Plain and simple, this new law will improve accountability and especially help the grassroots hold their elected officials accountable.

The First Nations Financial Transparency Act ensures first nation citizens have the same democratic rights and protections as all other Canadians. First nations are already required as a condition of funding agreements to provide government officials with audited financial statements and a schedule of salary, honoraria and travel expenses for chiefs and councillors.

That is not always shared with local residents, even when they ask for the information. In fact, during committee hearings for Bill C-27, we heard stories of people being intimidated in their home community, just for asking for that information.

This act ensures these statements will now be made available to first nation members, as well as to the public through posting on a website. This change will not lead to an increased reporting burden. These documents are already being prepared in accordance with the same accounting principles that apply to all levels of government right across the country, using a consistent format that was put in place in 2012-13.

Our ultimate goal is one recipient, one agreement and one report. Work toward this goal has already begun through a pilot project in which several first nations across Canada are taking part. The participating first nations prepare an annual report to their community and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada will now draw the performance information it needs from these reports to satisfy its own requirements to report to the Treasury Board and Parliament.

The results of this pilot project have been encouraging and as an added benefit, the participating first nations are in an excellent position to meet the requirements under the First Nations Financial Transparency Act.

In parallel with financial transparency created by the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, our government is reducing the reporting burden on first nations created by funding agreements. The year-end reporting handbook has been streamlined by 60% from previous years. This means that we are reducing the number of reports recipients must submit, including eliminating those that duplicate information we can now get from the audited financial statements that will be online.

*Business of Supply*

• (1945)

All first nations will now be completing fewer reports each year, beginning this year. We intend to go even further to weed out unnecessary reporting, while ensuring Parliament, Canadians and first nations community members can evaluate the results achieved with taxpayer dollars.

Consistency and transparency will help voters in first nations make decisions at election time. They will be able to make comparisons from year to year and from community to community. They can ask questions about spending and about revenues. Some first nations governments already post financial information on their communities' websites. Some already table comprehensive annual reports to their communities. We commend them for this. The First Nations Financial Transparency Act will encourage this kind of progress right across the country. Legislation like Bill C-27 is an essential step forward on that path.

We have worked with first nations partners to develop legislation that would replace the defective election provisions of the Indian Act with a clear, consistent, reliable framework that communities can use to elect strong, stable, effective governments. I am pleased to report that our creative and collaborative work has borne fruit and the result of that creative collaboration is Bill S-6, the first nations election act.

The Indian Act elections system has significant flaws. For instance, the Indian Act requires that first nations communities hold elections every two years. This requirement deters first nations chiefs and councils from initiating long-term projects, from working closely with investors, business owners and partners in other governments and from taking full advantage of emerging opportunities to improve the lives of people in their communities.

There is more. The Indian Act does not prevent any person from running and being elected chief and to a councillor position at the same time. The current system's loose nomination process also enables the names of candidates who are neither dedicated to running nor serious about serving to be placed on the ballot without their approval and, in some instances, without their knowledge. Because of this omission in the law, some first nations elections have had more than 100 candidates vie for as few as 13 positions.

Finally, the Indian Act elections system does not contain offence and penalty provisions, leaving it open to abuse and questionable activities.

Bill S-6 would enable first nations people to shut a piece of the Indian Act by providing an alternative to its flawed election provisions. Bill S-6 would present an open, transparent and accountable election system that first nations people expect and deserve. We only have to consider some key provisions of the bill and what these provisions would set in motion to understand its value.

Significantly, Bill S-6 would provide for terms of office of four years. With this time horizon, band councils are well positioned to advance important initiatives for the well-being of their communities. As well, Bill S-6 would provide: more rigour to the nomination of candidates; offence and penalty provisions that would allow courts to impose penalties for activities such as vote buying

and obstructing the electoral process; and remove the paternalistic role of the minister in reviewing and deciding upon election appeals.

It is important that we all understand that the proposed act would not be mandatory. A first nation could simply remain under its current election system, whether that is the Indian Act or its own community-based system. To opt into the new law, a band council must adopt a resolution asking the minister to add its name to the schedule of first nations to which the new election system would apply. At a later time, a first nation could remove itself from the first nations election act by developing its own community election code, submitting that code to a community vote and receiving a favourable outcome. More than that, the fact that Bill S-6 is the product of collaborative efforts among government and first nations organizations is testament to its validity as an important step forward for first nations.

As members can see from our work on the First Nations Financial Transparency Act and on Bill S-6, the first nations election act, our government is committed to helping deliver more effective, more transparent and accountable governments.

• (1950)

**The Chair:** The member has about four minutes and forty-five seconds for questions.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Chair, two years ago, after hearing complaints from first nation community members, I introduced my private member's bill, Bill C-575, to increase financial transparency and accountability for first nations across Canada. My bill died on the order paper, but this government introduced Bill C-27, the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, to deliver more effective, transparent and accountable governments. I am proud to have contributed to this legislation becoming law so that first nation communities can benefit from the investment, economic development and greater certainty that accompanies enhanced accountability and transparency.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the time the minister spent in Winnipeg in celebrating this legislation coming into force and the many meetings we held that day to celebrate with many of the members who had been calling for this legislation for quite some time.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is: Why did the government bring in a piece of legislation on first nation financial transparency?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, who started the work on her private member's bill and made significant contributions to what would become Bill C-27 and now law.

*Business of Supply*

Our government believes first nation members, like all Canadians, deserve that kind of transparency and accountability from their elected officials. The act builds on our ongoing commitment to ensure that first nations have strong, transparent and accountable governments and does not increase the current reporting requirements of first nations.

Our government has heard from aboriginal community members who have said that financial disclosure is important and necessary for their communities. I am proud that we have taken action to deliver results for first nations and, as a matter of governance, have that discussion go on between its members and its council with respect to financial transparency.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Chair, we know first nations have been denied basic access to the financial information of their elected officials and their financial statements for far too long. We believe that first nations deserve and expect the same level of financial transparency and accountability of their first nation governments as all other Canadians.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is: What are the benefits of the First Nations Financial Transparency Act?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Chair, the act actually addresses the issue of financial transparency for first nation leaders by expanding the scope of the information to be publicly disclosed. In accordance with provisions in their funding agreements, first nation band councils are already required to provide Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada with audited consolidated financial statements, which include a schedule of salary, honoraria and travel expenses for their elected band officials. Therefore, the act ensures that these statements are made available to first nation membership in their communities and the public by being posted on a website. This will help first nations by supporting reductions in the reporting and bureaucracy requirements surrounding funding agreements themselves.

Of course, transparent and accountable first nation governments also create, as importantly, a better environment for private sector investment with more confidence, which could lead to greater economic development opportunities. In fact, we heard that at the standing committee, again, with that superordinate goal of improving the quality of life for first nation communities and their members.

• (1955)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I am glad to have the opportunity to ask the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development a few serious questions.

First, does the minister acknowledge the urgency of addressing violence against first nations, Inuit and Metis women?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, indeed, that is why economic action plan 2013 announced funding of \$24 million over two years for the family violence prevention program, allowing my department to continue its programming at the funding level of approximately \$30 million in 2013-14 and 2014-15. These investments contribute to enhanced safety and security of on-reserve residents, particularly women and children.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, does the minister acknowledge the tragedy of more than 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, absolutely. That is why we are taking concrete action by investing \$25 million over five years to address the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada. Funding is also provided for shelters and violence-prevention programming on reserve. This should attest to our concern about the issue.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, if the minister and his government are so concerned, will they commit to a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, yes or no?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, if the concern of the hon. member is such, maybe she could extend it to the matrimonial property rights of women, which we are trying to implement in Canada, to try to fill a gap of more than 25 years where women living on reserve are denied a basic right, which the NDP opposed.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, I would ask the minister to respect the rules and keep his answers to the same length of time as the questions.

My question is: Will the minister commit to a national inquiry into missing and murdered women, yes or no?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the House has decided to create a special committee to look at the issue. The government has endorsed a motion and, as I understand it, the work is currently taking place to look at this issue. I am sure we can trust the members of Parliament to do an excellent job in their mandate.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, I would like to acknowledge that question was not answered. Certainly, families and organizations like the Native Women's Association of Canada would like to know that answer directly from the minister.

Which department takes the lead role in coordinating the federal government's response to violence against aboriginal women?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** This is a whole of government concern, Mr. Chair. Several departments are concerned about this issue and are working with first nations and stakeholders all across Canada to try to address this important issue.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, again, which department is taking the lead?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the lead over the inquiry has been taken by the Department of Justice. It is ably assisted, I might add, by a host of other departments.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, many recommendations in the UN universal periodic review of Canada draft report asked that Canada develop a national action plan to address violence against aboriginal women. Will the minister commit to a national action plan?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, will the hon. member respect the will of the House and let the special committee do its work, make its recommendations and then allow the government to analyze them and take the proper steps that have to be taken?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, will the minister use the power he has in his role to listen to what emerged from the UN periodic review and commit to a national action plan, yes or no?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, it is important, I believe, that we respect the will of the House, which has appointed a special committee to look into this issue. We shall let the committee do its work, listen to witnesses and stakeholders and then get the recommendations of the committee, which I can assure the hon. member, the government will consider diligently.

• (2000)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, does the department have benchmarks to measure progress in preventing violence against women?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the issue of violence against women, as I have indicated, is a serious concern. Ending violence against aboriginal women is a priority for our government, and it is a shared responsibility of not only the federal government but the provincial and territorial governments and also civil society.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, if it is such a priority, how much funding is specifically set aside by the department to address violence against aboriginal women?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, action plan 2013 announced funding of \$24 million over two years for the family violence prevention program, allowing my department to continue to offer its programming at a funding level of approximately \$30 million in 2013-14. Another thing that could help these women and children would be the adoption of Bill S-2, the bill that would try to fill the gap that has existed in this country for too long.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, how much of that money is allocated for northern and remote communities?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the \$30 million that will be spent in 2013-2014 will be for the benefit of all first nations all across Canada.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, how does the funding for emergency shelters on reserve compare to funding for those off reserve?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, we have invested in about 41 shelters that exist all over the country. This network of 41 shelters has grown from 35 a few years ago as a result of the construction of five new shelters and the addition of an existing shelter in the Atlantic region to the list of department-funded shelters.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, is the minister saying that out of 633 first nations, only 41 first nations have emergency shelters on reserve?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, approximately 329 first nations communities are served by these shelters. In 2010-2011, approximately 3,143 women and 2,890 children accessed family violence shelters, and 270 proposal-based prevention projects were supported throughout Canada.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, how many of these shelters are operating at full capacity?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, some are operating at full capacity; others at less than full capacity. What is important is that the investment that has been made this year will again ensure that these programs can continue throughout Canada.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, out of these 41 shelters, how many are at full capacity?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as I indicated, these shelters are there to meet the demand as it comes. Some are at full capacity, indeed. Others are at less than full capacity. The important thing is that these shelters are in place to serve these 329 first nations communities across Canada.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, clearly there are no real answers there, so let us move on to another question.

Does the minister acknowledge the disproportionate number of aboriginal women in prisons? Does he know what percentage of women in prisons are aboriginal?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I do not have the exact number of aboriginal women in prison. I am sure that the Minister of Public Safety would be able to answer her question.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, the percentage of aboriginal women in prison is 33%.

How is the government addressing the overrepresentation of aboriginal women in prisons?

• (2005)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, not only is this a matter for the federal Minister of Public Safety, but as I said earlier, the problem of women in those circumstances is a shared responsibility of not only the federal government but the provincial and territorial governments and, indeed, civil society, as well.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, what percentage of funding for aboriginal economic development is going to women or organizations that serve and employ aboriginal women?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the department has an economic development program, which is in place and which benefits, without gender regards, all first nation members all across Canada.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, we know that aboriginal women often live in greater poverty than aboriginal men.

The question is: In the aboriginal economic development program, what percentage of the funding is focused on engaging women in the workplace, or is there no focus on employing and training aboriginal women?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I know for a fact that my colleagues the Minister for Status of Women and the Minister of Health and our departments are working together to address that situation. There are programs in place which are gender-neutral, but efforts are being made to work with the stakeholders and these groups in order to improve their employability.

That is why the NDP should revise its position to oppose the measures that will lead to better skills training of these young girls and women throughout all first nations in Canada.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, how does the federal government plan to address the need for increases to officer complements in first nations police forces and for proper training and equipment for these officers so they can do their job effectively, efficiently and safely.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I thought the member was going to congratulate the government for the announcement by the Minister of Public Safety that long-term sustainable and predictable funding has been committed to provide those services for first nations all across Canada.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, when will the first nations police program be updated to address the current situation facing first nations police services and include resources for housing and infrastructure?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as I just said, the government has recently announced long-term sustainable and predictable funding to help first nations police on first nations lands. We can trust these professionals to do their job to the best of their ability. They know the terrain really well and I trust they can discharge their responsibilities.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, is the minister saying that all first nations that have pointed to the deficiency in policing funding are okay with the funding announcement, or are there still first nations that require and have asked for federal funding for their police service?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the hon. member should know by now that this government remains focused on four priorities and they have been outlined by the Prime Minister many times. These are priorities that Canadians care most about: first, their families; second, the safety of our streets and communities, and that does not stop at the door of first nations because they are included; third, their pride in being a Canadian citizen of our country; and fourth, their personal financial security.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Chair, I would ask the minister to hear the calls from the Garden Hill First Nation regarding policing.

The department completely eliminated the funding envelope that provides first nations and tribal councils with the financial resources to secure legal services. Could the minister explain why the government continues to take actions that stifle the ability of first nations to advocate and protect their interests?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Quite the contrary, Mr. Chair. This government and this department is working co-operatively with first nations all across Canada to improve the situation, the self-sufficiency and the prospects of first nations all across Canada.

• (2010)

**Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Chair, before I begin, I would like to indicate

that I will use the first 10 minutes of my time to speak and the last five minutes for questions.

Funding for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development programs services and activities allows the department to support aboriginal people and northerners in their efforts to improve social well-being and economic prosperity, develop healthier, more sustainable communities and participate more fully in Canada's political, social and economic development.

One such initiative that aims to improve the rights of families living on reserves is Bill S-2, the family homes on reserves and matrimonial interests or rights act.

Many Canadians are not aware that in the absence of legislation like Bill S-2, if the spouse who holds the interest in an on-reserve family home passes away, the surviving spouse has no legal rights to that home, or that the spouse holds the interest in a family home on-reserve can sell that home without the consent of the other spouse and keep all of the money, or that the spouse who holds the interest in the family home on reserve can bar the other spouse from the residence.

Where do members think they are going to end up?

Constituents in my riding of London North Centre were shocked when I told them that aboriginal women did not have the same matrimonial rights that women off reserves had, or that in the event of domestic violence or abuse a court cannot order the spouse who held the interest in the on-reserve family home to leave their residence, even on a temporary basis.

Domestic violence is a stain on society. To counter it, countries such as ours should continue to maintain effective justice systems and to establish appropriate and specialized legal responses.

For many women living on reserves, however, there is no justice. Aboriginal women are at least three times more likely than non-aboriginal women to experience violence. They are also more likely to experience severe violence that is repeated over time and over and over again.

Aboriginal women who experience this violence and abuse currently have no legal recourse when it comes to the family home. In cases of abuse, women often have to choose between leaving their home or enduring the abuse because there are no emergency protection orders or exclusive occupation orders available to them.

I saw a witness in tears who said that if this bill had been in place, she would still have her home, for which she paid.

*Business of Supply*

Although violence against women that takes place off reserve has similar impacts on individuals and communities, there is at least one fundamental difference off reserve. There are laws that enable women to seek protection and retain access to the family home. Women who live off reserve can go to a judge and secure legal resolutions, such as exclusive occupation orders and emergency protection orders. These tools provide women with the rights to the family home and a way to protect themselves and their children. This has been going on for years all across Canada, but not on reserves.

However, many women living on reserves do not have access to the same protection measures. Aboriginal women on reserves are all too often forced to leave the family home, along with their children, and even leave their reserve community when they experience violence at the hands of their intimate partner.

It is simply unacceptable that in this day and age, people living on reserve are not afforded similar rights and protections as those available to people living off the reserve. Individuals living on reserves should not be penalized simply because of where they live.

Bill S-2, family homes on reserves and matrimonial interests or rights act, if passed, will provide matrimonial real property rights and interests to men and women who live on reserves and will provide protection for spouses in situations of domestic abuse.

• (2015)

Betty Ann Lavallée, national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal People, said before the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, that Bill S-2 is addressing the real human issue—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order. I was wondering why Bill S-2 has anything to do with the main estimates.

**The Chair:** I am sure the member is aware that the range of debate is extremely wide, I think even more so when we are in the committee of the whole.

The parliamentary secretary.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:**

[Bill S-2] is addressing the real human issue of an aboriginal person, something taken for granted by all other Canadians...A spouse within an aboriginal relationship should not be denied, or put out on the street alone and without any recourse, because of a family [or marital] breakdown.

Prevention is the cornerstone of the government's overarching plan to stop the violence perpetrated against aboriginal women. This bill is one important means by which first nation women and children would be protected as it will allow access to emergency protection orders.

Bill S-2 would provide protections in situations of family violence and may prevent future incidents. Furthermore, this legislation would empower first nations to develop their own laws in the area of matrimonial real property, laws designed to meet their particular needs and respect their particular customs.

Under Bill S-2, a first nation could formalize its traditional dispute resolution processes and remedies and finally give them the force of law. The legislation would also ensure that until such time as a first nation would be able to create its own laws, federal rules would provide families with the rights and protections they sought and

deserved just like all non-aboriginal citizens and aboriginal people living off reserves.

As a result, all men, women and children living on reserve would have rights related to the occupancy transfer or sale of the family home that were not previously available to individuals living on reserves.

More important, in situations of family violence a spouse would be able to apply for an emergency order to stay in the family home with the exclusion of the other spouse for a period of up to 90 days with a possibility of an extension.

Furthermore, we have committed to the creation of an arm's-length centre of excellence for matrimonial real property, which will assist first nations in the development of their own on-reserve matrimonial real property laws or in the application of the federal provisional rules.

I would like to point out that as part of the development of this legislation, our government undertook an extensive consultation process that included over 100 meetings in 76 cities across Canada.

We have had ample opportunity to review, discuss and debate the bill since it was first introduced in 2008. Since then, more than 40 hours have been dedicated to debate and study of the bill in Parliament. More than half of this time occurred during committee study of the bill, with 60 appearances from first nation organizations individuals and federal and provincial representatives, among others.

As a result of these consultations, Bill S-2 incorporates a number of improvements over previous versions. We are proud of this bill and urge all parties to support it.

To further protect vulnerable aboriginal women and children, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada also supports access to a network of shelters serving on-reserve residents and work in partnership with provincial and territorial governments, first nation people and other stakeholders to develop effective and appropriate solutions to the issue of the domestic violence.

Family violence is an issue that can affect Canadians from all walks of life and can have tremendous costs, particularly for children, so it is important to ensure that help is near. Families and first nation communities that are remote and isolated make these particular challenges in accessing protection and support services. In order to address these challenges, this government invests in the ongoing operation of the family violence prevention program on reserve.

Economic action plan 2013 commits \$24 million over two years for this program. These funds will allow the total funding level of the program to remain at \$30.4 million for each of the next two years. This investment contributes to enhanced safety, security for on-reserve residents, particularly women and children.

• (2020)

**The Chair:** Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women.

*Business of Supply*

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** Mr. Chair, I have the pleasure of being part of the status of women committee that is currently studying Bill S-2. I hope that the bill will be referred back to the House very soon. If passed by Parliament, Bill S-2 will do much to protect some of the most vulnerable people in Canadian society, specifically women and children living in first nation communities.

This bill must be passed into law in order to ensure that women and children on reserve can benefit from the same rights and protections people living off reserves are afforded. They deserve and expect no less.

Our government believes that family violence, wherever it occurs, should not be tolerated, and that the rights of individuals and families to an equal division of the value of the family home must be protected.

It is shameful that the opposition is not supporting these important measures. If they truly want to stand up for aboriginal women and children, they should support our legislation to protect the rights of women and children on reserves.

Can the minister explain to the committee why aboriginal women and children cannot wait any longer for access to these same rights and protections?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for London North Centre for her work on the status of women committee dealing with this piece of legislation and her participation on the special committee for missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Working for more than 20 years, in eight of those years working as a nurse, as well as being a business person and a lawyer, meaning involvement in health, economic development and justice, I know there are several important pieces to develop any one of these particular areas.

One of those important pieces is actually this legislation, because unlike the majority of Canadians, individuals residing on most reserves do not have the same rights and protections that you and I and women do in the event of a relationship breakdown, death of a spouse or family violence. Women and children in families living on reserve have been waiting for this for more than 25 years. Without those matrimonial property rights, particularly the emergency protection orders contained in them, these vulnerable people will continue to be defenceless, and we are here to fix it with this piece of legislation.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** Mr. Chair, aboriginal women are three times more likely to experience violence, including spousal violence. Our government believes that aboriginal women should have access to rights that most other Canadian women take for granted: the right to the equitable distribution of the family home upon a divorce or separation, the right for a spouse and their children to continue to occupy the family home on the death of a spouse and the right to be protected from violent situations in the family home.

We have heard stories about aboriginal women having to leave a violent situation in their family home on reserve for a shelter in a nearby town. We have heard stories about aboriginal women who have paid for the family home on reserve, only to be evicted on the

dissolution of the relationship. Some of these women are still paying for the homes in which they are not allowed to stay anymore.

Could the minister please speak to the need for access to justice for these aboriginal women?

**The Chair:** The parliamentary secretary has a little better than a minute to respond.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Chair, I would be happy to answer that question. In my time working as a nurse in these communities, rather unfortunately on occasion, I have witnessed first-hand and have had a ringside seat to unfortunate acts of family violence. I have seen first-hand at two or three o'clock in the morning, when it is minus 30° or minus 40°, an unfortunate act of violence committed to a woman and have seen her at the front door of that nursing station with her small children.

It was shocking then and it is shocking now that as a matter of justice and a matter of access to justice, they do not have the right to protect themselves in situations of violence or, as the member points out, in the dissolution of a marriage.

The bill does not propose anything more than providing access and the same rights and protections on reserve that are already available to individuals living off reserves under provincial and territorial legislation.

● (2025)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister if he thinks that consultation with aboriginal people is best handled by the federal government or by businesses like Enbridge?

**The Chair:** Would the hon. member indicate how much time she is going to use in the way of a speech and how much in the way of questions?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** There will be no speeches.

**The Chair:** Okay. The hon. minister.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, Canada takes its legal duty to consult obligations very seriously. We are committed to an approach to aboriginal-Crown consultation and accommodation that is fair, efficient, accessible, transparent and meaningful.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, in the 2013-14 main estimates they allocate about \$11.4 million in contributions to first nations for the purpose of consultation policy development. Why is the department expecting to cut support for first nations participation and consultation by 60%, or \$18 million, from last year?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the duty to consult is the solemn duty of the Crown, which we are respecting throughout. The duty to consult is an important part of the reconciliation that is called for by the Supreme Court of Canada in so many decisions. We take this obligation seriously and we discharge that obligation in respect of the honour of the Crown.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I ask the minister how he can say he is taking it seriously and then talk about the billions of dollars in potential new investment in Canada's resource sector, while preparing to slash the support for first nations to effectively participate in these constitutionally required consultations?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the government is taking concrete steps to ensure that government funding for our organizations is directed at the delivery of essential programs and services for aboriginal people. We recognize, of course, the important contribution that aboriginal representative organizations make on behalf of their members and that is why we continue to provide them with the core funding that enables them to continue dispensing these essential services to first nations all across Canada.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I remind the minister that he has slashed the dollars for consultation by 60%, which exactly flies in the face of everything to do with a respectful partnership on these resources.

Does the federal government have a legal obligation to support post-secondary education for first nations and Inuit students?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the concern of our government for post-secondary education should be evident from the last budget that was tabled in the House. Again this year, we have renewed our commitment to post-secondary education by designating new resources, important resources, to post-secondary education so that first nations and aboriginal youth, all across Canada, Metis, Inuit and first nations members, can access post-secondary education throughout Canada.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, in view of the huge wait list, I would take the minister's answer to the legal obligation to get these kids to post-secondary as a no.

What is the total number of students attending first nations schools, normally residing on reserve?

• (2030)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, students attending these schools is about 116,500 or 117,000. We invest \$1.3 billion for the education of those aboriginal youth.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, what is the number of students living on reserves who have to go off reserve and attend provincial or territorial schools?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, there are certain students who attend the schools on reserve who are funded federally. Others attend private schools on reserve. Others attend schools that are in the provincial system. Our concern on the education of children is witnessed by our determination to bring about the legislative framework to a national school education act that would ensure we would have better graduation rates so aboriginal youth could enter the labour market much more efficiently for their own benefit.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, what is the amount that bands are having to pay to send their children off reserve to school?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I can give the summary of the total. It is \$393,763,463.20.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, what is the department's goal this year for the number of first nations and Inuit students graduating with a post-secondary certificate?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the concern we have for the education of aboriginal students all across Canada should be echoed by that side of the House. Those members should support and participate in the consultation and the important work that is taking place right now to try to adopt a national education act which would ensure that we improve the graduation rates, so we equip aboriginal youth all across Canada with the tools they need to enter the labour market and contribute to their own community, region, province and country.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, my question was about the department's goal and the answer, which the minister does not seem to understand. The department does not have a goal listed in the reports on plans and priorities of how many first nations and Inuit students will finish post-secondary education this year.

How many communities were under boil water advisories as of today and is this level higher or lower than it was in 2006?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, we have adopted a comprehensive plan for water and waste water on reserve. From 2006 to 2014, we will have invested \$3 billion to improve these infrastructures. Anyone who cares to visit the first nations across the country will see that enormous progress has been achieved.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I would let the minister know that the progress he has achieved is that the boil water advisories are 20% higher now than they were in 2006. The department's own assessment in 2011 was a \$1.2 billion shortfall in order to meet the water and waste water needs. How much of this need has he funded since that report came out in July 2011?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, in 2011-12, our government supported 402 major and minor first nations water and waste water infrastructure projects and 286 were planned for 2012-13.

• (2035)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, it is quite clear that the need is not being met. The boil water advisories are up 20%.

I would like to move to the issue housing. What happened to the \$295 million of additional funding that was allocated in 2005 for on-reserve housing to build even more than the 13,800 units that should have been built every year if the government had stayed at 2005 funding levels?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, between 2006-07 and 2012-13, the department provided approximately \$1.2 billion in on-reserve housing support to first nations communities. According to first nations reports, the Government of Canada's investments have contributed to an average of 1,750 new units and 3,100 renovations annually over the past five years.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, could the minister tell us if the department has done a calculation of how long it would take to fill the on-reserve housing gap, identified in the departmental 2011 evaluation, at the current funding levels?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the provision and management of housing on reserve lands, as I said earlier, is primarily the responsibility of first nations, with support from the Government of Canada. In addition to government funding, first nations are expected to identify funding from other sources for their housing needs.

We are working co-operatively with all first nations to address those housing challenges that first nations face. We are cognizant of the fact that access to safe, sustainable and affordable housing is essential for improving economic and social outcomes, hence the important investments we are making.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I will ask the minister again. At these funding levels, when does he believe that the housing gap identified in the 2011 report will be met?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, this is an issue I discussed with several first nations, with chiefs and councils, across the country. We continue to work together to find ways to improve the housing situation of first nations all across Canada. I am confident that by working together and looking at options and innovations, we can achieve much better results in the future.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, in September, the government announced a new results-based approach to self-government negotiations. How many specific land claims does the government anticipate settling this year?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I have a lot of powers, but I have no crystal ball. All I know is that we are devoting important resources throughout the country, especially in western Canada and in British Columbia, to reach agreements with first nations. The new approach, which my predecessor announced in September, has as an objective to conclude, as rapidly as we can, more such agreements.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, when does the government anticipate bringing the NunatuKavut land claim from Labrador to the House?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the hon. member should know that before a land claim is accepted, certain criteria must be met. The assessment of these is taking place as we speak. When that decision is made, we will be able to make an announcement.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, in the 2013-14 main estimates, the income assistance program is reduced by \$40.4 million. Is this because of the government's proposed harmonization of income assistance with provincial systems?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, no, it is simply because we will ensure that the program is complied with throughout the country. We believe that with stricter compliance, if the conditions of the program are met and respected throughout the country, we will effect those savings. Therefore, it is not a cut, because the service will still be available to all first nations all across the country.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, is the government not currently subject to an injunction regarding this proposed restructuring of social assistance until a court can hear the legal challenge later this year?

● (2040)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the fact of the matter is that in one part of Canada, the maritime provinces, there is an injunction in place preventing the application of the provincial rates to the first nations of those three provinces. As the matter is before the court, I will not comment any further.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Mr. Chair, before I begin, I would like to indicate that I will be speaking for 10 minutes and then posing tough but fair questions for the remaining five minutes.

Education represents our hopes and aspirations for the future of our children and their ability to succeed and make their mark in this world. First nations leaders, parents, educators and our government all share the same overarching goal, and that is to provide first nations students with quality education that allows them to acquire the skills they need to enter the labour market and be full participants in a strong Canadian economy.

Our government continues to invest in initiatives and programs that will improve literacy and math skills, teaching and on-reserve school infrastructure. Between April 2006 and March 2012, our government has provided funding to support the completion of 429 school projects, including the building of 36 new schools and 393 renovations and other school-related projects.

In 2011-12, our government provided \$1.55 billion to support approximately 116,400 first nations elementary and secondary students. In addition, approximately \$200 million was provided to first nations for the construction and maintenance of education facilities on reserve.

Economic action plan 2012 included an additional \$275 million over three years to improve school infrastructure and education outcomes of first nations students. This investment includes \$100 million to provide early literacy programming and other supports and services to first nations schools and students, and \$175 million to build and renovate schools on reserve, providing first nations youth with better learning environments.

These additional funds are helping more first nations students get the education they need so that they can graduate and pursue the same opportunities available to all Canadian students. In economic action plan 2012, our government committed to exploring mechanisms to ensure stable, predictable and sustainable funding for first nations elementary and secondary education.

Despite the scale of these investments, more work needs to be done to improve education, literacy, graduation rates and post-secondary completion and to ensure that students have safe and secure learning environments.

*Business of Supply*

For more than 40 years, first nations have requested greater control over first nation education, more parental involvement in decisions about their children's education, and better support for the promotion of first nations languages and culture.

At the same time, the call for legislation has been repeated in years of studies, audits and reports, including three major reports to Parliament: the 2011 report from the Office of the Auditor General; the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples 2011 report, "Reforming First Nations Education: From Crisis to Hope"; and the 2012 report of the National Panel on First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education.

What rings true in all of these studies is that first nations children deserve an education system that is transparent and accountable and that achieves results. We all agree that the current system is not working. We recognize that there are challenges. For example, on-reserve schools are the only ones that do not benefit from overarching legislation. The current first nations education system does not include accountability requirements for educational outcomes. First nations are not legally required to spend federal education funding on education. Federal funding for first nations education is divided into many different programs, making the system bureaucratic and complex.

The moment has come to provide the foundation for the development of a strong first nation education system with enough flexibility to accommodate the needs and diversity of first nations communities.

Our government is working with first nations partners on a concrete agenda to improve graduation rates of first nations students. Our government has committed to work with first nations partners and other stakeholders to introduce a first nation education act and have it in place for September 2014, which would put into place standards and structures to improve accountability and educational outcomes for first nations children on reserve.

● (2045)

Of that \$250 million announced in economic action plan 2012 for school infrastructure and programming, \$115 million will be allocated in 2013-14. This includes \$40 million to support early literacy and partnership activities. The strong schools, successful students initiative launched in October 2012 provides funding to education organizations to conduct self-assessments and to develop plans to improve their organization's capacity to deliver education services.

The 2013-14 main estimates allocation also includes \$75 million in funding to support the commencement and continuation of priority school construction projects in selected communities. Economic action plan 2013 confirmed our government's commitment to consult with first nations on the development of a first nation education act, and we are determined to follow through on this commitment.

Over the last four months, our government has held intensive consultations on this proposed approach. Officials have been speaking with first nations chiefs, parents, teachers, principals, elders and community members across the country about the government's proposed legislative approach to first nation elemen-

tary and secondary education. Potential legislation would provide the modern framework necessary to build standards and structures, strengthen governance and accountability, and provide the mechanism for stable, predictable and sustainable funding, key ingredients to education success.

The proposed legislative approach would respect the historic treaties and current modern land claims and self-government agreements and legislation. Our government has held eight regional consultation sessions across the country and more than 30 video and/or teleconference sessions with first nations chiefs, educators, parents, teachers, elders, students and other community members. In addition, the department's website hosted an online survey and provided opportunities for individuals or organizations to submit comments online. We have received hundreds of responses.

During this phase of consultations, we heard about the importance of treaty rights, funding, and language and culture in the development of education legislation. We were given suggestions about the proposed legislative approach. Our government will also continue to have discussions with any first nation individual, organization or other stakeholder that wishes to receive further information on the proposed legislative approach.

Education is a shared responsibility. Parents, teachers and leaders all have roles. We must work together to help ensure that all first nations students have access to a strong, accountable education system in their communities. The result will be better outcomes for students at all grade levels so that all students have the skills and knowledge to reach their full potential and make positive contributions to their communities. That is why we remain committed to developing a first nation education act that allows first nation students to pursue the opportunities and prosperity they seek to succeed and make their mark in this world.

Now for the tough but fair questions.

I mentioned at the beginning of my speech that education represents our hopes and aspirations for the future of our children and their ability to succeed and make their mark in this world. First nations leaders, parents, educators and our government all share the same overarching goal: to provide first nations students with quality education that allows them to acquire the skills they need to enter the labour market and to be full participants in a strong Canadian economy.

Our government's economic action plan 2012 included an additional \$275 million over the span of three years to improve infrastructure and the overall educational prospects of first nations youth. The main estimates have identified this increase in funding for education in 2013 and 2014.

Could the minister update the committee on how much we currently invest in kindergarten to grade 12 education for first nations youth?

*Business of Supply*

● (2050)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the member's important question. I welcome the opportunity to respond to this issue and explain how our government has been supporting K-12 education for first nation students.

We spend more than \$1.5 billion annually to support approximately 117,500 first nation students. In last year's budget, as the member alluded to, we invested an additional \$275 million for K-12 education, but shamelessly the two opposition parties voted against it.

We are also responding to the calls from the Auditor General, the Senate committee and a panel co-sponsored by the Assembly of First Nations for action to develop a first nation education act.

We are committed to exploring further mechanisms to ensure stable, predictable and sustainable funding for first nations elementary and secondary education.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Mr. Chair, as the minister mentioned, in economic action plan 2012 our government committed to exploring mechanisms to ensure stable, predictable and sustainable funding for first nations elementary and secondary education. Despite the scale of investments in K-12 education, we know more work needs to be done to improve education literacy, graduation rates and post-secondary completion, and to ensure students have a safe and secure learning environment.

Economic action plan 2013 confirmed our government's commitment to consult with first nations on the development of a first nation education act, and we are determined to follow through on this commitment.

What does the government hope to achieve with first nations education legislation, and how will this improve first nations education and graduation rates?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, while we have made important investments in first nations education, we know that money is not the answer. That is why we are committed to making the structural changes needed to improve literacy and graduation rates and to ensure students have a safe and secure learning environment.

People should realize that first nation students are the only students in Canada whose education is not governed by comprehensive education legislation. A first nation education act would create the structures and standards to support strong and accountable education systems on reserve and provide a framework for improved school governance, while allowing communities to adapt the delivery of education to meet their unique local cultural need, and that is important.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Mr. Chair, in economic action plan 2012 our government committed to exploring mechanisms to ensure stable, predictable and sustainable funding for first nations elementary and secondary education. For more than 40 years, first nations have requested greater control over first nation education, more parental involvement in decisions about their children's education and better support for the promotion of first nations languages and culture.

At the same time, the call for legislation has been repeated in years of studies, audits and reports, including three major reports to Parliament: the 2011 report from the Office of the Auditor General; the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples 2011 report entitled "Reforming First Nations Education: From Crisis to Hope"; and the 2012 report of the National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education. What rings true in all of these studies is that first nation children deserve an education system that is transparent, accountable and achieves results.

Could the minister describe the consultation that has taken place thus far on the first nations education act and let us know what we can expect next?

● (2055)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as the member knows, my predecessor announced the launch of this consultation in December 2012. The first phase has been completed. Consultations have taken place with first nations chiefs, parents, teachers, principals, elders and community members. The second phase to which we are also committed is to share with first nations a draft bill, which we will do in the next few months.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP):** Mr. Chair, right off the bat, I will tell you that I will use my 15 minutes to ask the minister questions.

First, I would like to come back to one of the questions asked previously. The minister spoke of 93 specific claims that have been resolved. However, what percentage of specific land claims have been denied since 2008?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, we are very proud of the initiative that helped speed up the processing of the specific claims the hon. member is referring to. This policy and this new approach, which have been applauded by all of Canada's first nations, enabled us to unclog the system and resolve 93 of them. The work is ongoing, and we intend to continue in that direction.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, the response was evasive, but I have the answer here. I will set the record straight. According to the Assembly of First Nations, 88% of specific land claims have been denied since 2008.

Now, can the minister tell us how many homes in first nations communities do not have access to running water? It is a simple question.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as I said a number of times earlier, between 2006 and 2014, we will have invested over \$1 billion to improve the water system on first nations land, which is part of an overall plan that includes looking at the infrastructure issue, as well as the issue of training people who look after these systems.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, he is still avoiding the question, but I have the answer. In April 2011, 1,880 first nation homes did not have running water and 1,777 homes reported having no waste water service

Could the minister tell us how many first nation communities are under a boil water advisory? The answer to this should be very simple.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the member clearly already knows the answer. I will simply say that many other municipalities in this country are under similar advisories. The measures we are taking are what is important. Every time we suggest investing money to solve the problem, he votes against the measure.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, 120 communities are under a boil water advisory.

Now, what does the minister estimate it would cost to update the waste water and drinking water infrastructure on reserves?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, we have a comprehensive plan to address the issues with water, water quality and waste water systems on first nation land.

It is odd that the member is so concerned about this, when last week he opposed our bill that would have implemented regulations to bring safe drinking water to the first nation communities.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, the answer is very simple. The estimated cost of upgrading waste water infrastructure is \$4.7 billion.

In budget 2013, how much funding did the government set aside for water and waste water infrastructure, as well as funding for schools and housing, over the next 10 years?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the member just told us that it was \$4.7 billion. I suppose he is dreaming about imposing his carbon tax, about taking \$21 billion from Canadian taxpayers so his party can throw money at problems without actually addressing the real issue, which is structural.

• (2100)

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, he is changing the subject. In fact, the answer is \$7 billion. It is that simple.

According to the department's estimates, would that be enough to ensure that reserves' waste water and drinking water infrastructure complies with federal and provincial regulations?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, we introduced a bill in the House of Commons that will allow my department and the Canadian government together with first nations across the country to adopt regulations that will ensure that the water in first nations communities is safe.

As I mentioned in the House earlier this week, this will certainly not happen overnight. However, what is important is that we have a comprehensive plan in place that will produce results.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, does the minister believe that the infrastructure in aboriginal communities could be damaged by these changes, and that other infrastructure may have to be built and adapted for new climate conditions?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I am convinced that if the New Democratic Party supports the bill concerning waste water and drinking water on reserves, we could, together with first nations, implement regulations that would address the concerns that some aboriginal peoples may have. We could also ensure that first nations across the country and all our investments are protected by a solid, structurally well-established system to ensure that they have safe water.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, how much money was allocated in the budget to help aboriginal communities adapt to this challenge?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as I indicated earlier, by the end of 2014, more than a billion dollars will have been invested in first nations infrastructure, such water and waste water systems. What is more, we want these investments to be backed by legislation allowing regulations to be adopted so that we can continue to build. We established that unsafe water resulted from lack of training on the reserves 60% of the time. Training is something that has already been implemented and is producing very positive results.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, does the minister agree that substandard housing can have repercussions for the health, education and socio-economic conditions of members of first nations?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, that goes without saying.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, does the minister agree that the number of housing units being built and renovated is not keeping up with demand?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, responsibility for housing lies with the first nations. The Canadian government must give them support, which we have been. We have implemented programs that allow us to work with the first nations to deal with housing on first nation reserves across the country, which is a major issue.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, how many new housing units will be built over the next two years?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as I was saying earlier, the members seem to be asking the same questions.

From 2006 to 2007, and in 2012-13, my department will have spent roughly \$1.2 billion on housing on first nation reserves. According to reports submitted by first nations, the Government of Canada's investments have allowed 1,750 new housing units to be built and 3,100 more to be renovated per year over the past five years. We will continue in the same vein.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, how many existing homes will be renovated over the next two years?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, if the past is any indication, I just said that we will continue in the same vein, so I expect the same results.

• (2105)

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, how many aboriginals in Canada have inadequate housing?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Far too many, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, can the minister break that number down according to group, namely Inuit, Metis and first nations? He did not offer a number, but can he divide it by group?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, this is no laughing matter. It is a very important issue. We have budget estimates to deal with serious matters such as housing and health. We need to give young aboriginals the opportunity to gain the skills and education they need to participate in the Canadian economy.

However, the member is taking pleasure in disregarding the serious questions and asking questions that have nothing to do with the real challenge of safety—

**The Chair:** The hon. member for Manicouagan.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, what sort of reference guidelines does the government use to measure progress in improving housing on reserve?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as the member knows, depending on the region, some reserves have adopted building codes that they enforce on the reserve. We hope that all first nations will eventually be subject to building standards in order to protect the massive investments that taxpayers make in housing. That is our goal.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, has the department allocated additional funds to address the problem of mould growing in houses on reserve?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the issue of mould is affecting many first nations across the country. In fact, concerted efforts have been made to address this problem. Thousands of houses have been renovated. Many of the 3,100 renovations a year that I mentioned earlier were necessary because of mould.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, is the department following up on remediation measures in order to address the problem of mould growing in houses on reserve?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the government and the department are working with first nations to ensure that housing investments made by first nations are protected so that measures can be taken locally to ensure that those investments are not wasted and that housing does not deteriorate because it is not cared for properly. I have spoken with many chiefs and band councils across the country. They are concerned about the situation and are working in their communities to prevent such situations as much as possible.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, the 2011 national household survey tells us that only 17.2% of aboriginal people speak a native language, a drop of over 10% compared to the 2006 survey.

Is that an error in the data or rather the result of your department's policies regarding the promotion of aboriginal languages?

**The Chair:** It is not my department, but perhaps the minister can answer that.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I can say that I have visited many first nations across the country. When I compare what I am seeing today with what I saw 20 or so years ago, I can say that tremendous progress has been made in terms of preserving aboriginal languages and culture in various first nations in Canada, and I am very proud of them for that.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Speaker, how much money has the department allocated to promote aboriginal languages?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Speaker, language falls under education and is included in the \$1.5 billion investment in kindergarten to grade 12 education programs.

It is important to point out that considerable progress is being made across the country when it comes to protecting and relearning aboriginal languages. Several first nations can attest to this. We will continue to make these investments in order to continue achieving good results.

**The Chair:** The member for Manicouagan has just one minute.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:** Mr. Chair, I will proceed in English from now on.

Why was a Federal Court order needed to implement Jordan's principle, when it passed unanimously through the House?

• (2110)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, Jordan's principle is certainly an issue that was addressed in this House. Once the House adopted the principle, we concluded agreements with some of the provinces. These were official agreements and letters of intent and we have arrangements with all the other provinces to ensure that the principle is respected.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Chair, before I begin, I would just like to indicate that I will use the first 10 minutes of my time to speak, and the last 5 minutes to pose questions for our minister.

*Business of Supply*

I appreciate the opportunity to speak in today's discussion of the main estimates for 2013-14 of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. The funds provided by these estimates will allow the department to continue fulfilling its mandate of improving the lives of aboriginal people and northerners. Our government's top priority is jobs and economic growth for all Canadians. This priority is particularly crucial when it comes to achieving our goal of healthier, more prosperous and self-sufficient aboriginal communities. Our government's strategy has been to focus on finding real solutions to specific economic obstacles, and we remain focused on creating jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity.

Business owners and operators, entrepreneurs and investors have vital roles to play in spurring Canada's economy by starting new businesses and expanding existing ones, thereby encouraging job creation and economic development. The role of the government is to help foster predictable, consistent and reliable conditions that give Canadian businesses, entrepreneurs and investors the certainty and the incentives they need to take calculated risks to invest, expand and create jobs.

Our government continues to concentrate action to ensure that the necessary conditions for aboriginal communities to create and take advantage of economic opportunities do indeed exist. Our government is committed to supporting aboriginal businesses through the aboriginal business development program. This program, as we know, had its inception in 1986. The program has provided \$730 million in direct non-repayable contributions to support over 11,600 aboriginal businesses. In addition to direct non-repayable contribution support to aboriginal entrepreneurs, the aboriginal business development program also provides operational support and loan capital to a network of aboriginal owners and operators in the financial institutions, also known as AFI.

Since 1986, \$232 million of loan capital has been invested into the network, from which over 35,700 business loans totalling \$1.49 billion have been made available to aboriginal entrepreneurs. The AFI is one of the most cost-effective Canadian job creation mechanisms available to government. A 2010 analysis revealed a cost to government of \$12,479 per job created and maintained. Furthermore, each new AFI loan advance produces and maintains more than three full-time equivalent jobs.

It is also important to note that aboriginal self-employment is on the rise. According to the 2006 census, there are more than 37,000 first nations, Metis and Inuit persons in Canada who have their own businesses and are doing quite well, a significant increase of 85% since 1996.

Our government continues to expand the first nations land management regime, which is a shining example of the concrete steps we are taking to enable first nations to assume greater control over their day-to-day affairs and economic development. The first nations land management regime provides the opportunity for first nations to opt out of the 34 land-related sections of the Indian Act, and assume greater control over their resources. Communities assume greater control over their reserve lands and their natural resources, which is an important stepping stone to economic development.

There has been significant progress made under the first nations land management regime over the past few years. I am very proud of what our government has accomplished, and extremely impressed with what some first nations have achieved. Many first nations have shown great interest in opting in to the first nations land management regime.

• (2115)

To date, the regime includes a total of 69 first nations that are either developing land codes or have ratified and are operating under their own first nation land management land code.

We have invested in the first nations land management regime so that more first nations can take advantage of the economic opportunities it creates. In economic action plan 2011, our government reallocated \$20 million over two years to respond to the growing interest from first nation leaders who recognized the benefit to their communities by participating in the first nations land management regime.

Through economic action plan 2013, we will invest a further \$9 million over two years into the first nations land management regime. Last spring, we welcomed 18 new entrants into the first nations land management regime, and just this past March, we welcomed another 8 new entrants. These 26 first nations are now positioned to assume greater control over their reserve lands and natural resources. This leads to new investments and jobs and opens the path to greater prosperity and self-sufficiency for their communities.

With these recent entrants, there are now 32 first nations developing their own land codes and 35 first nations now fully operational under this regime, and 2 first nations have since moved into further self-government positioning. While there are many first nations across the country that have achieved success under the first nations land management regime, I will raise two success stories as examples.

First, Westbank First Nation in British Columbia has attracted investment to its lands since its self-government agreement of 2005. In 2010, investments generated annual tax revenues of \$80 million, \$50 million of which goes to the federal government. Over the past decade, the Westbank First Nation's GDP has grown from some \$100 million to \$458 million. A sizable success.

Since 2005, Westbank First Nation created 3,300 working opportunities, raised over \$300 million in building permits and attracted \$245 million in construction investment. This first nation has become a recognized entity in the Okanagan Valley and works with governments and partners to sustain profitable, sustainable and culturally appropriate development within and beyond its borders.

*Business of Supply*

Second, also in British Columbia, the T'Sou-ke First Nation on Vancouver Island has become the largest solar energy-producing community in B.C. Its participation in the first nations land management regime opened the door to this opportunity, which has become a thriving business venture. FNLM is a powerful tool for first nations seeking greater control over not just their land and resources but economic futures as well.

We have also taken some steps to help unlock the economic potential of lands for those first nations that remain under the Indian Act.

In December of last year, the Jobs and Economic Growth Act received royal assent. The act included amendments to the land designation sections of the Indian Act. First nation designated lands are reserve lands that a first nation has agreed to release for commercial, agricultural, recreational or other purposes. Similar to how municipalities would zone land for a specific purpose off a reserve, first nations that operate under the Indian Act identify lands on their reserve for specific purposes, following a land designation process. The land remains reserve land.

I see I am running out of time. Let me just conclude this by saying, for first nations operating under the Indian Act, land designation is a prerequisite for economic development on reserve and is a legal instrument that permits leasing of first nations land.

It is also critical to Canada's future economic prosperity. Our vision is one of a future in which first nations are self-sufficient and prosperous, managing their own affairs and being full participants in Canada's strong economy. All Canadians benefit from strong, healthy, self-sufficient aboriginal peoples and communities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I have a couple of questions for the minister. Since the minister is absent, I will ask the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chair, budget 2013 will expand the first nation land management regime by investing \$9 million over two years to create further opportunities for economic development on reserve. This would add 33 first nations to the regime, including the 8 announced earlier this year.

• (2120)

What does budget 2013 announce for additional investments into first nation land management regimes for first nations?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for Palliser for his contributions at the standing committee, particularly, as we worked through land use planning work on the committee. Certainly, the First Nations Land Management Act became an important part of that conversation.

Our government's plan for creating jobs growth and long-term prosperity does not stop at the doors of aboriginal communities. We are taking concrete steps to accelerate economic development. The First Nations Land Management Act is one of the important ways that we can do that.

The First Nations Land Management Act enables the communities to make decisions at the speed of business and that economic development is much greater in comparison to those whose lands

that are administered by the government, under the Indian Act, which are often slowed or face lengthy delays.

Therefore, we agree. We will continue to take action so first nations can take advantage of all the economic opportunities Canada has to offer, including the First Nations Land Management Act.

**Mr. Ray Boughen:** Mr. Chair, lands and natural resources are among the most valuable assets held by first nations. Their sustainable use is critical for economic development, for building partnerships with other governments and the private sector and for maintaining strong relationships with neighbouring communities.

We have heard time and time again at committee how the First Nations Land Management Act opens communications and communities up to a host of new economic opportunities for first nation businesses.

The question for the parliamentary secretary is this. How has the First Nations Land Management Act been a successful vehicle for economic development?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his logically-developed line of questioning on this important matter.

Many of the first nations under the first nations land management regime reported a significant increase in new businesses overall by band members and up to a 40% corresponding increase in the different types of businesses, including supplier and spinoff businesses. These first nations attracted approximately \$53 million in internal investment and close to \$100 million in external investment. More than 2,000 employment opportunities have been generated for band members and more than 10,000 jobs for non-members.

Therefore, this is a real economic driver for the first nation communities and for the region. I can think of no greater example than the great Kenora riding, where first nation communities have small business centres. They are participating in regional resource development through jobs, skills training. This First Nations Land Management Act provides an opportunity for communities under that regime to develop even more businesses in their own communities.

**Mr. Ray Boughen:** Mr. Chair, our commitment to creating jobs and growth does not stop at the doors of the aboriginal communities. First nations across Canada had expressed frustration, saying that the process of leasing land was too lengthy and had too much red tape. We have responded to their calls.

How do the changes to the land designation provisions in the Indian Act found in budget 2012 strengthen first nation decision-making power and authority over their lands?

*Business of Supply*

• (2125)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the current designation process could take up to two years and was preventing many first nations from taking advantage of business opportunities. Therefore, once again, this government acted instead of just talking about it. We amended the act, with the result that we have more economic development opportunities being pursued by those first nations.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I will be asking questions. My critic's area is northern development, so I will be asking a number of questions in that area, but will also move on to some broader responsibilities of the minister.

Why did the government not consult all the first nations in the Northwest Territories prior to its negotiating devolution of power to the Government of the Northwest Territories?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I am surprised by the question. The hon. member should know that better than any other member of the House.

Indeed there is a wide and substantial consultation process that is taking place as we speak. In March we announced that a general consensus had been reached, but we are in the process of consulting with all first nations throughout in order to not only meet our obligations but to ensure the success of the devolution for the benefit of northerners.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, they are not involved in the negotiations on devolution and consulting with them after the agreement has been signed is not consultation but simply showing them what will happen.

As the premier of the Northwest Territories indicated, the deal was: take it or leave it. How can there be consultation with no negotiation?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories continue to encourage and support the participation of the two other regional aboriginal groups to which the member refers.

The Government of Canada remains committed to fulfilling its section 35 obligations and responsibilities to consult aboriginal groups in the Northwest Territories with respect to devolution. We are doing that.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, getting to the agreement itself, one of the most important acts in Parliament is the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, which governs all resource development terms and conditions.

In the agreement, the minister will delegate certain powers to the territorial minister, but this act will not be transferred.

Will the minister and the government turn the full power of the right to say yes or no to the terms and conditions of development to the territorial minister or will the territorial minister remain one minister among the other ministers of the federal government in making those determinations?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I will not accept the invitation of the hon. member to put the cart before the horse.

There is a consensus on the general terms of the devolution agreement. Consultations are taking place. After those consultations have taken place and the accommodations that can be made have been made, there will then be an agreement.

However, tonight I cannot talk about what the results would be before these consultations take place. The member ought to know better.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, the premier of the Northwest Territories indicated there would be no changes made to the agreement that was signed by the Prime Minister in Yellowknife in March. How can we still be talking about the conditions of the deal if there are no changes to be made to the agreement?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the hon. member is familiar with the consultations taking place, the duty to consult and the conditions of the agreements that are in place which compel these consultations. Therefore, what can I say?

No agreement has been reached yet. There is a consensus on the terms of the agreement. The consultation must take place, it is taking place and when this has been accomplished we will know what the conditions will be.

• (2130)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, if there was no agreement made, what was the final agreement that the Prime Minister signed in Yellowknife? Was that not a final agreement? I am sure this is news to everyone who is listening in the Northwest Territories.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, if the hon. member is referring to the March 11 event that took place in Yellowknife, I was there with my learned friend, the Minister of Health, and the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was very clear. He said that the heavy lifting had been done and that there was a consensus reached on the terms for an agreement. I was present and he clearly said that consultations have to take place with the aboriginal communities. Until that is done, there is no agreement.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, okay, well, I will leave that then.

Will the minister confirm that the cost to the taxpayers to cleanup the Giant Mine is over \$900 million and is expected to rise?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, if the NDP wants to put a price on the health and safety of the residents of that community, we will not.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, that is certainly true, because the minister's staff would not indicate to the environmental assessment what the cost was going to be. Yes, the minister does not want to put a cost to it. However, will the cost exceed \$900 million?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the remediation project will pass through several phases and will take many years. It will not happen overnight. The Giant Mine remediation project team's first priority is the health and safety of the public and its staff and the protection of the environment. Multi-year cost projections will move over time as work progresses. I can assure the member that Parliament and Canadians will kept up to date.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, that is actually good news, because the minister will probably agree that we need to look at the ionization process to ensure that the water coming out of the Giant Mine site has no arsenic in it.

Will the minister instruct his staff to consider the ionization process outlined by the environmental assessment process to deal with this particular problem of pollution?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, my department is currently addressing specific high risks at the Giant Mine site through a care and maintenance program that works to protect the environment and minimize the risk to human health and safety. Two of the largest and most urgent components, the roaster complex and the stabilization of the underground, are set to begin next month in June. A remediation plan has been prepared for the management of the Giant Mine site, and it is currently undergoing an environmental assessment. I guess the member should know that.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, why did the minister change regulations on the downhole injection of drill waste, removing them from the Northwest Territories' water regulations just before moving forward with the agreement to change legislation?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, the steps we are taking in northern Canada are all pursuant to a northern strategy that takes into account the benefit to northerners of responsible development and the protection of the environment. I know that with any development, the NDP calls it a disease, but in the north, they call it a future benefit and economic development and jobs for northerners.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, downhole injection of drill waste is a pretty straightforward issue. The minister changed the regulations. He has put them under the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act. They are not going to come in front of any environmental assessment in the Northwest Territories. Can the minister explain why he did that?

• (2135)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, let me repeat: Our government is aiming for a northern regulatory regime that is more effective and predictable while safeguarding the environmental health and heritage of the north. This is what northerners have asked us to do as a Conservative government, and this is what we will deliver.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, the Land Claims Agreements Coalition is concerned about the changing to funding for the implementation of their land claims. Is the government still planning to move to per capita funding? Is it changing the funding formula in any way?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I met with the coalition. As a matter of fact, it was one of the first things I did upon being sworn in as minister. We had a really good working session where I learned that the coalition was ready to work in partnership with the federal government to ensure that Canada's obligations will be implemented. We are working in partnership with the coalition to see to it that all of Canada's obligations are implemented in the best possible way in accordance with our duty of diligent implementation.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, in the United States any transfers of offshore leases have to be signed off by the President of

the United States. In Canada, the minister only has to be notified of a transfer of lease on offshore oil and gas developments.

Will the minister countenance in the near term changing the legislation to give him more control over the transfer of offshore leases?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, I will repeat what I said earlier. What we are committed to is ensuring that the north has a regulatory regime that is more effective and predictable while safeguarding the environmental health and heritage of the north.

We are committed to that principle, and I am sure that in co-operation with the government in place in the territories, we can achieve that objective to ensure the sound and substantial economic development of all of the north for the benefit of northerners and Canada.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, in the last budget there was talk about clean energy for aboriginal communities in northern Canada.

Can the minister outline any of the efforts he has taken in that regard over the last year?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, as everyone in this House knows, the government is committed to job creation, economic growth and the long-term prosperity of all Canadians, including northerners.

We will continue on our quest to create jobs and ensure responsible economic development. We hope that the member who comes from there and who is asking the question would stop voting against these positive measures for his territory.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, when the minister talked about housing for reserves, he talked about 1,700 houses built on 620-some reserves. That works out to fewer than three houses per reserve per year. He talked about renovations to housing on reserve. There were 3,000 houses renovated. That works out to fewer than five house per reserve.

Does the minister think that fewer than three houses built per reserve and fewer than five houses renovated per reserve are the numbers that are required to fix the problem of housing on aboriginal reserves across Canada?

• (2140)

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, what this minister believes and knows is that between 2006-07 and 2012-13, we have provided approximately \$1.2 billion in on-reserve housing support to first nations communities.

According to a first nations report, the Government of Canada's investments have contributed to an average of 1,750 new units and 3,100 renovations annually over the past 5 years. The provision and management of housing on reserve land is primarily the responsibility of first nations, with support from the Government of Canada. I am proud of our support.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, this is your final question.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Chair, when it comes to capital funding for schools, the minister has indicated \$118 million a year. There are 600 reserves across Canada.

*Business of Supply*

We have heard the figure of 48 schools that need to be replaced. The capital cost for replacing a school in a remote and isolated community, as I know very well, coming from the Northwest Territories, is probably in excess of \$30 million.

Does the minister think that somehow this \$118 million capital replacement budget that he has indicated for reserve schools is going to be adequate to actually catch up to the problem that we have with aboriginal schools being substandard across this country?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt:** Mr. Chair, if the hon. member is really concerned about education and schools for first nations across the country, why does his party oppose a national education act that would identify mechanisms to ensure long-term, sustainable, predictable funding for a school system in Canada?

We already provide annual investment of approximately \$200 million a year for on-reserve school infrastructure. Between April 2006 and March 2012, we have provided funding to support the completion of 429 school projects, including the building of 36 new schools—

**The Chair:** The hon. member for Peace River. The hon. member is only going to have about four and a half minutes. Time will expire at 9:47 p.m.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Chair, that is distressing because I have a lot of good news, but I will use the initial portion of my time to speak and then I may or may not have tough but fair questions for the minister.

I am proud of what our government has been doing over the last seven years. Since 2006, when I was first elected, we have made unprecedented investments within first nations communities across the country. We have also seen important reforms to ensure we will see continued support for skills training, education reform, housing on reserve, safe drinking water, new schools, as the minister just talked about, treaty rights and the resolution of land claims. The main estimates for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada that we are discussing today will provide the department with the necessary funding to continue this great progress.

In addition to what has been tabled in main estimates 2013-14, economic action plan 2013 announced \$872 million in total investments in aboriginal peoples in northern communities, which will allow them to participate more fully in Canada's economy and benefit from its growth.

Of the total investments of \$872 million, about \$618 million are directed directly to aboriginal peoples and their communities, including strategic investments in the following areas: \$241 million for training for on-reserve income assistance recipients; \$9 million toward supporting the first nation land management regime; \$24 million being directed toward renewing the family violence prevention program; \$10 million toward supporting post-secondary

education for first nation and Inuit students; approximately \$5 million toward promoting business studies among aboriginal students; \$33.1 million toward supporting first nations fishing enterprises; \$155 million toward first nation infrastructure; and \$54 million to resolving specific claims.

The list goes on and I am going to continue. There are: \$36 million toward expanding first nation policing programs; \$11 million toward supporting the aboriginal justice strategy; \$48 million toward improving the health services of first nations communities; and \$4 million toward enhancing the mental health services in first nations communities.

Economic action plan 2013 confirms our government's commitment to consult with first nations across Canada on the development of a first nations education act to support pathways to education Canada and to continue to provide support under the capital facilities and maintenance program. Today I was speaking with a person in Ottawa named Semhar, who was talking about the importance of this program. What I am hearing from people across the country is that this type of investment is absolutely essential and education will lead to the transformation of first nations communities.

Economic action plan 2013 also provides \$254 million for northerners, including support for junior mineral exploration, which goes toward a 15% tax credit, estimated to be worth over \$100 million over 2013-14 and 2014-15. The construction of an all-season gravel road will link Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk in the Northwest Territories is also in budget 2013, an additional \$50 million, which builds on our investment of \$150 million from budget 2011. I can tell everyone what I am assured of, and that is that the member for Western Arctic understands the necessity of supporting his constituents. That is why he will reflect on his decision to vote against the budget and decide that, in fact, it is better to put his constituents first. That is why he will vote in favour of this budget and answer to his constituents if, in fact, he chooses not to.

● (2145)

I recognize my time is up. I appreciate this opportunity and look forward to continuing to do the good work that our government has done, working together with all the great men and women on this side of the House.

**The Chair:** It being 9:47 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:48 p.m.)



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