



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, October 31, 2012**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 31, 2012

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1405)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of our national anthem led by the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my message today is not scary.

[*Translation*]

The summit of the États généraux de la francophonie d'Ottawa will be held on November 17 and 18.

[*English*]

It will be held at the University of Ottawa's brand new social sciences building. The summit will cap off the extensive public consultation of this capital's citizenry.

[*Translation*]

The objective of the estates general is to identify the priorities of francophones and francophiles in Ottawa, to ensure that the language of Rabelais remains alive and well in our nation's capital.

[*English*]

Over the past year, the estates general team has hosted more than 30 cafés across the city to allow residents to express their views on various issues relating to Ottawa's French language and culture.

[*Translation*]

I was honoured to participate in several of these cafés. I invite all of my fellow citizens to the University of Ottawa on November 17 and 18 to dream of Ottawa. They can visit [jereveottawa.ca](http://jereveottawa.ca).

[*English*]

### ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, November 2 is a day of celebration in Burnaby. It marks 100 years of continuous presence of All Saints Anglican Church as a key member of our community and our faith community. Situated on the south slope of Burnaby since 1912, All Saints Anglican Church has provided 100 years of service to families, children and seniors, ministering to their spiritual and social needs and lovingly welcoming persons of all persuasions to its many programs.

I rise today to honour this important anniversary. Generation after generation, our community has had the good fortune to benefit from the parish of All Saints Anglican Church's leadership and guidance. We are very grateful for that and for it setting a high standard of service and dedication.

This week, the church will celebrate with a series of events that honour its past accomplishments and its service and commitment to the people for 100 years.

I say congratulations on behalf of my constituents of the rich and diverse community of Burnaby—New Westminster for 100 years of faith and fellowship in Burnaby.

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### SOUTH SHORE—ST. MARGARET'S

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize two significant accomplishments in my riding of South Shore—St. Margaret's.

First, I want to recognize Bailey Cameron. Bailey is from Woods Harbour, Shelburne County, and she plays on the bantam girls baseball team. Bailey will be playing with the Canadian junior girls national team in Cuba this February and is the only Nova Scotian to make the team.

I say, "Way to go, Bailey". Her hard work has paid off and her community is exceptionally proud of her achievement. On behalf of the Parliament of Canada, I say congratulations and wish her the best of luck in Cuba.

Second, I would like to recognize the relaunch of the *Bluenose II*. The *Bluenose* is steeped in Nova Scotia legend and is part of our nautical history. From the Lunenburg Shipyard Alliance, which did the refit, to the present captain and crew of the *Bluenose II*, I offer my congratulations to all who have been involved in this historic project, for truly the *Bluenose* is sailing once again.

*Statements by Members***UKRAINE**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with well over one million people living in Canada with Ukrainian heritage, it is easy to understand why so many have an interest in what happens in Ukraine. This past weekend I was in Lviv, Ukraine, and had the opportunity to visit political parties, the election commission and a polling station on election day.

Ukraine having an independent electoral commission is a good thing, however, I question its ability to enforce election law compliance. Based on some of the questions that I asked about the electoral process, it is clear that some rules are not being enforced.

Strong election laws and procedures for all stakeholders are critically important. Ensuring compliance to election laws is very complicated and expensive but it is an absolute must. Even Elections Canada needs to improve on this point.

All in all, from what I could see, the people of Ukraine are, at the very least, participating in the democratic election, but there is a need for a more powerful, independent election commission.

Building public confidence in an electoral process takes political goodwill, strong electoral laws and the knowledge that there is a consequence to those individuals or parties that try to cheat.

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**EVENTS IN ST. PAUL**

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to speak about the tragic event that struck our community of St. Paul, Alberta, last Thursday when a van drove through a window of a grade six classroom of Racette Junior High, resulting in the death of one student and injuring several others.

I would like to extend my condolences to the Wolitski family who are suffering with the loss of their daughter, Megan. Our community's thoughts and prayers are with those still in hospital, as well as all the children, families and teachers who were affected by this tragedy.

It is important to also acknowledge the tremendous bravery demonstrated by the first responders. Whether they were teachers, paramedics or volunteer firefighters, they all placed themselves in harm's way without a thought to their own personal safety and deserve to be commended. I would also like to thank the superintendent of schools, Mr. Glen Brodziak, for his leadership throughout.

When senseless tragedies like this occur, they strike at the heart of each and every parent. Today, I encourage Canadians across our country to hold their children just a little bit tighter.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in my riding, workers in forestry, farming, tourism and many other industries are worried about the changes to EI and the negative impact of the working while on claim pilot project.

In La Sarre, the head of a forestry company told us that a number of workers were already preparing to change fields if the reform was implemented. It will become too difficult to earn a living in forestry with the new reform.

In Amos, the head of an animal shelter is wondering whether he will be able to find qualified guides for future seasons. A bus company in the region is wondering whether it will be able to find part-time drivers during off-peak times.

And in the agricultural sector, farmers are worried that the workers they have trained will find more stable jobs elsewhere come spring.

All of these businesses and workers will be directly affected by this reform. The minister is jeopardizing a region's economy, and in doing so is proving her incompetence.

\* \* \*

●(1410)

[English]

**BRANTFORD BLAST HOCKEY**

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding need look no further than the Brantford civic centre for a source of exciting entertainment to fill this year's NHL void.

The Brantford Blast has been providing my community with high-flying entertainment since 2002. People are excited about the depth of this year's team as it embarks on a journey toward the Allan Cup.

It was a pleasure to be at the Blast home opener this past Friday where Blast owner and cancer survivor Peter Ham launched his "Pink the Rink" fundraiser. Teaming up with the Brant-Norfolk cancer society, the Blast committed funds from pink merchandise and ticket sales to the fight against breast cancer. Fans came dressed in pink and were treated to a 7-3 Blast victory, led by the dynamic one-two tandem of Mike Ruberto and Jon Jankus.

I offer my congratulations to Peter Ham and the Brantford Blast for their commitment to our community. We wish them best of luck for another exciting season and their drive to hoist the Allan Cup.

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**CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF**

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to announce in the House that the Prime Minister and the Governor General performed the change of command ceremony to install the Chief of Defence Staff of the Canadian Forces this past Monday.

I would like to congratulate General Thomas Lawson on his appointment to this role, while thanking the outgoing General Walt Natynczyk for his exemplary service to our country.

*Statements by Members*

General Lawson is a former fighter pilot, with 37 years of experience, serving most recently as the deputy commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command in Colorado. Looking at his background, I know that General Lawson's experience and military acumen will place the Canadian Forces in good hands for the future.

My riding is home to the famed Canadian Snowbirds, as well as NATO flying training in Canada. I know that the pilots and pilots-in-training will greatly benefit from the leadership of our new general.

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**THE GLACE BAY MINERS' MUSEUM**

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the National Arts Centre recently opened its new season with a production called *The Glace Bay Miners' Museum*. Based on a novel by Sheldon Currie of Antigonish and set in beautiful Cape Breton, it is a fantastic show that I would recommend to every member in the House. It runs until November 3.

Not only is it entertaining, it was written by one our own, the former MP for Dartmouth and celebrated playwright Wendy Lill.

This show was first introduced to Nova Scotian audiences in 1995 to great acclaim and it was no different here in Ottawa. Paula and I were pleased and proud to be in the audience with Wendy and her husband, Richard, and to join the rest of the audience who gave the play and its performers a rousing standing ovation.

It is worth noting that, along with Wendy, there were several people from Dartmouth involved in the production: the director, Mary Vingoe; the music director, Paul Cram; and two of the actors, Jeff Schwager and Francine Deschepper.

I offer my congratulations to all and say thanks for a great show.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of municipal governments because they represent communities across the country. That is why we are implementing measures to help them, for example, by making the gas tax transfer permanent.

We are proud that the municipalities support our positive measures in relation to the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, saying that:

The changes...will allow local governments to spend less time processing paperwork for small...projects...that result in higher costs for property tax payers.

However, the Leader of the Opposition does not trust the municipalities on this issue and says that they merely want to expand their tax base. He said that they refer to local and municipal authorities. They have a direct interest in expanding their tax base, and they have a tendency to approve anything and everything.

While the leader of the NDP is insulting Canadian municipalities, the Conservative government continues to work with them to implement positive reforms that will create jobs and stimulate economic growth.

[*English*]

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to express the concern and outrage I am hearing from Canadian women across the country. They have raised their voices to say that when the member for Saskatoon—Wanuskewin awarded medals of honour to anti-choice activists he crossed the line.

In the Conservative Party of Canada, the anti-choice movement has found a powerful ally. Linda Gibbons and Mary Wagner, both convicted criminals, represent a major threat to our hard-won reproductive rights. Every time they violate the provincial injunctions to keep women safe, they give strength to those people who think women deserve to be harassed, assaulted and even physically harmed when they seek health care in Canada. For the member opposite to be honouring this kind of behaviour is nothing short of outrageous.

This is not the first instance of a Conservative war on women's rights, but the latest in a pattern of anti-choice actions. From Motion No. 312 to Motion No. 408, we are witnessing just how far the Prime Minister will allow his caucus to push back the clock on a woman's right to choose.

Thankfully, the New Democrats will not stand for it and neither will the women of Canada.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**MEMBER FOR FREDERICTON**

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the hon. member for Fredericton is resting and recovering after successful bypass heart surgery last week.

Our good friend from Fredericton is a dedicated public servant who has worked hard for New Brunswick and, indeed, our nation. Before being named to cabinet by the Prime Minister, the hon. gentleman served in the cabinet of New Brunswick.

I hope all members of Parliament will join me in expressing our hope that our colleague will have a smooth and speedy recovery and will soon rejoin us in this great chamber. He and his wife Judy are in our prayers.

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**FIGURE SKATING**

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a talented and engaging young woman originally from Marystown in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

### Oral Questions

This past weekend, 16-year-old Kaetlyn Osmond won the gold medal at Skate Canada International. Last month, Kaetlyn won another gold medal at the Nebelhorn Trophy competition in Germany. She won her first gold medal at a national figure skating competition when she was 10 years old.

Kaetlyn's next goal is to win the National Figure Skating Championships in Mississauga in January. That win could entitle her to represent Canada at the World Figure Skating Championships in March. Her ultimate goal is to be a member of the Canadian team at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia.

Kaetlyn's talent was obvious at an early age when she started skating before the age of two. Her parents, Jackie and Jeff, were determined to help their daughter realize her dreams by first moving to Montreal and then to Alberta where Kaetlyn was able to advance in the sport she loves.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Kaetlyn, not only on her gold medal performance at Skate Canada International, but on all of her accomplishments as we wish her continued success.

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#### NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this evening, ghosts, goblins, pirates and witches will haunt the streets in communities across the country. Children will go door to door hoping for delicious treats like candy, chips and chocolate. Some will scream at the haunts they see along their way, others will play funny tricks on one another. Halloween is a fun time for children and a great time for families as a whole.

Unfortunately, on Halloween, the NDP would threaten this spooky fun with its haunting \$21 billion carbon tax and would raise the price on everything Canadians love this time of year.

Luckily, Canadians across the country can count on our Conservative government to keep taxes low and not impose higher prices on these festive things they love, like pumpkins, candies and costumes.

Why does the NDP leader want to play this terrible, expensive trick on hard-working Canadian families?

\* \* \*

#### CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons stood in this House and had the audacity to complain about mistruths in members' statements. He was not even trying to be ironic.

The fact is clear to anyone watching that the Conservatives have been propagating outright mistruths in their statements. Propagating falsehoods is nothing new for them. They conveniently ignore their own record when it comes to putting a price on carbon. The Prime Minister himself promised a \$65 a tonne price. The Conservatives' election platform committed to a cap and trade system and yet the government House leader is content to watch his MPs stand day after day in the House and repeat statements known to be untrue.

The New Democrats miss hearing about the great events happening in Conservative ridings, so I will make a pledge today. If the Conservatives commit to throwing away their PMO talking points and the daily regurgitation of falsehoods, we will commit to stop doing their jobs for them by talking about the wonderful people and events in their ridings.

\* \* \*

● (1420)

#### NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, on Halloween, Canadians from coast to coast to coast are frightened by the spooky NDP and the very scary carbon tax. The \$21 billion very scary carbon tax would raise the price of Halloween treats everywhere. Even Count Dracula himself is frightened by the very scary carbon tax proposed by the spooky NDP. The count himself says, "The carbon tax would result in costly candy and pumped-up pumpkin prices".

While vampires suck blood from their victims, the NDP's very scary carbon tax would suck money from Canadians' pockets.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to tax your carbon, but the NDP's Halloween trick is a terrifying tax. That is why Canadians are calling on us to put a stake through the heart of the horrendous hair-raising carbon tax.

Happy Halloween.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

#### FOREIGN INVESTMENT

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the ratification of the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, the Conservatives have failed to consult Parliament or Canadians. They are trying to tie the hands of Canadians for 31 years with no study, no debate and no consultation.

The Conservatives have brought to Parliament the trade deals with Costa Rica, Jordan and Panama, so why not this trade deal with China? Why will the Prime Minister not allow this constraining deal with China to even be debated in Parliament? Will he delay the ratification until this agreement with China has been properly studied here in the House?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for almost two decades, Canadian governments have been trying to get a foreign investment protection and promotion agreement with China for one very simple reason: Canadian investors have not had the kind of protection in China that Chinese investors have in Canada.

This agreement would allow us to move forward. That is why it has seen an almost entirely positive response from Canadian investors. They want to see this go forward and we are committed to giving them the kind of protection they need.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said:

It is a very fundamental constitutional principle that a previous government cannot bind the actions of a future government.

A year has not even passed since the Prime Minister said that and now he is trying to tie the hands of future governments for 31 years.

I want to be very clear. The Conservatives will not tie the hands of the NDP. We will revoke this agreement if it is not in the best interests of Canadians.

Why will the Prime Minister not allow the study of this deal? What does he have to hide?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP says that he would revoke the hard-earned right of Canadian investors to be protected in a marketplace like China. That is precisely why Canadian investors, the Canadian business community and the Canadian public at large do not trust the NDP with economic policy.

We know that China is an important market. We know that Canadians need investment protection there. This agreement does that and we are very pleased to be moving it forward.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats support trade. We just do not support selling out Canada.

[*Translation*]

This agreement with China will have a major impact on matters like the Nexen deal. I would remind the Prime Minister that the deadline is only 11 days away and that the criteria used to make a decision were never made public. This agreement with China raises many concerns. The arbitration process will be kept secret. Canadian investors will not have reciprocal access to Chinese markets.

It leaves the door wide open to lawsuits, and Canadians will pay the price. So why not consult them?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. For the first time, Canadian investors will have protection in China. That is why the business community is nearly 100% in favour of this agreement. We are committed to pursuing this objective.

[*English*]

The NDP says that it is for trade but it has opposed trade with anybody. The NDP even said that it was a sellout for Canada to have a free trade agreement with the United States. That kind of extremism on trade is why Canadians will never entrust economic policy to the NDP.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we will see.

There is also no transparency when it comes to the budget, considering the \$8 billion error that occurred in calculating program

expenses. The Conservatives refuse to give the Parliamentary Budget Officer the documents he needs to do his job.

Since the Conservatives do not know how to count and they refuse to provide details about the cuts and their impact on services, can they at least provide Kevin Page with the information he needs to do his job?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, this information has been provided to the House in various ways, through the budget, estimates and so on, with respect to the spending plans of the government.

The stimulus program that emanated from the budget in 2009 was always planned to come to an end and, in fact, it did come to an end. It was wound down. However, it was very effective. I note that the NDP voted against that stimulus plan.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, then why not give the information to the PBO? What are the Conservatives hiding that they will not give the information to him?

We have experienced a troubling decline in our economy this month. GDP growth is now down to 2010 levels. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has warned that cuts will reduce our economy by over \$20 billion and cost 125,000 jobs.

Why is the Minister of Finance ignoring the warning signs and why is cutting his only plan for the economy?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, the plan for the economy is in the two budget bills, one of which we voted on yesterday and the NDP again voted against economic progress for our country. It voted against the hiring credit for small business in Canada. These are job creating measures.

The NDP members stand in this place and say that they are interested in job creation and growth in the economy, but every time a measure is brought forward, including in the economic action plan 2012, they not only argue against it, they vote against it.

\* \* \*

#### FOREIGN INVESTMENT

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the subject of the Canada-China investment deal, could the Prime Minister explain why one of the terms is different in this agreement from any other agreement that has been negotiated in the past? That is the 15-year notice period, as opposed to 6 months or a year, with respect to the termination of the agreement. Could the Prime Minister explain that?

*Oral Questions*

Also, in order to clear up some of the issues that have been raised, and some of them may in fact not be as real as the people who raise them think they are, would he not agree that a committee hearing would be a very good way to let expert witnesses appear and resolve some of these questions?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, we are achieving, for the first time, long-term protection for Canadian investors in China. That is an important thing for our country. Chinese investors have long been able to expect that there will be lawful procedures in our country. It is important that we get the same gains for Canadians in China. That is why this agreement is important. That is why it has been received virtually 100% favourably by the Canadian investment community and why we are committed to moving forward.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the Prime Minister will agree with me that, while some people oppose the agreement, there are others who simply have some questions and want clear answers, and still others who want some debate and some clarification regarding the situation.

So I will ask the Prime Minister the same question. Why not organize committee meetings where experts could give their testimony and provide us with information?

Does the Prime Minister not think that that is what his predecessor, Mr. Manning, would have done?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is important that Canadian investors have long-term protection in Chinese markets. This agreement will generate unprecedented development for our country. That is why we have universal support from the business community.

It is important that we pursue these objectives and take action. We are here to take action for Canadian investors and that is what we intend to do.

[English]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the agreement as it is set out does not give Canada any greater access to the Chinese market than we have now. There are still whole sectors in China that are out of bounds for Canadian investors and Canadian companies. There are still requirements with respect to what Canadian companies can do.

In discussing the Nexen deal publicly, the Prime Minister said that reciprocity was one of the things that the Government of Canada was looking for with respect to this agreement. If that is the case, why would the Prime Minister not agree that, in the words of Justice Brandeis, “sunshine is the best disinfectant”? Why would he not ask himself the question, what would Preston do?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, we have had an important objective, and that has been for the very first time to ensure that there is a legal framework enabling and protecting Canadian investment in China. There has long been that in Canada, given the nature of our system, and any such arrangements in this agreement are reciprocal.

However, it is important. This is a big market and an expanding market. We are ensuring we are creating jobs. We are prepared to act on this side of the House, and that is what we are going to do.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives reduced the number of protected lakes from 32,000 to 97. The Minister of Finance promised that these changes would be studied in committee. A motion was moved, but something happened behind closed doors and the motion no longer exists.

Will the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development add meetings to the agenda to study the monster budget bill?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the list of protected bodies of water is based on the scientific analysis and the knowledge of Transport Canada staff. Data from the Canadian Hydrographic Service, from Statistics Canada on the transportation of goods, historical data and even data from the navigable waters protection program were used.

Here is another statistic: 98% of the projects submitted have never impaired navigation. This statistic shows that changes were needed.

[English]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is simple. A motion was proposed, we went in camera and the motion never came out again.

When the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters was before the committee about the Navigable Waters Protection Act, it warned that changes to the act could, “dramatically alter the ability of Canadians to continue...using thousands of miles of waterways currently protected under the act”.

My question is for the chair of the environment committee. Will he be scheduling meetings to hear from important expert witnesses like hunters and anglers to hear about this monster budget bill?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the list of protected waterways is based on science and security. Data from the Canadian Hydrographic Service's nautical charts, Statistics Canada's data on freight movement and historical data from the navigable waters protection program were used.

Another statistic is that 98% of applications never pose any threat to navigation. The data shows that changes were needed.

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once again, we have motions dealt with behind closed doors that never see the light of day again.

The Conservatives have stuck changes to Indian Act land designation into this mammoth budget bill. Recommendations were made by a working group that believed that at least some of the 600 bands in Canada would be consulted about these changes. That did not happen, and Conservatives are recklessly hurrying these amendments along.

Will the chair of the aboriginal affairs committee be scheduling meetings to study these amendments to the Indian Act hidden in this budget bill or has the Conservatives' haste made this just impossible?

**Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the committee, myself and my parliamentary secretary have all travelled extensively throughout the country. Everywhere we have gone we have heard of issues with the land designation process such as it takes too long and it is too complex. We have addressed that. We have received congratulations for addressing it.

I do not understand the problem at all because the consultation came to us. We did not have to go out for the consultation.

\* \* \*

• (1435)

[Translation]

### FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I hope that they will understand my question better than they did the previous one.

The monster budget bill will have a major impact on fish habitat, and the gutting of the Navigable Waters Protection Act will affect the lives of thousands of fishers across the country.

The government must listen to fishers. Will the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans commit to studying Bill C-45 in committee, or will he break the Minister of Finance's promise?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the premise of the question is totally false. Managing navigation does not prevent fishers from doing their jobs, nor does it prevent Fisheries and Oceans from managing its files. This is not about fish; it is about navigation. The NDP is mixing all of the issues up. Maybe they want to scare people because today is Halloween, but they are way off base.

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### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives said that they agreed with the motions, and the motions were moved. Meetings were held in camera and, just like that, the motions no longer existed. The budget implementation bill

### Oral Questions

**The Speaker:** There is no interpretation at the moment.

Is it fixed?

It is working now.

The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives said that they agreed with the motions, and the motions were moved. Meetings were held in camera and, just like that, the motions no longer existed. The budget implementation bill, which is supposed to deal exclusively with the economy, also attacks the Customs Act. Therefore, it is imperative that the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security provide for study of Bill C-45. A motion will soon be debated in that regard.

Can the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security assure us that Bill C-45 will be on the committee's agenda?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is asking several committees to scrutinize the legislation, but I always find it interesting when the NDP members say, "Do as we say, not as we do". They complain that this bill is too big, but when the NDP does budget bills in Manitoba, they are omnibus bills. When the Leader of the Opposition was a member of the government in Quebec, it had a budget implementation bill 468 sections long, 383 pages.

The Leader of the Opposition says, "Do as I say, not as I do".

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### TRANSPORT

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Transport will also soon consider a motion to examine the budget implementation bill. This bill contains transportation-related changes, namely with regard to the Canada Shipping Act. The Standing Committee on Transport must therefore examine these changes.

Will the chair of the Standing Committee on Transport keep the Minister of Finance's promise and put the review of Bill C-45 on the committee meeting agenda?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada, our department, is pleased to make changes that will save Canada even more money and allow our economy to flourish.

Of course, the committees are managed by parliamentary committees people. What is important is that we are not going to implement a carbon tax that will place an additional \$21 billion burden on the shoulders of Canadian taxpayers.

*Oral Questions***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, unlike what happened to my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Environment and various other committees, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration was not allowed to hold an in camera meeting. However the result was the same. The motion that was moved to study the changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act contained in Bill C-45 did not survive the attacks of the members for Richmond Hill, Willowdale and St. Catharines. These Conservative members did not keep the Minister of Finance's promise.

Will the chair of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration correct this mistake and make plans to examine this bill in committee?

[English]

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, surely the member is not asking me to overrule the decision of the committee. If that is what she is asking me to do, the answer is no. The committee spoke, and that is the answer.

\* \* \*

• (1440)

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if we waited for transparency from the government, we would be waiting till the rivers run dry.

The reason the Conservatives are trying to kill any scrutiny of this omnibus bill is that they do not want Canadians to know they are stripping protection from 99.7% of Canada's lakes and rivers, and the remaining 0.3% are in Tory ridings, which brings us to the Muskoka minister.

Will he explain to us why the property values of the uber-rich cottagers in his riding merit protection, while the rest of Canadians are being tossed overboard?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the opposition continues to complain about the size of the bill, I do have to get up and correct myself.

I earlier quoted the length of a Quebec budget implementation bill as 383 pages. Unfortunately, that is only the English version of the budget bill when the Leader of the Opposition was in the Quebec government. When we have it bilingual, as ours is, it is actually 778 pages long, far longer than any budget bill from this government.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is the Ottawa bubble in a nutshell. We are talking about our lakes and rivers.

Canadians are passionate about our lakes and rivers. It is what defines us as a people. Therefore, when we see the pork barrel king of Muskoka not only subverting the system again, but putting his millionaire cottagers to the front of the line, it is just wrong.

What is up? Is he thinking that by creating this exclusive club he will get to ride a paddle-boat around Lake Rosseau with Goldie and Jeff? I am sorry, dude, it is way over the line. Mark it zero.

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is wrong of the hon. member to cherry-pick data in order to confirm his conspiracy theory. He has ignored bodies of water that are inconsistent with his conspiracy theory, including oceans, the St. Lawrence Seaway and many others.

The reality is that provinces and municipalities have asked us to cut the red tape. We will continue to protect navigation, not conspiracy.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, until his arrest last week, convicted criminal Nathan Jacobson had full access to the government, with close ties to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and even the Prime Minister.

They have said they did not know about his criminal past, but the Minister of Public Safety could have told them. Court documents show CSIS had been watching Mr. Jacobson for years, suspecting him of representing the Russian mafia in Canada.

We know the Conservatives refuse to return his donations, but will each cabinet minister table every contact they had with them and the nature of these communications?

**Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is suggesting is completely false.

Department of Justice officials received a request from the United States to arrest Mr. Jacobson on October 24. A warrant was obtained just one day later, on October 25, and police carried out the arrest later that same day. In other words, the government has been completely responsive to this situation.

This is a matter related to a private citizen. It is not related to the government. As the member knows, we do not interfere with police operations. As this case is now before the courts, we should let that process continue. It would be completely inappropriate to discuss it here.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the installation ceremony of the new CDS, the Prime Minister lectured the military and his ministers about “more tooth and less tail for less money”. General Lawson was immediately put in the awkward position of saying that there was no fat left.

*Oral Questions*

Will this new Conservative decade of darkness apply to hero shots of the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence posing for carefully crafted photos of themselves on military assets in the Arctic, and will it apply to fake photo ops, at \$47,000 per pop, of airplanes that we may never buy?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course the Department of National Defence is doing its part to ensure the efficient and effective use of public funds.

This is all about generating savings for Canadians, and a major part of those savings with respect to readiness will be achieved through efficiencies gained, which were announced in budget 2012, and streamlining of contracting processes, internal processes, while maintaining the regular and reserve force strength.

However, when it comes to the issue of the decade of darkness, I would have to defer completely to that member who was part of the government that brought that decade into being.

\* \* \*

• (1445)

[Translation]

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once upon a time Canada's waterways belonged to all Canadians.

With Bill C-45, only 97 lakes will be protected by federal legislation. A fact of interest is that 12 of those lakes are located in the riding of the President of the Treasury Board. Another interesting fact is that 90% of the lakes that will be protected are located in Conservative ridings.

What gives the Conservatives the right to appropriate our natural heritage?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is false.

As far as I know, the minister's riding is in the St. Lawrence River area, and that is on the list. That is completely false. This list is based on scientific data and statistics collected for years. It includes waterways that are navigable, and not a small creek or stream, as the NDP would like. When we think of water, we do not automatically think of navigation.

Yes, we will protect the environment. We will be focusing on navigation, as we are currently doing.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when Atlantic Canadians complained that the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development had cancelled the pilot project without even telling them, the minister responded by saying that she had told them two years ago. Never mind that she did not make any announcement and still has not answered their letters.

With communication skills like that, it is no wonder the minister does not think that consulting Canadians is important. Canadians disagree, and they are protesting loudly. Will the minister listen to them and back down on her harmful changes to EI?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we were very clear two years ago in our economic action plan that we were providing additional supports for those who were unfortunate enough to lose their job through no fault of their own. We did that by extending extra weeks, by offering extra training programs to help the unemployed get the skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

All of these programs were always destined to be short term to help Canadians through the worst of the recession. Now that we are in a stronger position, those programs that were scheduled to be temporary have come to their natural end.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last spring, the Minister of Finance said that people were welcome to express their opinions on employment insurance and that the government would take those opinions into consideration. Since then, the Conservatives have ignored all of the concerns that people have expressed about the government's toxic employment insurance reform.

Will the Conservatives keep their promises? Will they scrap their poorly conceived employment insurance reform? Will they consult the public to find out how to improve the program?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, changes to the employment insurance system are designed to help people find jobs. That is good news. What we are doing puts more money in their pockets because they are working more. Our programs will help people find and keep jobs. That is much better. The system is much better.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, funding for east coast businesses from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency declined by a whopping 25% last year alone. Businesses in Atlantic Canada have not suddenly lost their need for support; the Conservatives have lost their willingness to support Atlantic Canada, except, of course, when it comes to the patronage trough.

Why are the Conservatives leaving the east coast behind? Why is the government not committed to ACOA?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong and fearmongering. If he wants to compare apples to apples and look at investment for economic development, he should take into account stimulus measures that were meant to deal with the recession and the unprecedented level of federal investment in Atlantic Canada, not only by ACOA but Industry Canada and all other departments.

Further, he should mention the shipbuilding initiative, which analysts say will create 15,000 jobs and add \$2 billion in economic benefits annually.

• (1450)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the priority is the economy. The purpose of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is to promote the economy in the Atlantic region. But rather than help businesses, the Conservatives are using the agency to make partisan appointments. They fired over 100 employees and slashed aid to businesses and organizations by 25%. They are stalling economic development all over the Atlantic region.

Why are the Conservatives going after communities in the Atlantic region?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the member had done his homework, he would know what is going on in the Atlantic region. He would know that federal investment in Atlantic Canada is higher than ever. He would also know that, according to analysts, the shipbuilding initiative will create 15,000 jobs and inject \$2 billion annually into the Canadian economy. He should have read about that in other parts of the newspaper.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Ted Opatz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for far too long, Canada has had an immigration system bogged down by long wait times that have made it difficult to attract the talented individuals that our economy needs. Our Conservative government campaigned on a platform that included a long overdue transformation to make our immigration system work for the economy, for newcomers and all Canadians.

Can the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism please update the House on the announcement that he made today and how it will help the Canadian economy?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I announced that next year Canada will continue to welcome a record number of newcomers, between 240,000 and 265,000 permanent residents. In particular, we are increasing the Canadian experience class, an exciting new immigration program that invites foreign student graduates and highly skilled temporary foreign workers to stay in Canada. They already have jobs. They have perfected their English

or French language skills, and they have Canadian degrees and diplomas in most cases. They are set for success. Our transformative agenda is designed to ensure that immigrants succeed, because when they succeed, Canada succeeds.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, two veterans ombudsmen have said that the Veterans Review and Appeal Board is not doing its job properly. The tribunal's appeal process does not work properly and the dissatisfaction rate is very high among veterans and their families.

When will the Conservatives finally dismantle the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and replace it with a simpler process for processing applications? When will they give veterans and RCMP members the benefits they deserve?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I remind her that the veterans ombudsman said that the Veterans Review and Appeal Board has a key role to play in ensuring that veterans and other clients of Veterans Affairs Canada receive the benefits and services they are entitled to.

Why do the New Democrats want to deprive veterans of a legitimate service they receive thanks to free legal services? I urge the member to continue to support our government's efforts to appoint competent individuals to the tribunal.

[English]

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's lump sum payment plan for injured veterans has proved to be a failure. In some cases, injured vets get only 10% of what they have received through the courts or workers' compensation. That is the reason Canadian Forces members who are injured in the line of duty may have to launch a class action lawsuit against the government. Imagine, after risking everything for one's country, having to fight the government in court to get a fair pension.

When will the Conservatives change the lump sum formula to ensure that veterans get the pensions they deserve?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that after years of neglect, this government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, has taken unprecedented steps to improve the benefits of our veterans. That is the reality.

*Oral Questions*

As the member is well aware, the disability award is one of the many benefits that our veterans are getting, whether from Veterans Affairs Canada or DND. If veterans are seriously ill and injured, they can get as much as \$500,000 in total, and \$50,000 a year. Why? Because our objective is to help them transition into civilian life.

• (1455)

[Translation]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, veterans have been criticizing this for some time, and the Auditor General also confirmed it last week: when ill or injured military personnel leave the Canadian Forces, they have to cut through a great deal of very difficult, complicated red tape. Even departmental staff find the eligibility criteria unclear.

Instead of repeating the same speeches in the House, why does the minister not listen to the concerns of veterans and the Auditor General?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Auditor General has recognized the very real efforts our government is making to address the issues facing seriously injured or ill veterans. The Auditor General did also indicate that we need to cut red tape and reduce wait times.

Why is my NDP colleague against cutting red tape in order to speed up and simplify our processes? That is exactly what we are doing with our red tape reduction initiative; it is what we are doing with our veterans transition action plan; and it is what we will continue to do. On this side of the House, we are not just talking about veterans; we are taking action.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, many RCMP and military personnel when they are medically released from the RCMP or the military end up on the Canada pension plan disability benefit. The problem is that the amount of money they get for CPP disability is automatically deducted, dollar-for-dollar, from any other form of payment they receive. It does not matter whether they walk out of the military or RCMP or get carried out, their financial burden remains the same.

We are asking the government, will it now stop the CPP disability clawback on the heroes of our country so they can get the pensions they so richly deserve?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that on this side of the House we are standing up and delivering for our veterans. Whether we look at the Auditor General or the ombudsman, they acknowledge the effort we have made, and also our stakeholders. Ray Kokkonen, from the united peacekeeping mission, has said that we are heading in the right direction with the decision not to appeal the court decision but going over and beyond by harmonizing our program.

We are moving forward, and I will table legislation to keep on with this good work.

\* \* \*

#### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a government report says that foreign students at Canadian universities

benefit our economy, with greater brainpower, innovation and productivity. The minister says he wants more of them to stay, but his treatment of two Nigerian students in Regina sends the contradictory message that foreign students risk unfair, inconsistent and arbitrary abuses of power based on disinformation.

Both the University of Regina and the Government of Saskatchewan oppose deportation of these two young women for a small honest mistake. Will the minister agree?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is the opposite of what the member for Wascana just suggested. First of all, one of the students told the CBSA that she had not been enrolled in classes and had been academically disqualified, and she had documents confirming that. Secondly, the system is of course not administered in an arbitrary or political fashion, but rather in an objective fashion, in this instance by the Immigration and Refugee Board. Both of these individuals had hearings before the immigration division before receiving exclusion orders. Both of their social insurance numbers indicated that they did not have permission to work in Canada.

We are open to legal immigrants and to foreign students. We merely ask that people respect our fair rules.

\* \* \*

#### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Dennis Manuge fought the Conservatives in court and won on behalf of disabled veterans. RCMP veterans are now suing the Conservatives but the government refuses to even talk to them.

Yesterday, our brave Afghanistan veterans launched a class action lawsuit because they are being treated like second class citizens by the government. Hundreds of other veterans have been forced to the Federal Court to overturn bad decisions by the veterans appeal board.

Is this how the government stands up and delivers for veterans, by fighting them in court?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, coming from a member of the Liberal Party and its years of neglect, I am proud to say that yes, our government is standing up and acting for veterans.

### Oral Questions

We have been acting unprecedentedly. We created the veterans ombudsman. We created a bill of rights. Moreover, last month I announced that not only are we not appealing the court decision but we are going beyond that decision. We are investing \$177.7 million more into the pockets of our veterans. I will table legislation as well to address the war veterans allowance.

We are standing and acting for—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

### FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the 2009 Fraser River sockeye salmon collapse should have been a dire warning to the Conservatives about their fisheries mismanagement. However, instead of investing in fishery science and protecting fish habitat, the Conservatives gutted the Fisheries Act and dismantled scientific capacity in DFO. Now B.C. will be left with half the habitat protection staff it had a decade ago.

How does the minister expect to protect wild salmon if he is slashing funding for fishery science in B.C.?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have actually increased funding for fishery science in the last budget. We are focusing on protecting the productivity of Canadian fisheries. Fisheries and Oceans is consolidating its habitat management operations into 16 locations across Canada to provide for better protection of fisheries resources that Canadians value.

A new fisheries protection program will be better positioned to regulate serious harm to fish and the habitats that support them. It is very important.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today Canadians are finally going to get some answers about Conservative fisheries mismanagement from Justice Cohen. After 18 months, \$26 million and 150 witnesses, one thing is clear: this report cannot sit on the shelf to gather dust. The stakes are far too high for Canadian fisheries.

Will the government advise us when we can expect an action plan to rehabilitate the Canadian fishery here on the west coast as a starting point?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize the importance of salmon to British Columbia. That is why we commissioned the Cohen commission back in 2009 after the slow returns of sockeye salmon to the Fraser River.

We want to thank Justice Cohen and his team for their hard work and dedication on this report. We are pleased to be tabling it this afternoon.

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### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to deepening our relationship with the dynamic and growing countries of the Asia-

Pacific. Canada and Hong Kong enjoy a rich and diverse relationship and strong trade and investment ties. Family and cultural ties between Canada and the Philippines are growing every year. Nearly 500,000 people of Filipino origin now call Canada home.

Could the minister please share with the House how our government is building on our strong ties with these countries?

**Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the past few years our government has been expanding Canada's relationships within the Asia-Pacific region to create jobs and economic benefits right here at home.

Today, the Prime Minister announced that he will travel next month to the Philippines and to Hong Kong, where he will highlight our growing people to people ties and strengthen our already deep and historic relationships.

I look forward to joining him on these visits to further build upon the partnerships that exist between Canada, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

\* \* \*

### CENSUS

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yet again, the Conservative government says one thing and does the exact opposite. It fear-mongers about jail time for the mandatory long form census, yet two years later, people can still go to jail if they do not fill out the mandatory short form census, the labour force survey or the census on agriculture.

Will the Conservatives stop the hypocrisy and immediately remove jail time for every type of census in Canada, yes or no?

[Translation]

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, quite the contrary. We hope the opposition will agree that Canadians deserve to be treated like adults.

That is why we brought in this reform. We have always believed that, with a balanced approach, we can collect the information needed concerning the long form census. Statistics Canada agrees that this new approach will yield useful and usable data.

We hope to finally have the support of the opposition during this reform.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT**

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our young people are paying the price for the Conservatives' policies. A report released yesterday by certified general accountants, indicates that young people cannot fully realize their potential or develop their skills because available jobs do not match their qualifications. As a result, wages and productivity are affected. In the end, the entire Canadian economy is suffering because of the Conservatives.

Why do they still not have a job creation plan that will allow our young people to use their skills?

• (1505)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are investing in students and youth, by helping them go to college and university. We have also expanded the youth employment strategy by providing an additional \$50 million dollars in the budget this year.

Unfortunately, as always, the NDP opposed these initiatives to help our youth.

\* \* \*

[English]

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks, Canadians across the country will celebrate and remember our country's veterans. We must never forget the sacrifices made by those who selflessly served Canada in defence of our core values and freedoms.

Canada's war memorials are sacred ground. Sadly, there are those who would desecrate these monuments to our veterans. This is unacceptable to our government and to all law-abiding Canadians.

Would the minister please inform this House about the government's position on Bill C-217?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all members should thank the member for Dufferin—Caledon for bringing this important legislation forward.

Our nation's war memorials are sacred ground and those who would dishonour the memory of our veterans should face serious consequences.

This legislation would create a new offence related to protecting war memorials and would establish tough new penalties for anyone who intentionally damages or defiles these permanent tributes to Canada's fallen heroes.

There will be a vote in a few minutes. I encourage all members to support the bill. Our fallen soldiers deserve nothing less.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE MINING INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism

indicated that the Aluminum Technology Centre in my riding would remain open.

However, he has not said a word about the centre's budget. We are wondering whether the centre will be spared from the Conservative government's irresponsible cuts. The entire aluminum industry in my riding and the workers who make a living in that industry are concerned. The aluminum industry in my riding and throughout the region is very important in terms of the secondary and tertiary processing that make it possible to develop and diversify our economy.

Will the government maintain the Aluminum Technology Centre's budget? It is of the utmost importance.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the hon. member and the people of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Quebec and Canada who benefit from the research done at this centre. As I said yesterday, the government's position is clear: the centre will remain open.

\* \* \*

**SECURITIES**

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Finance is still dreaming of getting his hands on Quebec securities. Even after he was turned down by the National Assembly of Quebec and the Supreme Court of Canada, the minister did not try to hide his desire to come back and interfere in this key sector of Quebec's economy.

The minister now seems to want to take a back door approach to accomplish things that he cannot accomplish in the light of day, and clauses 168 and 169 of Bill C-45 are particularly worrisome.

What did the Minister of Finance try to hide in this bill with regard to securities?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing, actually.

The Supreme Court of Canada has given the federal government as well as the provinces guidance on what our respective constitutional responsibilities are relating to securities, and I said "respective responsibilities". The Supreme Court of Canada was clear that the federal government has a responsibility, for example, with respect to the global oversight of securities in Canada. The provinces have their own responsibilities with respect to securities.

We have had some continuing discussions with the provinces with respect to this issue and I am hopeful that we will be able to be creative together.

*Private Members' Business***POINTS OF ORDER**

## TABLING OF DOCUMENT

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today in question period I made reference to the budget implementation bill of the government of the province of Quebec when the leader of the opposition was a member of that government. I would like to table it right now. It is one of the rarer things that actually dwarfs me at 778 pages in length.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed from October 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials), be read the third time and passed.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:10 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-217 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

• (1510)

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that we proceed immediately with the vote.

• (1515)

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

*(Division No. 487)*

**YEAS**

## Members

Abлонczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bélangier	Bennett
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Carmichael
Carrie	Casey
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Cotler
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dion	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Eyking
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finlay (Haldimand—Norfolk)

Flaherty	Fletcher
Foote	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodale
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hyer	James
Jean	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Pacetti	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poilievre	Preston
Rae	Raith
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 181	

**NAYS**

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bellavance	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brosseau	Caron
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle

*Private Members' Business*

Donnelly  
 Dubé  
 Freeman  
 Genest  
 Giguère  
 Gravelle  
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
 Hassainia  
 Jacob  
 Kellway  
 Larose  
 Laverdière  
 Leslie  
 Mai  
 Masse  
 May  
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
 Nantel  
 Nicholls  
 Papillon  
 Pécelet  
 Pilon  
 Quach  
 Ravignat  
 Rousseau  
 Sellah  
 Sitsabaiesan  
 Stoffer  
 Thibeault  
 Tremblay

Doré Lefebvre  
 Dusseault  
 Garrison  
 Genest-Jourdain  
 Godin  
 Grogoué  
 Harris (St. John's East)  
 Hughes  
 Julian  
 Lapointe  
 Latendresse  
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
 Liu  
 Martin  
 Mathysen  
 Michaud  
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
 Mulcair  
 Nash  
 Nunez-Melo  
 Patry  
 Perreault  
 Plamondon  
 Rafferty  
 Raynault  
 Scott  
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
 Stewart  
 Sullivan  
 Toone  
 Turmel — 98

Benskin  
 Bernier  
 Bezan  
 Blanchette-Lamothe  
 Block  
 Borg  
 Boulerice  
 Brahma  
 Breikreuz  
 Brosseau  
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
 Bruinooge  
 Calandra  
 Carmichael  
 Carrie  
 Cash  
 Chicoine  
 Chisu  
 Choquette  
 Christopherson  
 Cleary  
 Coderre  
 Côté  
 Crowder  
 Cuzner  
 Davidson  
 Day  
 Del Mastro  
 Dewar  
 Dionne Labelle  
 Doré Lefebvre  
 Dubé  
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
 Dykstra  
 Fantino  
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
 Flaherty  
 Foote  
 Fry  
 Gallant  
 Genest  
 Giguère  
 Glover  
 Goguen  
 Gosal  
 Gravelle  
 Grogoué  
 Harris (St. John's East)  
 Hawn  
 Hiebert  
 Hoback  
 Hsu  
 Hyer  
 James  
 Julian  
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
 Kerr  
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
 Lamoureux  
 Larose  
 Lauzon  
 Lebel  
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
 Leitch  
 Leslie  
 Liu  
 Lobb  
 Lunney  
 MacKay (Central Nova)  
 Mai  
 Masse  
 May  
 McCallum  
 McGuinty  
 McLeod  
 Menzies  
 Miller  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
 Nantel  
 Nicholls  
 Nunez-Melo

Bergen  
 Bevington  
 Blanchette  
 Blaney  
 Boivin  
 Boughen  
 Boutin-Sweet  
 Braid  
 Brison  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Butt  
 Calkins  
 Caron  
 Casey  
 Charlton  
 Chisholm  
 Chong  
 Chow  
 Clarke  
 Clement  
 Comartin  
 Cotler  
 Cullen  
 Daniel  
 Davies (Vancouver East)  
 Dechert  
 Devolin  
 Dion  
 Donnelly  
 Dreeshen  
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
 Dusseault  
 Eyking  
 Fast  
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
 Fletcher  
 Freeman  
 Galipeau  
 Garrison  
 Genest-Jourdain  
 Gill  
 Godin  
 Goodale  
 Gourde  
 Grewal  
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
 Hassainia  
 Hayes  
 Hillyer  
 Holder  
 Hughes  
 Jacob  
 Jean  
 Karygiannis  
 Kellway  
 Kent  
 Komarnicki  
 Lake  
 Lapointe  
 Latendresse  
 Laverdière  
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
 Leaf  
 Lemieux  
 Leung  
 Lizon  
 Lukiwski  
 MacAulay  
 MacKenzie  
 Martin  
 Mathysen  
 Mayes  
 McColeman  
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
 Menegakis  
 Michaud  
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
 Mulcair  
 Nash  
 Norlock  
 Obhrai

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.  
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT**

The House resumed from October 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-350, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (accountability of offenders), be read the third time and passed.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading of Bill C-350, under private members' business.

● (1525)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 488*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy  
 Adler  
 Albas  
 Alexander  
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
 Ambler  
 Anders  
 Andrews  
 Armstrong  
 Aspin  
 Aubin  
 Baird  
 Bélanger  
 Bennett

Adams  
 Aglukkaq  
 Albrecht  
 Allen (Welland)  
 Allison  
 Ambrose  
 Anderson  
 Angus  
 Ashton  
 Atamanenko  
 Ayala  
 Bateman  
 Bellavance  
 Benoit

*Private Members' Business*

O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Pacetti	Papillon
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pécllet
Penashue	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Poilievre	Preston
Quach	Rae
Rafferty	Raït
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Rousseau	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Scott	Seeback
Sellah	Shea
Shipley	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sullivan
Sweet	Thibeault
Tilson	Toet
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Turmel
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 279	

## NAYS

Nil

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.  
(Bill read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PREVENTING PERSONS FROM CONCEALING THEIR  
IDENTITY DURING RIOTS AND UNLAWFUL  
ASSEMBLIES ACT**

The House resumed from October 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-309, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (concealment of identity), be read the third time and passed.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading of Bill C-309, under private members' business.

● (1530)

[English]

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

(Division No. 489)

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Eyking	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poilievre	Preston
Raït	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 153	

*Routine Proceedings*

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**NAYS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rae
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turmel	Valeriote— 126

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.  
(Bill read the third time and passed)

● (1535)

[English]

**MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES**

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table a document entitled, “Individual Member's Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2012”.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the final report of the commission of inquiry into the decline of the sockeye salmon in the Fraser River entitled, “The Uncertain Future of Fraser River Sockeye”.

\* \* \*

**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 governments response to 48 petitions.

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in relation to Bill C-383, An Act to amend the International Boundary Waters Treaty Act and the International River Improvements Act.

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

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL CHARITIES WEEK ACT**

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-458, an act respecting a national charities week and to amend the Income Tax Act (charitable and other gifts).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to table my private member's bill, an act respecting a national charities week and to amend the Income Tax Act.

As we know, charitable organizations play an important role in our society. It is vital that we support this excellent work and continue to invest in the strength of our communities. That is exactly what my private member's bill would do.

I am proposing that the tax deadline for charitable donations be moved to the end of February during tax preparation season to raise awareness of the available tax credits and to encourage increased giving. At the same time, national charities week at the end of February would highlight and celebrate the important work of our charitable sector.

*Routine Proceedings*

I urge all members to support this bill as we work together to champion our charities and to build a better society.

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

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it my pleasure to present petitions on behalf of residents in Oshawa who are quite upset that, without consultation, public hearings or environmental assessments, the Oshawa Port Authority has given permission to FarmTech Energy to build an ethanol plant at the Oshawa harbourfront on crown land adjacent to a sensitive wetland, home to species at risk, a wildlife reserve and a provincial park.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to divest the federal port authority back to the City of Oshawa and to halt construction of the ethanol facility.

## ABORTION

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents who note that Canada is the only nation in the western world that has no laws restricting abortion and that it is in the company of countries like China and North Korea. They also note that the Supreme Court has said that it is Parliament's responsibility to deal with the issue and to enact abortion legislation.

The petitioners call on the House to speedily enact legislation that would restrict abortion to the greatest extent possible.

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present three petitions in the House today.

The first petition asks the government to reverse its decision regarding the Experimental Lakes Area.

● (1540)

## KATIMAVIK

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from citizens in my riding who are asking that the funding for the Katimavik program be reinstated.

[*Translation*]

## DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition has to do with Development and Peace. The petition calls on Parliament to restore funding for development assistance and provide the \$49.2 million requested by Development and Peace.

[*English*]

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand in the House today and present two petitions.

The first petition is signed by a great number of residents from New Brunswick and some from Nova Scotia. They are petitioning this House and the government to change the proposals made by the

Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development with respect to employment insurance. It will greatly disadvantage those in small rural communities and seasonal industries.

The petitioners call upon the government to change its course.

## ACCESS TO MEDICINES

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from a group of grandmothers, advocacy groups and others from the Tantramar area of my riding from Sackville, New Brunswick. They call upon the government and the House to adopt Bill C-398 to ensure that generic medicines are available to those most in need, particularly in African countries.

I think it is important that the House consider this petition favourably.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from the Grandmothers' Advocacy Network. They have secured 177 signatures from Toronto calling for the adoption of Bill C-398, which is currently before the House, with respect to facilitating better access to needed drugs in developing countries.

The grandmothers point out that their sister grandmothers are burying their adult children and caring for many of the 15 million children who have been left orphaned by AIDS around the world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House to pass Bill C-398 without significant amendment to facilitate the immediate and sustainable flow of life-saving generic medicines to developing countries.

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

I rise to present a petition on behalf of residents from across Ontario, including Windsor, Tecumseh and Peterborough, who are very concerned about the government's closure of the Experimental Lakes Area in northwestern Ontario.

The petitioners call on the government to reconsider.

## CHILD CARE

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is on child care. The residents of Thunder Bay, Red Rock and Nipigon support a national child care program and note that Canada ranks dead last among OECD nations when it comes to early learning and child care spending.

The petitioners call on the government to do more for our young people.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, lastly, I am very proud to present a petition today on behalf of the residents of Thunder Bay regarding the development of a federal suicide prevention strategy.

The petitioners note that suicide is especially prevalent among young people and the second leading cause of death among youth between the ages of 10 and 24.

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from hundreds of people who call on the government to save the ELA, Canada's leading freshwater research station.

The petitioners draw attention to the fact that Canada's Experimental Lakes Area is a unique, world-renowned facility for freshwater research and education.

The petitioners call on the government to immediately recognize the importance of the ELA to the Government of Canada and to reverse the decision and continue to staff and provide financial resources to the ELA at current or higher levels.

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first is from citizens in my riding who are concerned about the release of genetically modified alfalfa, saying that such will contaminate and threaten organic farming systems and other farmers.

The petitioners call on Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa to allow a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

## RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from around 100 folks from my riding who say that Parliament has a solemn duty to reject any law that says some human beings are not human.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is in support of my Bill C-322.

The petitioners state that horses are ordinarily kept and treated as sport and companion animals and are not raised for food production.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to adopt into legislation Bill C-322, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act (slaughter of horses for human consumption).

## DEMENTIA

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present a petition from people in places like the provinces

*Routine Proceedings*

of Alberta and Quebec, but mostly from the great riding of Nickel Belt.

The petitioners call on the government to help pass Bill C-356, An Act respecting a National Strategy for Dementia. Dementia does not have party lines and they call on all members of the House to support this private member's bill to help alleviate some of the problems of people who have to support dementia patients.

• (1545)

## CENTRE FOR PLANT HEALTH

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with real joy today that I present a petition that has already been fulfilled. I want to publicly thank the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for reversing a decision that had been taken.

The petitioners call on the government to keep the Centre for Plant Health, a CFIA centre that has been in place for a hundred years in North Saanich, open. Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food decided to keep it open.

## FOREIGN INVESTMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I hope my second petition can be dealt with as perfectly. This petition is from residents of Alberta and British Columbia.

The petitioners call on the government to not ratify the Canada-China investment treaty, but to allow for the voice and the views of tens and tens of thousands of Canadians to be heard on this issue.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling a petition.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to appoint a royal commission on the environment and health with a mandate to examine and make recommendations regarding all aspects of the environmental and health impacts of industrial activity in Canada and the application of the precautionary principle, which protects public health and the environment from uncertain risks to the regulation of both industrial processes and the production and distribution and availability of consumer goods in Canada.

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions signed by citizens from all around the metro Vancouver area.

The petitioners call for the Experimental Lakes Area to be saved. As the science and tech critic for the NDP, I have met a number of delegations that are trying to save this wonderful international research facility.

*Routine Proceedings*

I would ask the House to look at these petitions and reconsider the matter.

\* \* \*

**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. 827 and 863.

[Text]

Question No. 827—**Mr. Hoang Mai:**

With regard to environmental assessment on the proposed new bridge on the St. Lawrence River at Montreal: (a) why was this assessment done using a screening type of assessment rather than a comprehensive study; (b) what type of assessment will this project be subject to, under the new regulations and changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act as proposed in bill C-38; (c) how many comments did Transport Canada receive concerning this project, before the April 4th Transport Canada deadline, in terms of the Draft Environmental Assessment Guidelines under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, (i) how will these comments be assessed by Transport Canada, (ii) will these comments be made public; (d) what specific expertise will the following federal authorities contribute with respect to the environmental assessment, (i) Health Canada, (ii) Parks Canada, (iii) Federal Bridge Corporation Limited/Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated, (iv) St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation; (e) what are the financial costs of the environmental assessment; (f) is Consortium Dessau Cima+ the only firm in charge of environmental assessment, (i) have they agreed to respect the preliminary timeline of mid-2014, (ii) will the drafting of the reports by all firms be made public soon after this date, (iii) what are the details of the contract, number T8080-110362, reference number 236518; (g) have the responsible authorities delegated the performance of the environmental assessment to any other party and, if so, (i) have the other parties agreed to respect the preliminary timeline of mid-2014, (ii) will the drafting of the reports by all firms be made public soon after this date; (h) what is the government's policy in the eventuality that the responsible authorities conclude that the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects; (i) what are the public consultation processes involved in the environmental assessment and their timelines; (j) have the responsible authorities established a list of main interested parties and, if so, is it public, and, if it is not public, why not; (k) how many public consultations have been organized to listen to local constituents' concerns, what was discussed, and are reports available; (l) which First Nations were included in the consultation, when, what points in the process were discussed, and are reports available; and (m) will the official opposition have the opportunity to examine and comment on the environmental assessment according to subsection 18(3) of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on January 22, 2012, the minister announced the launch of the environmental assessment, which is expected to be completed by December 2013.

The federal government announced on April 23, 2012, that the consortium Dessau/Cima+ of Montreal has been retained to complete the federal environmental assessment for the new bridge for the St. Lawrence. The assessment will include the environmental and technical components required to formulate recommendations to minimize repercussions of the project on the environment and on communities. The public, the local consultative groups, the private sector and the community groups will have an opportunity to participate in the environmental assessment process.

Question No. 863—**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin:**

With regard to Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission decision 2011-291: (a) what measures are in place to guarantee service for the 13,000 households in Quebec that could be deprived of service; (b) how much funding has been allocated to this issue; and (c) in case of loss of service, what is the plan to provide telephone and high-speed Internet services to the affected residents?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the CRTC can assure Canadians that they will not lose service due to this decision. One of the key policy objectives of the Telecommunications Act is to render reliable and affordable telecommunications services of high quality to all Canadians in both urban and rural areas. This includes the households served by small incumbent telephone companies in Quebec. The CRTC generally has two approaches to achieving this objective.

One approach is to rely on market forces to deliver high-quality service at a reasonable price. Where competition is strong, customers have a choice of service providers and these companies provide customers with innovative new services. In Quebec, wire line services will soon be available from competitive service providers. These will complement advanced wireless and satellite providers that already offer voice and Internet services to rural subscribers in Quebec.

With regard to (b), in areas where there is not enough competition to achieve this objective, the CRTC's approach is to provide an annual subsidy to incumbent carriers in order to ensure access to telephone services at affordable rates. In 2011, the total amount of subsidy provided to incumbent carriers across Canada was \$156 million; \$6.5 million of this subsidy went to the small incumbents that provide service in Quebec.

With regard to (c), it should be noted that the CRTC monitors telecommunications markets across Canada, including the Quebec markets in question. The CRTC has broad powers under the Telecommunications Act that can be used as necessary to achieve its policy objectives, which include access to telecommunications services.

\* \* \*

[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. 835, 847, 851, 855, 856, 857 and 867 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Text]

**Question No. 835—Mr. Mike Sullivan:**

With regard to the Initiative for Equitable Library Access: (a) what is the amount of spending in the past five fiscal years, broken down by year; (b) what strategy did Library and Archives Canada develop to meet the long-term library and information access needs of Canadians with print disabilities; (c) did Library and Archives Canada present the government with a final report on the outcomes and recommendations of the Initiative and if so, what is its title and date of submission; and (d) when and for what reasons did the federal government's participation in the Initiative end?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 847—Mr. Matthew Kellway:**

With regard to the Action Plan for the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat: (a) where will the Treasury Board obtain the data regarding the F-35 costs that it intends to use in its review, as per the sixth point of the plan; (b) will there be an independent review of the data sources used in the review; and (c) will the criteria, process and results of the review be made public (i) if yes, when, (ii) if no, why not?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 851—Ms. Françoise Boivin:**

With regard to the distribution of jobs in the government and all federal public agencies in the National Capital Region: (a) how many jobs were there in 2011 on the Quebec side of the National Capital Region; (b) how many jobs were there in 2012 on the Quebec side of the National Capital Region; (c) how many jobs were there in 2011 on the Ontario side of the National Capital Region; (d) how many jobs were there in 2012 on the Ontario side of the National Capital Region; (e) how many jobs on the Quebec side of the National Capital Region will be eliminated as a result of the cuts announced in the last budget; and (f) how many jobs on the Ontario side of the National Capital Region will be eliminated as a result of the cuts announced in the last budget?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 855—Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:**

With regard to the impact that the cuts announced in Budget 2012 will have on the Canadian Institutes of Health Research: (a) where will the increases or decreases occur in relation to the forecast amounts in place before the budget was tabled on March 29, 2012, broken down by institute; (b) for each institute in point (a), (i) what are the amounts of the planned increases or decreases in human resources and funding, (ii) will positions be eliminated and, if so, how many; (c) which initiatives, institutes or programs will be eliminated by Budget 2012; (d) what are the reductions in transfer payments to the provinces/territories and municipalities, broken down by (i) initiative, (ii) province/territory; and (e) which grant or contribution agreements will be reduced or cancelled, broken down by (i) program or initiative, (ii) recipient?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 856—Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:**

With regard to the impact of the cuts to the Public Health Agency of Canada announced in Budget 2012: (a) where will the increases or decreases occur in relation to the forecast amounts in place before the budget was tabled on March 29, 2012, broken down by (i) branch, (ii) initiative/program; (b) for each branch or program in point (a), (i) what are the amounts of the planned increases or decreases in human resources and funding, (ii) will positions be eliminated and, if so, how many; (c) which initiatives and/or programs will be eliminated by Budget 2012; (d) what are the reductions in transfer payments to the provinces/territories and municipalities, broken down by (i) initiative/program, (ii) province/territory; and (e) which grant or contribution agreements will be reduced or cancelled, broken down by (i) program/initiative, (ii) recipient?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 857—Ms. Jean Crowder:**

With regard to the Nutrition North program: (a) what are all the recommendations made by the Nutrition North advisory board since its inception; (b) which of those recommendations have been implemented; (c) what is the rationale for implementing

those recommendations; (d) what is the rationale for not implementing the rest of the recommendations; (e) since the implementation of the Nutrition North program, what cost-of-living research or evaluations have been done for the areas served by the Nutrition North program; (f) what research or evaluations have been completed and reported to the department on the effectiveness or short-comings of the program; and (g) what research or evaluations are planned for the program?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 867—Ms. H el ene LeBlanc:**

With regard to the RADARSAT Constellation program: (a) who is the minister responsible; (b) what are the names and titles of the main senior officials responsible; (c) what are the government's intentions with regard to continuing the RADARSAT Constellation program and what are the reasons behind the government's decision; (d) what is the name or names of the senior officials who made the written decision in (c) or the necessary recommendations; (e) did the 2012-2013 budget strategic review have an impact on the RADARSAT Constellation program and, if so, what; (f) was the initial projected timeline for each development phase of the RADARSAT Constellation program followed (based on the "major milestones" outlined in the Canadian Space Agency's 2011-2012 Report on Plans and Priorities) and, if not, what are the reasons that led to the delays; (g) will the first RADARSAT Constellation satellite still be launched during 2014-2015, as set out in the Canadian Space Agency's 2011-2012 Report on Plans and Priorities and, if not, what are the reasons that led to the delays, and the projected launch date; (h) will the second and third RADARSAT Constellation satellites still be launched during 2015-2016, as set out in the Canadian Space Agency's 2011-2012 Report on Plans and Priorities and, if not, what are the reasons that led to the delays, and the projected launch date; (i) what major changes, if any, is the government considering to the initial development plan for each phase of the RADARSAT Constellation (based on the "major milestones" outlined in the Canadian Space Agency's 2011-2012 Report on Plans and Priorities); (j) what are the titles of the specific cost-estimate documents or the political measures or actions the Minister of Industry referred to when answering the question asked in the House on May 16, 2012, by the Member for Burnaby-Douglas when he replied: "[the government] wants to deliver [the RADARSAT Constellation Mission] in a most cost-effective way"; (k) is the firm Macdonald, Dettwiler and Associates still the main contractor for completing the development of Phase D and subsequent phases of the RADARSAT Constellation; (l) are the firms MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates (Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue), COMDEV Limited, Magellan Aerospace, Bristol Aerospace, and MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates (Halifax) still the main subcontractors for completing the development of Phase D and subsequent phases of the RADARSAT Constellation; (m) what specific factors are behind the government's decision to delay signing a contract with or providing the funds earmarked for Phase D to the firm Macdonald, Dettwiler and Associates in the 2012 federal budget; (n) does the government intend to honour the contracts with the main contractor and the main subcontractors or terminate them; (o) if the government intends to terminate the contract, what are the reasons behind this decision; (p) if the government intends to terminate the contract, what will be the costs or penalties incurred by the government, broken down by contract; (q) is the government currently seeking a new main contractor or new main subcontractors to carry out Phase D of the project or any other subsequent phase and, if so, (i) what is the reason behind the decision to seek a new contractor, (ii) has a new main contractor or have new main contractors been selected, (iii) has a new main subcontractor or have new main subcontractors been selected, (iv) has there been or will there be a new call for tenders; (r) if the answer to any of the questions in items (q)(i) to (q)(iv), inclusively, is yes, what is the new distribution in percentage and dollar amounts by province and region of the contracts' regional industrial benefits; (s) what are the most recent overall estimates of the cost of the RADARSAT Constellation; (t) are these estimates higher or lower than the program's original estimates, and by how much; (u) what unforeseen situations or amendments to the initial program led to these variances in the Constellation cost estimates; (v) what proportion (in percentage and dollar amounts) of the overall project costs is related to incorporating the Automated Identification System (AIS) into the Constellation; (w) how much money has been allocated to the overall project to date; and (x) how much money has been allocated to Phase D of the project to date?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

*Speaker's Ruling*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**

## FOREIGN INVESTMENT

**The Speaker:** The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being given the floor to speak about an urgent and troubling situation. This week, the most consequential investment agreement that Canada has signed since NAFTA is set to be ratified without any debate or study in Parliament.

The text of the Canada-China foreign promotion and protection agreement, known as FIPA, was only made public a few weeks ago. The few experts who have looked into the fine print of the treaty are raising serious concerns for investors, Canadian industries and even provincial governments. The NDP has called for this agreement to be studied, debated and brought forward for a vote, but to no avail. That is why today, as a last resort, we are calling for an emergency debate on this controversial treaty.

Chinese investment is going to be a big part of Canada's economic future and Canadian business needs access to China. However, we need to be smart about how we engage with this increasingly assertive global power. While Canada has resources China wants, we have our own interests to advance as well. Before locking ourselves into a long-term investment treaty, we need to ensure we are not overlooking the details that could cost us dearly down the line.

Osgoode Hall's Dr. Gus Van Harten, an expert in international trade law, points out that the treaty may be unconstitutional because it allows Chinese investors to dispute laws and regulations passed by provinces. Is this true? We do not know because the text of the treaty was revealed a little more than a month ago and provincial governments have not had the chance to complete an analysis.

We also seem to have sacrificed core Canadian values on the negotiating table. Since 2004, Canada has insisted on transparency in the dispute resolution process. No more. Under the agreement, Chinese investors, including state-owned enterprises, could sue the Canadian government in secret. Presided over by unaccountable arbitrators, these tribunals can award billions of dollars in damages to Chinese investors. It is not only hypothetical, Chinese investors are keenly aware of how to use these powers. Ping An, a Chinese insurance company, is currently suing the government of Belgium for \$3 billion through a FIPA-style agreement signed with that country.

Does the deal even gain us reciprocal access to China? Under the agreement, China will retain all the non-conforming measures that have made it notoriously difficult for foreign investors to enter its market. Canada will retain the same right on paper, but in practice we have already eliminated most of those barriers. Therefore, in effect, it will remain far easier for the Chinese investors to snap up Canadian companies than vice versa. By locking in relatively open access to the Canadian market for 31 years, we are essentially giving up all the bargaining chips we might have used to pry open the Chinese economy for Canadian investors in a more reciprocal way. Is this FIPA really the best deal we could get?

What scope will it leave for future regulatory changes? As we grow the Canadian conversation about sustainable resource development and diversifying our economy, we want to leave scope for policy innovation. Even now, the Canadian government is scrambling to rethink the beleaguered Investment Canada Act and delay an approval of the CNOOC Nexen purchase. The FIPA makes allowances for existing Canadian policy, but new regulations could be subject to challenge if the treaty is locked in at the end of the month. We need to look ahead because once we sign on the dotted line, we are locked in. While NAFTA can be cancelled at six months' notice, the terms of the China-Canada FIPA are enforced for a minimum of 31 years. According to Gus Van Harten, "The treaty has a 15-year minimum term, then requires one year's notice to terminate, and then lasts another 15 years for all investments that exist at the time of termination".

Before binding Canadians to the terms of this treaty, these issues need to be debated on the Parliament of our country. Even supporters of this treaty are arguing that it needs a public debate. However, time has run out. It is now clear that the Canada-China foreign investment promotion and protection agreement is set to be ratified without any debate in the House. This would be a break from the established practice of government, which has typically sought Parliament's approval for treaties of this magnitude, and it would be a disservice to all Canadians who deserve to hear the merits of this treaty debated.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I urge you to grant my request for an emergency debate on this treaty.

● (1550)

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Ottawa Centre for once again bringing this matter to the House. While I am sure it is a matter of great concern for many members and very important, as I have ruled on two previous occasions, I do not find that it meets the test for granting an emergency debate.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### FINANCIAL LITERACY LEADER ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-28, An Act to amend the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act, as reported without amendment from the committee.

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 25 minutes.

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

**Hon. Ted Menzies (for the Minister of Finance)** moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** On division.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Speaker:** When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Ted Menzies (for the Minister of Finance)** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to be able to continue moving this bill through the House and that we are able to stand to speak to this at third reading today. The act is the financial literacy leader act. It is a very important piece of legislation, as it is a key part of efforts to improve financial literacy in Canada.

Before beginning my remarks here today, I would like to thank all of my colleagues at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance for their timely study of this legislation earlier this fall. In particular, I would like to recognize the work of the chair of the finance committee, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, not only for his continued leadership on the committee, but also for his serious commitment to improving Canadians' financial literacy. I know he is hard at work in committee right now.

He has been a very strong advocate, not only for this legislation, but for a number of key financial literacy initiatives, including his own recent private member's motion, Motion No. 269, a motion that called for the implementation of a task force on financial literacy.

There is no question that improving financial literacy is an important objective. It is one that I hope all parliamentarians would share. It is an objective that is increasingly seen as growing in international consensus.

In the words of a joint statement by the finance ministers of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum earlier this year:

Financial literacy has become a life skill that is essential for every economy to foster safe and sound, efficient, transparent and inclusive financial systems.

### Government Orders

Indeed, in a marketplace with an ever-growing number of complex financial products and services, it is more important than ever that consumers have the skills needed to make informed decisions.

As Annamaria Lusardi, a Dartmouth College economics professor, noted:

Given the complexity of current financial instruments and the financial decisions required in everyday life, from comparing credit card offerings, to choosing methods of payments, to deciding how much to save, where to invest, and how to get the best loan, individuals need to know how to read and write financially.

Fortunately, here in Canada, there has been a good deal of progress made in this area.

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, or as we refer to it, the FCAC, is the government's lead agency on financial education and literacy. It has introduced a number of positive initiatives in recent years. For example, the FCAC has developed innovative tools to help Canadians, such as a mortgage calculator that quickly determines an individual's mortgage payment and the potential savings that result from early payments on that mortgage.

It has also created innovative online information to help consumers shop for the most suitable credit card, as well as banking packages that actually meet their needs.

Most recently, due to the work of FCAC, Canadians can now benefit from an objective, reliable and free resource to help them make sense of the everyday financial questions they face. That is referred to as "Your Financial Toolkit". It is available to everyone, for free, online at the FCAC website. I would encourage anyone who is interested to go to that website to see this financial toolkit. It is another way that Canadians can acquire this life skill that is so critical in today's economy.

In simple, non-technical language, "Your Financial Toolkit" covers the basic financial topics that most Canadians have to deal with every day, from banking, budgeting and saving, to personal debt management, fraud protection, as well as retirement planning. It also provides Canadians with an opportunity to practise new financial skills and apply the information to their own personal situation.

I should note that reviews for "Your Financial Toolkit" have been overwhelming positive. The well-known personal finance journalist Alison Griffiths has noted:

...I'm happy to report there is something there for everyone.

• (1555)

Our Conservative government strongly supports the good work by the FCAC, and we have provided it with more resources to build on those successes. That is why, for example, our government announced \$3 million in new funding each and every year. That is in addition to the \$2 million in annual funding already provided to FCAC for financial literacy initiatives. This commitment clearly demonstrates how vital our government believes that improving financial literacy is for Canadians, both at the local level and right across the country.

*Government Orders*

Thanks to our increased support for FCAC, we have seen our agenda for stronger financial literacy in Canada actually moving forward. However, that is only one part of our efforts. We have even gone further, expanding beyond and building on what already exists, starting with the task force for financial literacy that was established in June 2009. It was tasked with making recommendations to create a national strategy to improve financial literacy in Canada. It was comprised of 13 members drawn from the business side, educational sector, community organizations as well as academia.

The task force was created and given a mandate to talk to Canadians directly and get their opinions at the grassroots level, not to impose a top-down strategy. As a result, the task force travelled extensively all across Canada. In its travels, members heard about excellent creative examples of financial literacy education at the local and provincial levels. They heard examples of individual successes that would help inform a comprehensive national plan.

The task force delivered its final report "Canadians and Their Money: Building a brighter financial future". It was handed to us in February 2011. It outlined 30 recommendations to improve the financial literacy of Canadians, aimed at various levels of government and stakeholders as well. I encourage all Canadians to visit its website at [financialliteracyincanada.com](http://financialliteracyincanada.com) to read that report and learn more about the work of the task force, especially those who contributed to it.

Since its release over a year ago, I am very pleased to say that the work of the task force was widely praised by a vast array of organizations, and commentators as well. For example, Social and Enterprise Development Innovations, a charitable non-profit organization that aims to expand economic opportunities for low-income Canadians, strongly endorsed the report, especially for its tireless work in consulting widely in every region of the country. In the words of Laura Watt, the president and CEO of that organization:

[Social and Enterprise Development Innovations commends] the federal government for recognizing the critical importance of financial literacy. We also commend the diligent and thorough work of the task force members, who engaged Canadians in every province and territory in building a much-needed national strategy on financial literacy.

Also, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants spoke favourably about the task force report. It said:

The recommendations provide a concrete foundation from which to develop a national strategy.

Following the success of the task force's consultations and report, today's legislation starts the process of its implementation by acting on its number one recommendation. That is, establishing a dedicated leader within the government on these issues.

Specifically, it proposes to amend the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act to provide the framework for the appointment of a financial literacy leader. The proposed amendments also set out the duties, powers and functions of the financial literacy leader, enabling either him or her to carry out activities in support of this goal and establishing his or her terms of employment. This individual would be responsible for collaborating and coordinating his or her activities with public interest groups across Canada to contribute and support initiatives that will strengthen Canadians' financial literacy.

● (1600)

It would also continue the process achieved by the FCAC in its work on the national strategy for financial literacy. While the financial literacy leader will be essential to our government's financial literacy efforts, it is just one example of how the government continues to ensure that all Canadian consumers have the knowledge as well as the tools they require to save their money wisely while investing in their future in an increasingly complex financial marketplace.

Today's complex financial world demands improved financial literacy regardless of people's incomes or the types of jobs they do. Just consider a few of these real-life examples, such as: workers setting up a bank account and trying to determine the best way to reach their savings goals; families trying to make ends meet while saving for their first home; investors who may not be aware of the risks and returns of a specific investment or the true value of compound interest; seniors who, in a world of Internet banking and automated teller machines, are susceptible to financial scams and frauds; new Canadians unfamiliar with their rights to basic banking services; aboriginal Canadians living in a remote northern community who may face difficulties keeping up with new savings vehicles offered by government.

That is where financial education comes in. People who become more knowledgeable about financial matters are better able to obtain and benefit from those financial services. We know that financial literacy is the foundation of saving and investing, as well as the responsible use of credit. For example, when it comes to buying a house, being financially literate means understanding the true cost of borrowing. It means knowing that the first years of mortgage payments go toward servicing the debt, not actually paying down principal. Most importantly, it means knowing what questions to ask, such as what kind of mortgage people can get, what their repayment options are, what the fees and taxes are, how they can lower their payments and, above all, if they can really afford it.

Nowhere is the need for improved financial literacy more pressing than among Canada's youth. A recent study on youth financial literacy prepared for FCAC highlighted the cost of omitting basic financial literacy from a student's curriculum. According to the study of young Canadians aged 18 to 29, only one in four reported having received any education or training on personal finances, with most of this instruction occurring only at a post-secondary level. The study also demonstrated that this same demographic of young Canadians had a strong interest in financial education, especially when it comes to personal budgeting. Two-thirds make a monthly budget, although most do not always stick to it, unfortunately; and more than 7 in 10 put money aside for the future, although only half of them do so on a regular basis.

*Government Orders*

Young Canadians desiring to improve their money management should be an encouraging sign, particularly since young people now have more exposure to financial transactions than any generation before them. According to the same FCAC study, more than 8 in 10 young Canadians have a chequing account and almost as many, 72%, have a credit card.

We know that financial literacy education can be effective and that initiatives like the one being considered today can help ensure that Canada's youth get the tools and knowledge they need. Whether it is our country's teenagers or elderly, increased financial literacy leads to better consumer choices, a larger and more dynamic market for financial services, as well as greater involvement in our country's thriving banking sector. Its absence can put Canadians and, indeed, our economy at a competitive disadvantage, making Canadians pay more for necessary basic banking transactions, or perhaps short-term credit. Clearly, this is something that we all want to avoid and I am proud to have taken this aggressive action to date.

Improving Canadians' financial literacy is not an easy goal. It is an ongoing commitment that will require support from partners across the educational and financial sectors.

• (1605)

Making Canadians as financially knowledgeable as they can possibly be demands a long-term national approach and a collective commitment, one that is exemplified by the creation of a financial literacy leader, a position that today's act proposes to create. The groups actively involved in the delivery of these kinds of programs, like ABC Life Literacy, understand the importance of this position. As the latter testified at the finance committee:

A financial literacy leader, a national leader who helps us strengthen the financial literacy of Canadians, has the potential to help Canadians in this regard. Financial literacy is part of the spectrum of essential skills all Canadians need to thrive.

To build on the legacy of our parents and grandparents who spent only when they could afford it, we must work to ensure that our children and grandchildren fully understand the risks and the rewards of the vast array of financial products and services now available to them today. It is just common sense that our prosperity depends on markets and financial services being accessible to everyone.

This is something that our government has long understood and we have worked hard to implement initiatives to level the playing field for everyone. I can only hope that after careful study at the finance committee and with the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the important measures contained in today's act, all members of the House will get behind the financial literacy leader and improve financial literacy for everyone.

We have had nearly a year to debate and examine this legislation, so let us get on with passing it. I therefore urge all members of the House to vote in favour of today's act, which will help all Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money, not give it to the banks as a result of a wrong and inappropriate product or service being offered and utilized.

• (1610)

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister a few questions from what we heard at committee. The minister was at committee and did a fine job in

testifying before us, but he talked about a couple of things there and in his speech here, that is, about an ongoing commitment to financial literacy.

One of our concerns on this side of the House was regarding the ongoing commitment to ensure that our financial literacy leader could speak in both official languages. The minister talked about that at committee and said there was an ongoing commitment to that and that it would be mandatory. Is that something he is going to continue to put forward?

Second, he talked about the importance of the task force recommendations. There were 30 task force recommendations. One of the things we saw on this side of the House as being truly important, that would have made the bill great, is if the bill had included some framework within it. The second recommendation of the task force, to have an advisory council, would have brought forward some framework, but it is not in the bill.

Is the minister going to commit to ensuring that the financial literacy leader has this advisory council?

**Hon. Ted Menzies:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this piece of legislation is great, but we can make it greater. I thank the member for his support on that and his good questions at committee.

When I answered at committee, I said that although it was not defined in the legislation, the necessity of bilingualism would, of course, be respected because this is all across this country. We need to recognize that we are helping Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Certainly there needs to be some framework around this, but the financial literacy leader will be given the latitude, whether a man or a woman, to develop this framework. We will encourage this leader working within the auspices of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada to give some thought to how this needs to be rolled out, including how we can engage the not for profit organizations across this country already working on this, how we can engage the financial institutions that are making considerable investments working on this, and how we can coordinate those efforts with the educational facilities within our provinces. That will be the mandate of this financial literacy leader.

• (1615)

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing forward this very important measure for all of our constituents.

He mentioned in his speech how Canadians interact with the financial system every day, whether via credit cards or debit cards, or writing cheques or going to the bank. We on this side of the House agree that they should always be treated fairly in their dealings with financial institutions.

Since our government was elected in 2006, we have already taken many steps to ensure the protection of consumers when it comes to financial services products. I am thinking specifically of the banning of negative option billing, for example, for financial products.

*Government Orders*

I would like you, if you can, to comment on some of the measures we are taking now and have taken in the past to protect Canadian consumers.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before I go to the minister, I would just remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair rather than directly to their colleagues.

The hon. Minister of State (Finance).

**Hon. Ted Menzies:** Mr. Speaker, one of the most important aspects of this financial literacy leader is teaching people how to actually ask the questions, whether they are applying for a mortgage or a credit card. It is the information, the transparency, that matters. That is what we found and what the hon. members was talking about, that there was perhaps a lack of transparency around some of the products that we did have.

The simple fact is that we have banned the credit card cheques that were being sent to people. People assumed that there was no charge on those cheques because they had not requested them. We said that we certainly did not want to see Canadians receiving unsolicited credit card cheques, especially when they were unsolicited, because Canadians did not realize there was a cost.

Then there was our banning of negative option billing, which my colleague referred to. We also required greater disclosure on mortgage prepayments, including the amount of money a person could actually save if they asked some questions when applying for their mortgage, such as how they could pay it off sooner and how much they would save. Then there is the matter of the simple cost of someone paying off only the minimum amount on a credit card. When we receive our credit card statement, that information is now in a little information box. It is shocking how long it takes someone to pay off whatever amount is on his or her credit card.

It is about simple information for people that they perhaps did not realize was due to them. We have put that in regulations, so Canadians can get that information and make wise decisions.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what is in this bill is one thing, but once again the Conservatives are showing that they have forgotten a huge chunk of the population.

What does the member think this bill does to help the Canadians who do not have enough money to invest in private financial tools?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ted Menzies:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the question is raised, because we have actually put in place 120 different tax reductions since 2006 when we formed government. We have made sure that Canadians do have more of their hard-earned money. An average family of four now keeps over \$3,000 more than it did before. That is important. That is what we can do for Canadians, making sure that they keep more of their own money.

This legislation actually provides the information for them to be able to save more of their own money, to be able to invest it wisely, to be able to have a learned discussion with a financial adviser or someone who is simply providing them with an option for a registered retirement savings plan, perhaps even a tax-free savings

account, which is one of the best vehicles that Canadians have had offered to them for saving for their retirement.

It is about the information, and we have actually reduced their costs. Now they can take some of that money and we can help them invest it wisely.

• (1620)

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is important not only to talk about what is in the bill and what we have been doing, but also about the dissemination of information, as the minister brought up.

Many Canadians in today's technological age do not realize the information we should be disseminating and the information that we definitely should not be disseminating online. It is important that we raise that.

The awareness factor is something that has to be out there. A lot of my friends who are highly educated and have master's degrees do not realize that they are not very financially literate and do not understand how to calculate mortgage interest or credit card interest fees.

Regarding the awareness aspect of this, as the member for Edmonton—Leduc has acknowledged and done a great job in highlighting, could the minister talk about the impact on Canadians of our raising the awareness of this and having this debate on increasing their financial literacy?

**Hon. Ted Menzies:** Mr. Speaker, this is a great opportunity. There were a number of witnesses at the finance committee, who are very much engaged in this and want to help people. The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, FCAC, is doing a great job, especially with the addition of a leader who could focus specifically on this.

The FCAC has many other challenges ahead of it, but a financial literacy leader would be able to focus attention specifically on how we insert this into the educational system with our partners, the provinces, which hold the curriculum decisions. We think it is very important that there be a partnership there, that we start educating our children and even our seniors.

There is a lot of new technology. The fact is that one can now pay with a swipe of one's phone, which is pretty new technology for many Canadians. We need to make sure that they understand how that works. It looks like great technology, but we need to understand the challenges that go with it.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present the NDP's position on Bill C-28, which would create a financial literacy leader with the aim of improving financial literacy in Canada.

*Government Orders*

Let me start by saying that, obviously, an understanding of financial literacy is a good thing. Understanding how much the difference between a 5% and 5.5% APR will cost over the lifetime of a loan, how long it will take to pay off a credit card if only minimum payments are made each month, how much needs to be saved each month for school or for a car or to put money away for a down payment on a house, or for retirement, having this knowledge is clearly a benefit.

How do we get to the end point? As I said at committee, it is a little like golf. Some people hook. Others slice, but at the end of the day they are all trying to put the ball into the hole. Therefore, the question we must ask ourselves is: How well does the bill achieve its desired ends?

Unfortunately the bill, while a very small step, is not going to get us to the end point we all desire. For a start, the terms of reference for this position are extremely vague. While the holder of this post will be required to advance financial literacy, there is no definition of what constitutes financial literacy within the bill nor any attempt to define how we could or should advance it.

Moreover, the original recommendation to create this position was very clear on the need for an advisory council that would include labour, voluntary groups, educators and business stakeholders to direct the work of the financial literacy leader. The bill does not include any such measures to create this advisory council and, as such, there is very little in the way of accountability.

Additionally, there is no proviso in the bill that would ensure that this position is filled by someone who is fluently bilingual in both official languages. To me, and to the NDP, it would seem a necessary condition that someone who is expected to teach and encourage Canadians about financial literacy would be able to communicate in both French and English.

We in the NDP tried to address these problems at committee. We introduced six amendments, all of which were dismissed by the Conservative members of the finance committee. Most surprisingly, some of those nay votes seemed to contradict comments made by the Minister of State (Finance) in committee and here today.

When I asked the minister of state about the fact that bilingualism is not a legislative requirement in the bill, the minister replied that the ability to speak both official languages and to disseminate the information in both official languages will be mandatory. Yet just a week later when I tabled a motion to amend the bill to this effect, the Conservative members voted against the amendment on the grounds that they want to ensure that they can choose the right person.

We in the NDP believe that it is impossible to choose the right person if that person is not bilingual, because bilingualism is necessary to ensure that we are helping improve the financial literacy of all Canadians.

We are therefore left with a dilemma. The stakeholders that we have consulted have told us that the NDP approach is far superior to the bill that we are debating today, but unfortunately, and especially with the current government, the choice we are presented with is all or nothing, no compromise, no improvements. This is what is on the table and we can take it or leave it.

That is exactly what was on display at committee, where the Conservatives refused to accept even a single amendment. This approach is not good for the functioning of parliamentary democracy and it is not good for Canadians.

That is why we in the official opposition are not going to play these ideological games. Canadians want good governance and good public administration, and that is exactly what they will get when they elect their first NDP government in 2015.

That is why we in the NDP will be supporting the bill at third reading, not because we believe it is the big fix the Conservatives claim it is but because, for all its faults, passing the bill is better than the current status quo.

• (1625)

Unlike the Conservatives, we listen to stakeholders regardless of their political affiliations and we listen to their concerns when it comes to policy decisions. These groups have told us that the bill would be a small step in assisting their work and enhancing the financial literacy of Canadians.

Our concerns with the bill have certainly not disappeared. However, my colleagues and I will hold the government to account for all of the commitments that we have heard around their position, and when we form government in 2015, we will be in the position to correct all the problems that the party opposite is all too happy to ignore in order to score political points.

When we look at the bill, we should also look to place it within the broader policy changes that the Conservatives have brought forward in the past six years. For example, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada stats tell us that 26% of Canadians struggle with basic numeracy and 20% struggle with basic literacy. Yet the government that is trying to sell Canadians on financial literacy being the answer to their economic problems is the same one that cut \$17.7 million from adult literacy programs in 2006. The Conservative government's approach is to give with one hand while taking away with the other.

It is clear that financial literacy is something that we cannot understand in a vacuum. In fact, during the committee process, my colleague from Quebec raised this issue with the minister of state. He said:

You mentioned curriculum. That is very much a key issue. When I was in my third year of high school—which is equivalent to grade 10, I believe—we had what was called an economic education program. It covered things like credit cards and bank accounts, but it also dealt with fundamental issues facing people such as unionization. We looked at everything from a macroeconomic perspective, taking a lot more into account than just financial markets.

Instead of strictly limiting the financial literacy discussion to financial markets, pensions and other really specific issues such as credit cards, don't you think we should widen the scope and talk about economic education in general? Taking that approach, we could work with the provinces to help them develop a curriculum component possibly for primary students, but especially for high school students, to educate all young people about the complexities of economics, beyond just the financial dimension.

The minister's response was simple and to the point. The minister said, "I certainly can't disagree with you: that needs to happen".

### Government Orders

When pushed on it, even the government agrees that we need a more comprehensive strategy than the one we have been presented with. Instead, we get a bill that includes recommendation one of the Task Force on Financial Literacy and ignores the other 29. The minister's response to this is that the financial leader has at his or her discretion the option to put in place many of the other 29 recommendations.

We would agree with recommendation one but not with ignoring all the others. What is the point of independent task force reports if the Conservatives simply pick and choose the parts they like? Recommendation two of the task force calls for the creation of an advisory council made up of financial institution members, educators, unions and other stakeholders to ensure that the financial literacy leader is properly guided.

The Conservatives were happy to say that they were introducing the first and most important recommendation, but what they are doing is equivalent to building a house without putting in a proper foundation. It is not enough to say that it could, will or should have been implemented. It should have been implemented side by side with the financial literacy leader legislation. To do otherwise is to say that it is not important to ensure that all voices are heard.

We in the NDP take a different approach, one that listens to a wide variety of voices and ensures that no Canadian gets left behind. We need to make finance more understandable, not just make people better at understanding it. Even for people who do not struggle with numeracy and literacy, finance is not a particularly comprehensible subject. Barrie McKenna, a business columnist for the *Globe and Mail*, states:

Looking to financial literacy to fill the void is like asking ordinary Canadians to be their own brain surgeons and airline pilots. The dizzying array of financial products, mixed with chaotic and increasingly irrational financial markets, makes the job of do-it-yourself financial planning almost impossible – no matter how literate you are. The average credit-card agreement is as intuitive as quantum physics.

●(1630)

We also need to ensure that Canadians are aware that sometimes it may not be in their best interest to take out certain financial products. Encouraging people to take out savings and investment funds creates lucrative fees for banks and brokers. In fact, according to Morningstar, an investment research company, Canadian fees for equity funds are some of the highest in the world, being on average around two and a half times higher than fees in the U.S. for example.

We need to ensure that our financial literacy regime will criticize plans where fund managers take a substantial fee regardless of the performance of the fund, that it will highlight funds like the CPP, regularly outperform private funds and it must communicate to people the need to weigh the inherent dangers of investing in the stock market. Unfortunately, without a definition of “financial literacy” and without an advisory council, we cannot be sure that this will be the case.

We as parliamentarians should also be wary about increasing the quantity of financial literacy available without ensuring its quality. We in the NDP understand that this is a possibility and introduced an amendment to improve the reporting requirements of the financial literacy leader. However, as seems par for the course, the Conservatives ignored the concerns and voted it down. This has two dangerous and interlinked consequences.

First, the model presents the possibility of shifting all blame off banks and onto consumers. At the individual level, people can begin to be blamed for their own uninformed choices and, at the national or even international levels, systemic problems are no longer the fault of banks that will lend beyond their means to individuals who borrow too much. Obviously, individuals do have a responsibility to manage their own finances but banks, hedge funds and other financial institutions have the ability to affect the economy in a much more profound way than individual consumers, and we must not forget that.

Second, what do we do for the people who actually end up worse off due to financial investments that fail? We have to understand that some people will lose their savings when businesses go bust or when the stock market drops. This has been the way the stock market has worked since the first recognizable stock exchange opened in Amsterdam in the 17th century.

What about those people who simply do not have the type of disposable income required to invest in their futures, the people who live paycheque to paycheque, the people who have seen their wages stagnate or fall in real terms since the mid-1990s? The government should recognize that for a very large portion of Canadians a lack of savings is a reflection of the disparity between the rise in the cost of living and the rise in wages over the last 15 years or so.

Encouraging savings is fine for people who have disposable income after they have paid for the essentials but, unfortunately, far too many people taking on debt is not a choice. It is the only way to survive.

An OECD report published in December 2011 pointed out that the trend toward a less progressive tax structure and a more unequal society here in Canada began in the mid-1990s under the then Liberal government and has continued since 2006 under the current government.

As famed Canadian economist, Jim Stanford, noted in his submission to the national task force:

Personal savings will never constitute an important source of financial security for the strong majority of Canadians who cannot save, given the paucity of their incomes.

If the government really wanted to give these people an opportunity to build their own savings, then it would regulate bank fees and the level of interest that is charged on credit cards in order to allow people to put a little bit aside each month to ensure that it can help with their savings.

Similarly, if the government wants to ensure that Canadians have adequate savings when they retire, the way forward is not to create a new and inherently risky vehicle for private savings. There are already multiple methods for Canadians to save for their futures, RRSPs and TFSA's spring to mind, if they have the funds available to invest.

*Government Orders*

●(1635)

These vehicles are already supported and funded by the government. In fact, studies have shown that the highest earning 11% of Canadians contribute more to RRSPs than the bottom 89% of tax filers combined. Because of the tax benefits of these investments in RRSPs, Canadian taxpayers subsidize that contribution by the top 11% of earners to the tune of \$7.3 billion in annual net tax expenditures.

The creation of pooled registered pension plans, or PRPPs, therefore, only benefits those who are already able to invest in their retirement. It does nothing for the 30% of Canadian families who lack any form of retirement savings outside of CPP.

Encouraging people to invest in a risky vehicle on the stock market is not real leadership on financial planning. It again simply passes the entire risk and blame for an individual not having adequate retirement savings onto that individual. To make matters worse, the Conservatives have delayed the age at which Canadians are eligible for OAS from 65 to 67. It would make far more sense, if the government is really interested in Canadians' retirement security, in allowing Canadians to properly plan for their retirement, to reverse the changes to the eligibility age for OAS and, just as the NDP leader has done, make a commitment to the NDP plan to expand the guaranteed Canada/Quebec pension plan by phasing in an affordable doubling of benefits.

This plan has been called for by provinces across the country. It would allow Canadians both the ability to plan for their retirement and a guaranteed income to ensure they can retire with dignity. Moreover, the CPP is a much safer investment than market based private funds and consistently outperforms the market. Even business columnists, like the aforementioned Barrie McKenna of *The Globe and Mail*, pointed out the benefits of such a policy by stating:

And Ottawa could beef up the CPP, mandating Canadians sock away more money for retirement, while benefitting from the CPP's low costs.

However, so far, the government, and the Minister of Finance in particular, have not listened to this appeal for a real and proven way of ensuring Canadians can retire with dignity.

The problem is that the government seems to think that encouraging these skills is a suitable substitute for a proper regime of consumer protection, retirement security and a proper strategy for economic growth. The bill embodies the government's strategy, or lack of strategy, in addressing the issues that really matter to working and middle-class Canadians across the country.

I wonder why the creation of the financial literacy leader could not be included in the Financial System Review Act rather than being a stand-alone act? The Conservatives have no problem lumping together pieces of legislation that have no relationship to one another in omnibus budget bills but, apparently, a bill to amend the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act could not be included a system review of banking legislation. It appears to me that the only reason these did not go together was because the government hoped it could get some positive media out of this legislation, but who knows?

The NDP believes in real measures to protect consumers, seniors and low-income Canadians. My colleagues on this side of the House

in the official opposition will continue to stand up for policies that really help hard-working Canadians. This is a small start, a very small step, and one which we will be supporting to send to the Senate in order to get the funds, which have already been allocated, out to the organizations that really need them.

●(1640)

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague across the way for standing and speaking in favour of financial literacy, in moving forward with this legislation and sending it to the Senate.

It is obvious that there is a need for some financial literacy based on the speech that was just given. We talked about CPP outperforming the marketplace. I would like to know if the member opposite could break down how much the CPP has invested in the actual stock market. Does he know how much is in bonds, treasury bills and in common shares? I wonder if he understands that CPP is invested, actually, in the marketplace and the reason it is outperforming is because it is a pool.

He criticized the registered retirement pooled savings plan that we put together but the CPP actually is a pool of funds. That is why, based on reducing risk and spreading risk, it has been able to perform better. The fact is that the CPP is invested in the marketplace.

I appreciate his support but the NDP could use a little financial literacy.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, what the member forgot to mention is that the CPP is guaranteed and the PRPP is not. What we are calling for on this side is to ensure that Canadians can retire with dignity. The thing is that the Conservatives always forget the one tiny piece.

That is what I said about financial literacy. We need to ensure that Canadians have financial literacy but the financial literacy leader that the Conservatives are talking about and have brought forward is a very tiny step.

We encourage the Conservatives to bring forward this advisory council to ensure all French and English Canadians can get the education they need to ensure that we stop blaming individuals for the financial crisis. We need to ensure that they have the information they need and put the banks where they should be with the understanding that they have a responsibility with this as well.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech given by my hon. colleague from Sudbury, who demonstrated the importance of taking a stand regarding this bill on financial literacy. He also demonstrated what this could mean for Canadians on a day-to-day basis, and I thank him for that.

*Government Orders*

One point that I really appreciated, especially being the member for Québec, is the importance of having people who are competent as well as bilingual. We cannot overstate the importance of having bilingual government officials and the importance of having a bilingual financial literacy leader who understands people from Option consommateurs and the Union des consommateurs, and from all the provinces. I wish to thank my hon. colleague for that.

[English]

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, financial literacy truly is important. As a person who has a French last name and comes from a French family, I am working hard on becoming fluent in French. I have been doing this for a few years now but to be able to say that I could do this quickly and understand the complexities of many situations would not be fair.

We are asking the government, and the Minister of State for Finance has already mentioned it in committee and here today in the House, that it will be mandatory to be bilingual for this position. This is truly important to ensure that all Canadians, French speaking or English speaking, get the financial literacy education they need. Hopefully, the Conservatives will stay true to their word.

• (1645)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for Sudbury for educating the member for Burlington on pooled registered savings plans. Maybe he could hold a seminar and educate the rest of the members on the other side of the House.

After listening to his great speech about the work that was done in committee, it sounds to me like his committee works like the rest of the committees in this House of Commons. The Conservatives want us to support their bills so we can bring them to committee to make some change but, once the bill gets to committee, they absolutely refuse to make any changes. In this case, against the advice of the minister, they refused to make changes.

Would my hon. colleague tell me about the good changes that were suggested by the NDP?

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Nickel Belt for the great work that he does with me in the great city of greater Sudbury.

We proposed six amendments and, as I do not have time to talk about all of them, I will talk about three.

The first amendment was to ensure that the financial literacy leader, whomever the Conservatives hire, needs to be bilingual. That amendment was turned down.

We asked that a definition of financial literacy be included in the bill. That was pretty straight forward but it amendment was turned down.

We then asked that an advisory council be brought forward by looking at the recommendations of the task force. The second recommendation of the task force was that the financial literacy leader needed an advisory council. It recommended that the advisory council be made up of financial organizations, members from the industry, labour, education and other community stakeholders. All of these groups would then advise the financial literacy leader and

ensure that the great work that is currently being done by all of the not for profits and other organizations that are already doing this work across the country would be able to work together with this financial literacy coordinator. The word “coordinator” was used several times in committee. The witnesses never used the word “leader”, but said that they needed someone to coordinate all of this. We presented this amendment and it also was turned down.

Obviously, the Conservatives had no interest in trying to make this a bill that works for everyone.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we proposed six amendments to this bill that were all rejected. The one that interests me most is the advisory board. Could the hon. member could tell us a bit about the advantages of having an advisory board added to the legislation?

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to answer this question because that truly is important. If we look at what the advisory council's mandate and role are, it is to do what the title says, “advise the financial literacy leader”. No one person can be the expert on this subject, especially when there are so many great organizations right across the country, like the United Way, which are all doing great work when it comes to financial literacy. This advisory council is to ensure that we hear all perspectives from the education sector.

There are things that were talked about in committee. I quoted the minister and my hon. colleague from Quebec. We talked about ensuring that we could provide some type of financial literacy for the provinces to put into their education system. The financial literacy leader cannot do that, but he has to work with the educators, school boards and the provinces.

Right now, there is absolutely no framework in the bill to allow them to do this. Do we have concerns about that? Of course we do. Hearing from some of the stakeholders, they like having the financial literacy leader, though they also liked using the term “financial literacy coordinator”, which is important as well, as a first step so they can continue doing the great work they do. I hope the government stays true to its word and will ensure that the advisory council will be promoted and pushed for the financial literacy leader to implement as soon as this person is hired.

• (1650)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Drummond, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksasing, Aboriginal Affairs; and the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, Border Security.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-28, An Act to amend the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act, or more to the point, let us talk about having a financial literacy leader, or as my hon. colleague pointed out, financial literacy coordinator. It is necessary across all regions in the country for the sake of the troubled times that we have entered into. For that reason alone, having a person in charge of financial literacy is one that is necessary.

*Government Orders*

We are living in a different world than we used to. My father worked in one mill for over 40 years and he had what is called a defined benefit pension plan. Quite simply, when he retired, he had the same amount of money each and every month apportioned to him and the financial risk was taken on by the company. These types of pension plans are not as prevalent as they used to be.

What is happening is a lot of pension plans are becoming what is called the defined contribution plans, so the company contributes like they did before, but so does the individual contribute. The essential risk of a pension plan now falls on the shoulders of the individual worker or the person investing in that plan. There is a fundamental shift. People have to plan, if they take an annuity, how their asset mix is to be placed, which was done before in a defined benefit plan by the person in charge of the plan itself. Now we have entered a new age when there are a lot of people in that position.

The other aspect is there are a lot of people out there now who are in transient work. I say that for my riding in Newfoundland and Labrador because a lot of people there get work in other jurisdictions, especially when it comes to skilled labour.

In the early nineties, we had a collapse of the cod industry, which was the greatest massive layoff in the history of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. A lot of government programs were put in place to educate people to give them the skills. Over the years that paid off tremendously. Within my riding, a tremendous amount of people are not at the wharf, not at the factory, not at the plant, but at the airport. They are going to places like Alberta, Saskatchewan, Russia, off the coast of Africa, drilling. They are going to eastern Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, parts of the North Sea, Norway. They are going to places that were considered to be unimaginable for so many people in my riding.

What does that mean? How does this equate to financial literacy because they are making very good money to sustain their families? The problem is the pension plans we used to rely on are not portable. These people have to be their own investor. They have to take on all the risk themselves, which is the most important aspect of having financial literacy. Because people are now investors and absorbing the risks, I would like to see more defined benefit plans. Why not? If 308 members of Parliament are eligible for a defined benefit plan, why can others not be? That is not the way it is going. The risk is falling on the particular individual and that is why financial literacy is so important.

Let us look at another aspect. Let us look at our youth today. Let us look at some of the numbers. We are indebted right now at \$1.60 for every dollar that we bring in as income. This is not a good statistic, especially for the category of age 18 to 24, because they have actually fallen way behind before they have even started. A lot of that is consumer debt, which is the worst kind because there is no asset to show at the end of the day. Student debt is a big thing, but there is a degree to show for it and a education to get a high paying job. Whether they are mortgages, or automobiles to a lesser extent, or investments in RRSPs, pooled or not, these plans have a certain asset at the end of the day.

• (1655)

The problem is with the consumer debt and the high amount of interest on certain things, like credit cards either from a store or

chartered bank, what happen is a lot of this debt will not show an asset at the end of the day and therefore it becomes that much more burdensome to all individuals, especially the young.

How do we get into a situation where we improve financial literacy? There has been a lot of talk about it in the House. The member for Edmonton—Leduc brought it up in the House during the past number of years and also had a motion passed in the House some time ago, which lends to the type of legislation we are debating today. I certainly commend him for that.

Because we are the national legislature, the federal institution, when it comes to the term “education”, according to our Constitution, it falls within the jurisdiction of the provinces. However, the federal government has a role to help coordinate some kind of educational program for the young people across the country. It is not just isolated to them, but certainly for high school students this could be an open window into the minds of our young as to how this will cripple their ability to financially support themselves and their families in the future.

Bill C-28 is a small step in that direction. As we talk here in third reading and send it to the Senate, it is a step in that direction.

We talked about the task force. My colleague, the member for Sudbury, talked quite a bit about the task force itself, the financial literacy task force with 30 recommendations, the vast majority of which are bona fide recommendations. Number one of which would be to have that coordinator, the financial literacy leader, which is most important.

If we look at the background of this, over the past little while we have talked about it a lot and now I would like to see more action given to a national financial literacy strategy, if I may be so bold as to call it that. We will make small steps along the way, and this is one of those steps that is necessary.

It is designed to create the position of a financial literacy leader and enforces the consumer provisions applicable to federal financial institutions. It is all coached within the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada. This is the particular agency that provides a lot of this information. I would like to see it be more proactive in its education. Nevertheless, it does have ability and the resources and now because of the bill, it will get more resources to make that possible, certainly under the guise of the financial literacy leader.

The legislative summary is from the Library of Parliament, and I would like to congratulate the library for the wonderful work it does.

*Government Orders*

The FCAC, the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, monitors the financial services sector self-regulatory measures designed to protect consumers and small businesses. Again, we are in the situation where those who do not have the benefit of being a large company cannot really provide a lot of resources to looking after a lot of this material. What the government ends up doing is taking on that responsibility to provide a source of information for individuals and smaller businesses unable to afford to get the right advice, or a substantial amount of advice, to make that decision.

It also promotes consumer awareness and understanding of the financial services sector and responds to selected consumer inquiries. One point about that is very important, and that is the financial adviser. There are thousands and thousands of financial advisers across the country. I always like to recommend to people that they see a financial adviser especially those who have a skilled trade and find themselves working for a particular company for a short period of time, then another one and another one.

People are working for a 40-year span of their lives. Nowadays the idea of working for one company for over 40 years is a very rare thing. It happened many years ago for my family in a small town with a big plant, but now these situations do not happen as regularly as they used to. I would suggest people see financial advisers because they are the ones that take on the risk.

• (1700)

They could be pipefitters, electricians or carpenters. They are not necessarily financial experts. Many of them do not want to be. However, there is certainly a level of financial literacy that has to be attained in order for these people to support themselves as they move on from work, or if something happens to them and they have no choice but to leave the workforce because of a long-term disability or something of that nature.

It is certainly incumbent upon us to take the risk, but it is also incumbent upon us to learn about the financial tools out there to help us and to see what is available to us in order to plan over the long term.

The government has a large role, both provincial and federal, to ensure that financial literacy is a key learning tool for many of our young people and certainly for middle-aged people who have not even started to think about retirement.

I mentioned earlier the people who do not have access to a portable pension. The largest portable pension is the CPP, but whether it is the combination of the Canada pension plan and old age security coming together, it does not replace the income we had while we were working. It is a very low percentage. Therefore, for people who invest on their own, that would probably become the majority of their income as they enter into retirement years or if they face something like a long-term disability.

I have talked quite a bit about pensions, which I think is the ultimate example of financial literacy. This is important because we now have a substantial amount of people retiring. I am basically talking about the baby boomer age group, as we affectionately call it.

The 2011 federal budget announced \$3 million annually to undertake financial literacy initiatives. This amount was in addition to what was provided to the FCAC, which is a \$2 million fund.

When we talk about the financial literacy leader, the terms of the provision are clauses 3, 5 and 7 of the bill.

The objective of the leader is to provide national leadership in strengthening financial literacy. Whether we call the person a financial literacy leader or coordinator is a question of semantics, but we get the idea that the person has to take a very large role in the lives of others. They have to coordinate across many sectors, federal and provincial, French and English, as well as first nations.

This is a huge task for this person and one that is worthy. Obviously any task that is asked by Parliament and by government is worthy, but this one also has to be contemplated and well-financed, which is why the \$3 million is key here as the additional budgetary amount. In looking at this in depth, the powers, duties and functions of this particular person are also key to ensuring success is there.

I mentioned earlier that this is a small step toward improving financial literacy in this country. There is no doubt about that, but let us take a look at the financial literacy leader in this particular situation. The Commissioner of the FCAC may impose an assessment on any financial institution in order to recover some or all of the expenses associated with initiatives designed to strengthen the financial literacy of Canadians. It is putting some of that burden onto the financial sector, which is a great idea.

As is the case for Her Majesty, the Minister of Finance, and the commissioner, deputy commissioners, officers and employees of the FCAC, no action may be taken against the financial literacy leader for anything he or she does or omits to do in good faith in administering or discharging the powers or duties of the position of financial literacy leader. This is also a very important aspect. It allows this person to function in the way a person should function whose goal is to increase the amount of financial literacy across this country. We would not want to see this person chained into a position where they find themselves being suffocated, for lack of a better word, by rules and regulations and by their own machinery. It allows this person to go above and beyond the call of duty if that person chooses to do so.

The bill says the financial literacy leader will report to Parliament, and there is also a clause about civil proceedings.

The final point from the Library of Parliament is that financial literacy is frequently a topic of interest to parliamentarians, which it has been for quite some time. I mentioned my hon. colleague from Edmonton—Leduc. The issue has been discussed in parliamentary committee reports. We also heard from the member for Sudbury, who talked about six possible amendments. These were not accepted, but nonetheless, the discussion was there and I think some of them are quite noteworthy and noble in their cause.

• (1705)

We talked about the 30 recommendations from the task force. One of the recommendations my colleague from Sudbury brought up was about the advisory council, which I think is a positive step in the right direction as well.

*Government Orders*

What we see here are many facets of the industry, including those who are workers, such as the people I meet every weekend when I am at the airport and they are on their way to whatever job it is they have in the oil and gas sector. These are people who belong to building trades associations, or unions for that matter. They certainly do have quite a bit of input in how we can improve financial literacy.

Also, the issue has been mentioned in the House of Commons, including in the context of the private member's motion, Motion No. 269, by the member for Edmonton—Leduc, who is also the chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. The conversation we had centred around the importance of financial literacy and how we have moved ahead into what I would deem is a brave new world for all citizens who work in this country.

As I mentioned before, there is the Canada pension plan and old age security. If people do not have the CPP, they are most likely eligible for the guaranteed income supplement. These measures do not displace the income that people earned, and certainly not if people work in the oil and gas sector where wages are so high and all of a sudden they find themselves out of work, through no fault of their own, such with a long-term disability.

Financial planning at the earliest age and financial literacy plays a very important role for many years to come. If someone gets injured on the job at the age of 25 to 30, think about how many years he or she has to recover based on his or her investments in a very short period of time. This is where financial literacy becomes that much more important. We get calls at our office every day about this.

This particular legislation, Bill C-28, required a ways and means motion as it would give the Commissioner of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada the authority to impose a financial levy against any financial institution, as I mentioned, in order to pay for expenses related to financial literacy initiatives. During the committee study, officials also told finance committee that the government would increase the annual budget for the FCAC from \$2 million to \$5 million.

A significant contributor to rising household debt, which we talked about some time ago, was mortgages. One of the things I think was necessary was reducing the mortgages with 40-year amortization down to about 25 years. I think it was necessary because zero-down, 40-year mortgages were causing more problems than not. We found ourselves in a situation similar to that in the United States, where they had sub-par loans that caused ripples around the world that have lasted for years. That was not the only thing but certainly that was the genesis of it, the spark. That is one part of it that had to come down.

We are taking measures in addition to this that help financial literacy and certainly help the average consumer cope.

The danger in having zero-down, 40-year amortization mortgages is that, as we have seen, it is way too much risk to take on. We end up elevating ourselves to the statistic I read earlier, which is \$1.63 in debt for every dollar that we bring in. Nations in the world are in the same ratio. In Europe right now, nations that we considered financially sound are no longer as sound.

In looking at this, I would say that many of the questions that we had asked prior to third reading were addressed in committee.

The financial literacy leader will not have his or her own office. Instead, he or she will operate out of the office of the FCAC. That was one of the questions we brought up.

There are no plans to use Bill C-28 to levy an assessment on banks to pay for financial literacy. It should be noted the FCAC already had the power to levy assessments against banks under legislation brought forward when the FCAC was created.

There was also, of course, the question about the anticipated cost, the extra \$3 million for this particular individual.

Again, I would agree with my colleague that the advisory council should also be a second part to this. I am certainly willing to say yes to this, as a precursor to that step in the future.

• (1710)

I will go back to what I talked about in the beginning. This is a brave new world. It is one that compels our children to be that much more financially literate, to the point where this is a step in the right direction.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear my colleague speak to the good things that are going on with financial literacy and the things that our government is trying to accomplish. He highlighted a number of reasons why it is necessary. The world has changed, as he said, from a time perhaps long gone when individuals could depend on company policies or pension plans. The world is a different place.

I would like to highlight the great work of my young nephew. As a young person out of high school who did not have a lot of financial literacy, he got involved, educated himself and is now making a very respectable annual income on earnings from his stock.

I think about what my colleague has said about developing new skills and becoming financially aware. I wonder if he could speak to the benefits that this is going to have for his own constituents, who are going to be changing jobs maybe two or three times in their careers. How is this going to impact his own constituents?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I talked about my own constituents in this particular situation, but I should include her nephew as well because it seems he is obviously of the same measure.

The portability of anything one invests in is key. We have one weapon, for lack of a better term. Compared to other private investments, I am a big fan of the Canada pension plan. It is the most portable and we use it across this country. We need to invest wisely because the portability of investments is always key in the sense that the member's nephew and my constituents are able to use this investment around the world. They are able to invest and feel comfortable knowing that at the end of the day there is an annuity waiting for them. If they choose to use that mechanism, it is there for them not just in retirement but in the case of an accident if they have to claim long-term disability.

*Government Orders*

The only thing I would ask for more action to be taken on now is greater dialogue with the provinces to provide education through high schools and school boards.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague's speech. The sad thing about this bill is that six amendments were proposed in committee, but they were all rejected. One of those amendments had to do with the importance of bilingualism and having a financial literacy leader who speaks both official languages. Another amendment involved creating an advisory council so that the financial literacy leader would not be alone and could hear what educators and people on the ground have to say. I wonder if the member could talk about those amendments.

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I talked about the advisory council, which is another positive step. I agree with her. I honestly do. In my speech I mentioned the workers who I see in airports who go back and forth all over the world. They are key stakeholders. These are the people we need to see.

The other aspect I did not comment on, which I am glad she brought up, was the bilingual aspect. Yes, I agree that is one thing we should look at. I think there is a private member's bill coming from the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent that I hope will put that to rest.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

This is very important not only for Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec, but for us too, and the entire country.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a daughter who goes to university in the United States. The university that she goes to requires five core courses, such as math, English, physical fitness. One of them is financial literacy. If I had the opportunity to make a suggestion to whoever gets the new position being created today about what he or she should be promoting, I would say it is an excellent opportunity for every young person at university to take a financial literacy course.

My question to the hon. member across the way is this. Is there anything that he would like to suggest in terms of financial literacy to the person who gets this job?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, let us start with the idea the member just suggested. It is a great idea. It is about time we had a core course in all of our schools. It is that important. The member's daughter talked about that core course in school being a great idea. She will, in years to come, personally benefit from doing that course. I wholeheartedly agree.

Again, the other piece is the people who have invested on their own, and I include people who travel a lot. For children it is a school thing, but those who have a skilled trade right now should talk to the associations or unions that are involved, to say that the financial leader should look at how to reach these people, not just for retirement but also for cases of long-term disability.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the key things about this position will be how the person is chosen. I am

wondering if the member could give us his opinion about how the appointment should be made.

One of the concerns we have had with the government is the way it selects people for positions that come under an order in council. We obviously want someone who is going to have the skill set, but we also want to make sure we have an option in Parliament to have a go at it, as they say. I am wondering if the member could elaborate on the importance of choosing the right person and the process therein.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, as the member points out, it is an order in council appointment, which is chosen by cabinet in any which way, shape or form. That opens it up to many possibilities.

I hope it is done with a great deal of prudence in this situation. I would not want to rush the government into deciding who that person should be very soon. I would like it to take the time to get the feedback from provinces, labour groups, financial institutions and the Canadian Bankers Association. These people should have a say in what type of person that is and hopefully, through the weeds, government can figure out who that individual will be in this case. A case in point is to go after the best person. For example, the ambassador to the United States now is a former Manitoba premier. That is a good idea.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I noticed in the course of this debate that the Liberal member for Kings—Hants voiced some very similar concerns to ours regarding the bill. I am wondering if the member could remind us what the objections are and perhaps how he would see that these could be remedied.

• (1720)

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, when it came around to second debate, one of the things we had problems with is that there were a lot of unanswered questions. Through the course of deliberations at committee, we came forward with a lot of answers. For example, one was what the anticipated cost of the legislation would be. The anticipated cost is \$3 million per year. One of the things that did not come out of this as a successful measure, but it was talked about, was the advisory council, which is the second step in the right direction. It could be accompanied with legislation down the road.

However, the discussion was paramount. The six amendments furthered the discussion as well, and I congratulate the member for that. The hon. colleague from Sudbury had some valid points about that. In the meantime, this certainly is a step in the right direction. God forbid, I get negative about this. Everything has been Pollyanna since I started speaking, but I think members get the idea.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as the deputy critic for consumer protection, it is my great pleasure to speak today on a subject of great importance: financial literacy. There is no better time to talk about this issue because November, which starts tomorrow, is financial literacy month in Canada.

I know that "financial literacy" is not a hook for everyone, but it really matters to Canadians in their daily lives.

*Government Orders*

Bill C-28 would create a financial literacy leader in Canada. That is an interesting idea, but the bill before us today is pretty much an empty shell because it does not include the kind of meaningful political directions we were hoping to see. Nor does it include a definition of financial literacy, accountability mechanisms or concrete measures to increase financial literacy in Canada. That is a real shame.

Having read the bill, I have a number of questions. For example, what is the Minister of Finance's definition of financial literacy? No doubt they will say that financial literacy is having the knowledge, skills and self-confidence to make responsible financial decisions. However, such a simplistic definition gets in the way of creating a real strategy to address this complicated issue. We need a strategy for the medium and long terms. This bill does not come through.

Who is responsible for helping Canadians improve their financial literacy? A number of interveners have recommended ways to improve Canadians' financial knowledge. For example, the banks have created a number of initiatives to help Canadians learn more about this issue. Unfortunately, those same banks are responsible for the problem. Messages promoting healthy financial habits are too easily eclipsed by financial industry advertising about easy credit.

At a time when the number of financial products is growing faster than the need for them—there is no denying that this is true—it is extremely important to be well informed about financial matters. Financial concepts are often complicated and can be confusing for the consumer after a while or when the time comes to evaluate whether or not a product is suitable. Information provided to the client must be clearer in terms of content and presentation.

Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, summarized the situation very well: “Canadians need better government policy rather than lectures on how to save money.” The government is ignoring the harmful conduct of financial institutions.

As the main source of this difficult to understand information, the financial industry must improve the clarity of its communications. That was one of the recommendations made by the Task Force on Financial Literacy that is not in the bill.

The task force report to the minister states:

Canadians need financial information and advice that is relevant, understandable and engaging, and we believe governments and financial services providers have a responsibility to ensure that their communications meet these criteria.

Improving financial skills must be a lifelong endeavour. According to the task force experts, students should receive basic financial education. We cannot talk about financial literacy without deploring the lack of resources for youth. We are talking about elementary and secondary school students. It is a loss that economics is no longer taught in Quebec's secondary schools, because it is at that age that young people begin making many financial decisions.

Earlier, I heard the member for Burlington say that this should be taught in university. Personally, I believe that it should be taught at a younger age. It should already be part of their education. This reminds us that it is important that we accept this responsibility and take action now.

● (1725)

Many of these young people have started working and are continually exposed to consumerism and credit, without always having the tools they need to really understand the choices available to them. I will not talk about the fine print at the bottom of the page since it is not always easy to understand the preconditions and other similar elements.

James Clancy, president of the National Union of Public and General Employees, expressed an opinion in this regard that I share. He said that educating the public about finances, even at a young age, is good. Giving them a fighting chance to keep some savings in their bank accounts—through reduced banking fees, lower credit card interest rates or regulating industries—would be impressive. The government should focus on making serious changes to ease the burden on families and communities, and that is exactly what the NDP is proposing.

Canada's Task Force on Financial Literacy made 30 recommendations, one of which involved the creation of a financial literacy leader position. This bill does not take into consideration the other 29 recommendations.

The Conservatives do not seem to want to seriously tackle this problem since, if they did, they would have added some of the task force's other recommendations to this bill, including the creation of an advisory board that would include groups of workers and volunteers, as well as educators—in short, people who have expertise on the ground, the people the Conservatives should be listening to but ignore in many instances.

I would like to talk about another phenomenon related to financial literacy and that is the indebtedness of retirees. This seems to be a growing phenomenon.

Option consommateurs, an organization that I met with recently and that I commend, is currently conducting an awareness campaign to encourage Canadians to increase their knowledge of personal finance. The organization has noted that, unfortunately, more and more retirees are finding themselves in a precarious financial situation because they do not have enough savings for their retirement. What is more, this situation is only going to get worse when the age of eligibility for old age security increases from 65 to 67, another one of the Conservatives' bad decisions, another decision that is going to cause harm.

The NDP has a real plan to solve the problem of financial security for Canadian retirees. We are going to strengthen the guaranteed pension plans in Canada and Quebec, thereby giving Canadians an acceptable level of guaranteed income during retirement.

*Government Orders*

Furthermore, why not start up a national dialogue on the reasons why the houses we live in should be treated not as investments, but simply as roofs that all Canadians should be able to have over their heads? Retirees are not the only ones whose financial situation is deteriorating. A few days ago, Statistics Canada increased its estimate of the household debt ratio. This rate is now at 160% of disposable income. This higher level of debt makes individuals more vulnerable to economic shocks. So why is the financial burden on households increasing? The reason is easier access to credit, as well as the fact that the cost of living is increasing but wages are stagnating. This is the result of this government's ineffective economic policies.

Once again, and we have seen this many times, this government would rather lower the corporate tax rate, claiming that that will create jobs, instead of giving a tax credit to businesses that create jobs. That is what the Conservative government does.

If this government cares about protecting consumers, it should implement regulations on credit cards, so we can impose a cap on interest rates and eliminate the excessive fees paid by consumers.

• (1730)

Considering the lack of enthusiasm for financial literacy shown in recent years—or even decades—by the Minister of Finance and his colleagues, they need help, and a financial literacy leader position could help Canada at least take a small step in the right direction. We will continue to push the government to go further, because even though it has made a step in the right direction today, there is still a long way to go.

The NDP proposed some amendments in committee, in order to address some flaws in the bill, such as adding a bilingualism requirement and adding provisions that clearly define the meaning of financial literacy and require more accountability from the financial literacy leader. However, the Conservatives rejected all of our suggestions. They flat out rejected the six amendments proposed by the NDP.

We are very concerned about the fact that there is no explicit requirement that the incumbent of this position be bilingual. We think that if someone is responsible for improving financial literacy across Canada, he or she should be able to communicate in French and English.

As my hon. colleague from Sudbury said earlier, the NDP believes it is possible to find a financial literacy leader who is competent, highly qualified and bilingual. He thinks that can be done for other positions too, such as government officers.

We would not be shooting ourselves in the foot if we hired highly qualified, bilingual people. On the contrary, we would be showing the whole world that we are proud of our two official languages: English and French.

That is clearly an advantage in undertaking dialogue with other countries, particularly on these issues. Speaking two languages is an advantage. It would be good for the government to understand that and take it to heart as my party and I have done.

In conclusion, Canada would be better off if Canadians improved their knowledge of the economy and made responsible financial

decisions. To make that happen, we need a strategy that calls for a concerted effort on the part of clients, schools and various organizations, including those in the industry. That is why we need an advisory council made up of union and financial institution representatives and educators. That is worth repeating.

I would like to share some information. A Conservative member told me that one of my strengths is being able to cite experts in the field. I will indulge him by citing a few experts who support what we are proposing.

According to Barrie McKenna, a business columnist for the *Globe and Mail*, waiting for financial literacy to fill the void is like asking ordinary Canadians to be their own brain surgeons and airline pilots. The dizzying array of financial products, mixed with chaotic and increasingly irrational financial markets, makes the job of do-it-yourself financial planning almost impossible, no matter how literate you are. The average credit card agreement is as intuitive as quantum physics. Canadians are constantly bombarded with pitches to take on more debt, whether it is right for them or not. They are often blindly steered toward high-fee products and complex financial instruments. The accompanying disclosure statements are written by, and for, lawyers. There is a sounder and no doubt less costly path, but it does not suit the financial services industry or many business groups.

He goes on to say that Ottawa could mandate plain-English disclosure. Working with the provinces, the government could enhance regulation of industry sales incentives and defined-contribution pensions. Ottawa could strengthen the CPP, forcing Canadians to save more money for retirement, while benefiting from the CPP's low administrative costs.

• (1735)

Of course I agree with some of what he says. However, I cannot stress bilingualism enough in this area, as that is what is important. Mr. McKenna clearly highlighted the importance of understanding that, at present, consumers are bombarded by financial products. We must all do our part in order to make financial information easier to understand.

Thirty per cent of Canadian families do not have retirement savings outside of the Canada pension plan. Twenty-five per cent of Canadians have accumulated more debt in the past year. Never before has Canadian household debt been so high. Now more than ever the government must implement policies to help people and families in debt. That is important.

*Government Orders*

Financial literacy is an important aspect of the consumer protection framework. As I said earlier, this bill does not go far enough. The fact that many Canadians do not have any savings and the rise in consumer debt are symptoms of the discrepancy between the rise in the cost of living and salaries, rather than financial illiteracy. Too many Canadians live paycheque to paycheque. This situation proves that the government is not taking a leadership role and that it is incapable of addressing issues that are truly important to Canadians. The government has never implemented strict laws and regulations to protect consumers. And this bill falls far short of providing real help to consumers.

We believe that the best way to support consumers is to establish a single window consumer protection department or agency that would handle all consumer issues. If the government really wants to protect consumers, then it should move forward with credit card regulations and implement regulations that would cap interest rates and eliminate excessive fees paid by consumers.

In closing, I would like to briefly talk about retirement. Many retirees have more and more debt. The population is aging and many people are worried about what we will do for them. The NDP has an effective plan for financial security in retirement. We would strengthen the Canada and Quebec guaranteed pension plans by gradually doubling benefits in an affordable manner to a maximum of \$1,920 a month—this is not a gold rush—thereby providing Canadians with an adequate level of guaranteed income during their retirement.

• (1740)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her commitment to bilingualism, which I think is very good. I am trying to learn French myself. It is not going so well, to be perfectly honest, but I am trying. Maybe the next time her speech could be in both French and English. It would be great to see her practise that.

The member said one thing that caught my attention. I appreciate her comment about youth education, but she also said that the Conservative government should do things for job creators, instead of our commitment to lower taxes, to which we are committed. However, the biggest job creator in the country over the last number of years has been in the oil patch. Therefore, oil companies have been the biggest job creators over the last number of years. Is the member advocating for a tax credit for oil companies?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Burlington.

I could give him some French lessons, if he would like. I strongly believe that all members should be able to speak French, too. I am offering my services. I will help him learn French, because I think it is important.

Now, regarding large corporations, lowering taxes for large corporations is not the right way to create jobs. The Minister of Finance even said so himself this summer. Indeed, the government now realizes that lowering taxes for large corporations does not necessarily result in more jobs.

The solution lies with the NDP's proposal: create tax credits to promote job creation. That is a direct, concrete solution.

[*English*]

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the new member from Quebec for her speech. This is not a bad bill that the Conservatives have put forward, but it just does not do enough.

She mentioned food banks. Cape Breton has a lot of food banks and the uptake is increasing, especially over the last few years. It is unbelievable the number of people going to food banks.

Could she expand a bit on what she said about the food banks in her region and that the cause may be some of the policies of the government which have led to an increase of food banks in her region and other places in Quebec?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, it will be my pleasure. I very much appreciate my hon. colleague's comment.

Indeed, it makes no sense that so many people need food banks right now. In my riding of Québec, which usually does pretty well and has a relatively low unemployment rate, the need for food assistance has been doubling or tripling every year. It makes no sense.

This tells us—us parliamentarians, that is—that there is growing social inequality and the poor are getting poorer. Some people are having a hard time paying their rent and others are probably feeling overwhelmed by the high cost of cellphones, and so on. And since they cannot understand everything that is happening around them, they are forced to turn to food banks to make ends meet.

So there is a connection here with Bill C-28. I thank the hon. member for his comment, because we absolutely must address this situation.

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Québec, who made a very important link between financial literacy and consumption. Financial products are becoming more and more complicated, and people are getting increasingly confused.

Does the member for Québec not think we should start by simplifying our financial regulations and financial products before teaching people about increasingly complicated products? Would this not promote better knowledge and better use of financial products?

*Government Orders*

• (1745)

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Louis-Hébert. This is an interesting idea, as is the NDP's suggestion to have an advisory committee, but this suggestion was unfortunately rejected by this government.

Nevertheless, we will continue to push this idea, because an advisory committee, being made up of stakeholders, could help the financial literacy leader make the right decisions.

The idea behind the advisory committee is that two heads are better than one. It is a matter of bringing everyone together to find the best solutions.

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Québec.

I am very concerned about household debt, which is reaching record levels. Members of the middle class are getting sucked in to taking on too much debt without necessarily understanding all of the consequences for their future, their old age, their health—they could face expensive health problems—their retirement or the higher education of their children.

Still, I do see this bill as a good thing, a step forward, even if it will not help all Canadians to become aware of the importance of having basic knowledge about banking, taxation and so on.

I would like to know whether my colleague is optimistic enough to believe that this bill will send a shock wave through the Canadian public and help people a little. I am worried that in coming years, Canadian household debt could climb even higher from 160% to 170%.

I am very concerned for the Canadian economy.

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very valid point. We can see that the member also has a background in medicine.

With respect to household debt, everything is connected. People are worried, and of course anything can happen, such as health problems. Everything is interrelated. I appreciate the comment.

I, too, am very worried about household debt. I think that things are changing and that this bill is a first step. After Liberal and Conservative governments, the fact that this government is finally waking up to the importance of taking a good look at financial literacy is a good thing. Yes, this is a first step.

But I think the government should go farther. We need to define the mandate of the financial literacy leader more clearly, define what we want, come up with a long-term strategy, create an advisory council and appoint a bilingual financial literacy leader. These elements would follow up on recommendations by the task force and would improve our chances of making more progress.

That would make me feel a little more optimistic.

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it seems that some people have been forgotten in this bill. The financial literacy leader would be unilingual. What is more, this bill will not change anything for those who have less money to spend on everyday expenses and on private financial products.

Does the hon. member agree with me that it is important that the entire population of Canada be included in this new policy?

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for this suggestion.

I agree with him. Better information is needed.

As I said in my speech, people are overwhelmed with information. They have difficulty distinguishing between all the products that are presented to them, which makes their task much more difficult. It is important that they be better informed. That is the direction that we need to take. I can never say it often enough and so I hope that, in so doing, I will be heard. This could enlighten everyone.

In my opinion, it is important for people to be more knowledgeable, to be more confident as consumers and to be more enlightened on this topic in order to be able to make the right choices.

• (1750)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order. Before I recognize the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas, I will let him know that we will need to interrupt him at about five minutes to the hour, this being the end of time allocated for government orders this afternoon.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise this evening and speak to Bill C-28, An Act to amend the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act.

I do support this bill, although with some reservations, which I will speak to. My main concerns are the lack of an advisory council and the lack of inclusiveness. I do think this bill could have been more inclusive. I hope that when the government reviews this piece of legislation, it makes that a primary concern.

In listening to the debate this afternoon, I have wondered about the percentage of our economic trouble that is caused by low financial literacy. If we recount the state we are in at the moment, we have quite low economic growth. Our growth rate has just been reported and downgraded to 1.6%. We have been through a major recession. If we look across the water to Europe, the United Kingdom has been through a double-dip recession. There is all kinds of trouble in Greece and other countries. The United States has been struggling, although there are some signs of a little bit of a pickup there.

What is the cause of the problem? We know that what happened in 2008 was mainly the result of economic turmoil in the United States, where consumers became too indebted and bought into some bad mortgages. The financial institutions in the United States had invented financial tools that enabled mortgages to be bundled and packaged, and sold from institution to institution. Most institutions had no idea what they were buying but just thought it was a great deal. Earnings went up and up with apparently little or no risk. The economy, under the Bush regime, just continued on until we had a crash.

The investors who bought all of these bundled mortgages realized that the mortgages were flawed and faulty, and there was a crash. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and other institutions went under. If we think about that collapse, it not only happened in the United States but went right around the world as well. There was a big increase in unemployment. I read an interesting book written by Gordon Brown on this topic, talking about how global leaders acted very quickly to try to stem a depression, which I think was a real possibility. We are still feeling the effects today.

When I think about this I wonder how much of it was caused by a lack of financial literacy. I would say that very little was. It was really about the large financial institutions that were playing fast and loose with the rules, fooling each other as much as they could to make large profits.

While I see the inherent value of these changes, I do think there is a much larger picture to be taken into account here. I would also say that these things are very unpredictable. In 2008, we had the Minister of Finance on the other side of the House saying that there were no problems with the economy, and all of a sudden we lapsed into a recession.

I would suggest that it is actually the government that needs to sharpen its pencil and take more account of these things, for example, by listening more closely to the Parliamentary Budgetary Officer.

I am disappointed that there was no effort to include an advisory committee in this act. I hope that the government reviews this, perhaps a year into the implementation of the act. The advisory committee would not only bring more eyes to look at this but would also be more inclusive.

I will conclude by talking about the value of inclusion. For example, if labour unions were brought more onboard in this bill, they could go to their memberships and spread the word not only about this new institution but also help increase financial literacy among their members. I really would advise the government to take that into account.

• (1755)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas will have 15 minutes remaining for his speech when the House resumes debate on the question and, of course, the usual 10 minutes for questions and comments.

It being 5:55 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### BLUE SKY POLICY

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC)** moved:

Motion No. 387

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should further the success of its 2006 Blue Sky Policy, which has resulted in great progress in increasing the freedom of movement of people and goods, and should: (a) seek additional opportunities to

### *Private Members' Business*

create jobs in various sectors of the economy and enhance trade and tourism; (b) work with important stakeholders to support the Blue Sky Policy; (c) recognize that increased competition benefits Canadian consumers; and (d) seek more air service agreements to serve Canada's consumer, commerce, trade and investment interests.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to my private member's motion, Motion No. 387, blue sky policy. I thank the member of Parliament for Saint John for seconding this motion. It is an important motion for all of Canada.

I am here today to seek all party support and I think this is a measure that all parties can support. The motion calls on our Conservative government to continue with the implementation of our 2006 blue sky policy, Canada's international air policy.

Mr. Speaker, you already read the motion, but I want to repeat, for the benefit of those listening, what the motion specifically calls for. It states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should further the success of its 2006 Blue Sky Policy, which has resulted in great progress in increasing the freedom of movement of people and goods, and should: (a) seek additional opportunities to create jobs in various sectors of the economy and enhance trade and tourism; (b) work with important stakeholders to support the Blue Sky Policy; (c) recognize that increased competition benefits Canadian consumers; and (d) seek more air service agreements to serve Canada's consumer, commerce, trade and investment interests.

The blue sky policy guides our government's approach to the negotiation of international air transport agreements. Without these agreements, airlines cannot offer scheduled services between countries. Scheduled international air services are an important generator of economic activity not only for the Canadian air industry but also other sectors of our economy, for example, tourism. Since the inception of the blue sky policy, our government has negotiated new or expanded air transport agreements covering close to 70 countries around the world. These agreements create more air service options not only for the travelling public but also the business and tourism sectors.

Before blue sky, Canada had an open agreement with two partners. We now have open agreements covering 43 countries. I will briefly explain the blue sky policy and why scheduled air service agreements are important.

Under the general legal framework of the 1944 Convention on International Civil Aviation, countries negotiate bilateral air transport agreements to allow their respective airlines to offer scheduled air services between their territories. This is required since, under this convention, every country is sovereign over its airspace. These agreements typically grant operating rights, such as destinations to be served, number of airlines allowed to operate and frequency of flights. They also include safety and security provisions and important doing-business rules. The air industry is a vital part of the fundamental infrastructure of Canada's economy, like the banking or telecommunications sectors, for example. In Canada, the air carrier industry generates 42,000 direct jobs and another 20,000 in the rest of the supply chain.

*Private Members' Business*

Studies have shown that one new international flight a week to a Canadian airport can generate up to 100 jobs and several million dollars in employment income on a yearly basis. In 2011, the air transport mode carried 78.4 million passengers and 739,000 tonnes of freight. Air services also support our trade objectives. For instance, in 2011, Canada's total trade with the rest of the world was \$342 billion, of which \$117 billion were exports and \$225 billion were imports. Canadian and foreign airlines carried \$110 billion worth of goods, mostly high-value perishable or time-sensitive goods.

As former minister of state responsible for tourism, I am particularly aware of the importance of direct air connectivity to our key markets as an element of success for our tourism industry. These key priority markets include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, India, China, Japan and South Korea. As we work hard to market Canada in these countries through the Canadian Tourism Commission and provincial tourism departments, it is important to recognize that, without direct flights, tourists are more likely to go elsewhere.

● (1800)

Back in 2006, our government decided to modernize Canada's international air policy in recognition of the important role that our aviation industry plays in our economy. We consulted broadly, not only airlines and airports, but also trade groups, consumer groups, tourism associations, provinces and regional communities. We listened and delivered the right policy for Canada, one that takes into account the particularities of our geography, our population, our air industry and our economic needs.

The blue sky policy was adopted in November 2006. It calls for a more proactive approach to the negotiation of new or expanded air transport agreements and, in particular, the negotiation of reciprocal open skies type agreements when in the overall interests of the country. The policy has several objectives. It aims to: provide a framework that encourages long-term and sustainable competition in international air service; provide opportunities for Canadian airlines to grow internationally; enable Canadian airports to market themselves with more flexibility; support our international trade objectives; and support a safe, secure, efficient, economically healthy and viable Canadian air transportation industry.

While these agreements are primarily driven by aviation considerations, they have economic benefits that go beyond this sector of our economy. Consequently, it is important for the policy to be implemented with the appropriate degree of input from relevant stakeholders.

This is why Canadian airports and airlines, as well as the tourism sector under the federal tourism strategy, are regularly consulted on negotiation priorities. When contemplating a larger negotiation, such as the one that led to our historic comprehensive air transport agreement with the European Union, consultations are even broader.

Federal departments and agencies, such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian Transportation Agency, the Department of Finance, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Canada Border Services Agency, are also consulted on issues related to the implementation of the policy. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, in particular,

provides information related to foreign policy and international trade considerations.

In its May 2012 report on Brazil, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade commended our government on its consultation process and stated that it was the best practice for other federal departments to emulate. That was the transport department.

I am proud to say that since our Conservative launched the blue sky policy, we have signed new or expanded air transport agreements covering close to 70 countries around the world. In 2011 alone, we expanded agreements with Brazil, Mexico, Japan and China. These efforts have resulted in new air services being launched to the benefit of travellers, shippers, as well as the business and tourism sectors.

Blue sky is the right policy for Canada. It supports our air industry as well as our international trade, tourism and economic development objectives. It also promotes competition and helps to produce more choice for Canadian consumers. This is precisely why I tabled Motion No. 387 last June.

The results continue to come in. For example, in the 2006-10 period, the number of international destinations accessible from Canada increased by 9%. The annual number of direct international flights has increased by 43% overall and Canadian airlines have increased the total number of outbound international flights by 56%.

It is for all those reasons that I invite all members of the House to support Motion No. 387, so that this blue sky policy can continue to produce benefits for all Canadians.

● (1805)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since 2006, the Canadian government has signed over 30 open sky agreements with 50 countries and yet the number of tourists coming to Canada dropped from 20 million in 2002 to 16 million in 2011. We are losing five million air passengers to the U.S. every year due to uncompetitive prices.

According the UN World Tourism Organization, we have dropped from seventh in the world in terms of travel destinations to eighteenth. Obviously, these blue sky agreements do not seem to help our travel deficit, which is exploding, increasing sixfold in just the last decade to almost 16 million by the end of 2011.

How would more blue sky agreements help with our travel deficit and create jobs in Canada given that we have lost 11,000 jobs because of expensive fares.

*Private Members' Business*

**Hon. Rob Moore:** Mr. Speaker, our government has been aggressively targeting growth nations for increased tourism travel. I will use, for example, China where the Canadian Tourism Commission, which is supported by our government, has been aggressively going after the Chinese tourists, which is so important.

I should mention that it was the Prime Minister who, a couple of years ago, signed the approved destination status agreement with China. The results have been impressive since that agreement was signed. I will give an example for the hon. member. Travel from China totalled 237,000 person trips in 2011, that is up 22% over 2010, with spending totalling \$408 million which is an increase of just under 30%.

We will continue to aggressively market Canada to the world.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be very specific with the country of the Philippines. The member talked about Japan, Korea and China. One of the other countries in Asia that I think needs to have more attention given to it is the Philippines where there are all sorts of wonderful opportunities to look at what can be done to enhance air travel between our two countries.

To what degree has the member advocated to open up and provide those types of air travel opportunities for citizens of both Canada and the Philippines, especially if we take into consideration that the Philippines today is Canada's number one source country for immigrants?

If the member wants to address some of the concerns that the previous questioner had, he should enable people from countries like the Philippines to come through visiting visas. The number of visiting visas that are being turned down, ultimately, does have an impact on the overall travel where we could have a lot more people travelling from that country to Canada.

I am interested in what the member would have to say on those two points.

•(1810)

**Hon. Rob Moore:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a number of important points.

We are negotiating these open sky agreements with countries throughout the world. I have the list here. Since the launch of the blue sky policy in 2006, we have negotiated open sky type agreements with 16 countries. We have expanded agreements with 10 countries. They include Mexico, Japan, Jordan, Singapore, Morocco, Cuba, Egypt, Algeria, China and, in answer to the hon. member's question, the Philippines. Under the blue sky agreement, there has been an expanded agreement with the Philippines.

I should also mention that, under our federal tourism strategy, the tourism industry is now at the table and is being very much consulted on its priorities before we negotiate new air service agreements with other countries. We are asking the tourism industry where its priorities are, where it is targeting and how we can work with it to ensure Canada is accessible to visitors from other countries.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative policies are hurting air travellers, airports and the airline industry. They have been saying collectively that the

Conservative government must stop charging huge airport rental fees, stop overcharging security fees and stop laying off airport screeners, which is causing long lineups in all Canadian airports.

Canada is losing five million air passengers to the U.S. every year due to uncompetitive prices. We need to keep air travellers from crossing the border to simply hop on planes. Canadian jobs in Canada have to be the first priority.

According to the Canadian Airports Council, Canada lost 11,000 jobs and \$240 million in tax revenue because of these 5 million Canadian passengers going to the U.S. to travel.

Between 2002 and 2011, almost all countries posted gains in international arrivals, except in Canada. Around the world, almost all countries are getting more international arrivals. We are one of the very few countries that are getting less.

The number of tourists dropped from 20 million in 2002 to 16 million in 2011. This is at a time when more people are travelling around the world. There are more tourists out there. Yet in terms of international tourist arrivals, Canada used to be number seven in the world list, according to the UN World Tourism Organization. We are now placed at number 18. We have slipped from number 7, within the first 10, to number 18, close to 20.

Canadians love to travel abroad, but we are not attracting enough foreign visitors to Canada. Some of the Canadians who are travelling abroad, go to the U.S. to fly out rather than flying directly. Why? Because the fees are too expensive. The Canadian government has been gouging them.

Our travel deficit is exploding, increasing six-fold in just the last decade to almost \$16 billion at the end of 2011. In this context, let us discuss a motion calling for more open sky agreements with other countries.

Since 2006, Canadian governments have signed open sky agreements with other countries. A more structured and branded approach was taken. We could call it blue sky policy or open sky, it is very similar, but 50 countries are collectively signed in different agreements, representing over 85% of Canada's overall international passenger traffic.

Agreements are already in place with large jurisdictions like the U.S. and the EU, as well as a host of smaller countries. However, the success of these agreements, especially since the introduction of the blue sky policy, has not been examined and the assessment has not been made accessible.

There is no serious attempt to seek out whether these open sky agreements have a positive or negative impact on Canada's airline sector, consumer pricing, et cetera. We do not know whether there is any net benefit existing agreements have yielded in terms of reduced air fare prices.

Passengers are seeing the air fares going up. They are not seeing them going down. Connections frequency, we do not know whether that has made it easier; GDP, or tax benefits or job creation. We are losing jobs because of the price the government charges airports and security costs such a high price.

*Private Members' Business*

Without a proper assessment of the existing agreements, the federal government should not go into signing even more agreements for which no clear business case exists.

Another concern is that there is not much potential left in terms of signing additional agreements. Yes, China and India are not signed in, but there are certain risks through state controlled or subsidized airlines.

• (1815)

There may be problems that we do not know about because it is not clear what precisely the business case would be. Would there be government subsidies offered to their airlines that would make it difficult for our Canadian airlines to compete?

What is also in question is whether Canada's carrier, especially Air Canada, would benefit from an additional open sky agreement. It is already beyond Air Canada's strategic scope and resources to exploit the opportunities offered through free access to a number of countries. In other words, Air Canada is not using the ability to offer direct flights to countries for which it theoretically has unrestricted access.

For example, we used to have a lot of tourists coming from Korea. However, now there are fewer because the cost of flying is just so high. Although there is the possibility of having direct flights, there are fewer flights due to fewer tourists coming to Canada.

We do not know what impact these kinds of open sky or blue sky agreements would have on Canadian aviation workers. We know that Aveos laid off 2,000 people, so Air Canada is obviously struggling, even though we have open sky agreements with countries around the world representing 85% of Canada's international air traffic.

It is very important that we work hard to protect Canadian jobs and shield Canada's air industry from unfair and uncontrollable foreign competition. Therefore, any new agreements have to be based on a strong business case for Canada with safeguards to prevent the creation of unbalanced and disastrous competition.

High airfare prices is the key reason why fewer tourists are coming to Canada. In the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's publication "Gateway to Growth", which is its road map on global competitiveness, it did not talk about blue sky agreements. Rather it talked about creating a new success-based funding model to competitively fund the Canadian Tourism Commission and reviewing the aviation cost structure to restore Canada's competitiveness.

Right now Canada is not competitive because the Conservative government continues to charge huge amounts for user fees and levies on aviation, not because we are not signing blue sky agreements. For example, last year \$850 million came from air passengers and airlines. On top of that \$850 million cash grab, the Conservative government grabbed another \$90 million by charging GST on that. The milking of passengers through excessive security charges and unreasonable airport charges has to stop.

Open sky agreements that would have a clear net benefit for Canadians through increased competition and lower ticket prices would be welcome, but to continue what the Conservatives have

been doing, such as signing treaties left and right without looking at the effects on markets and job numbers, is simply irresponsible.

Therefore, let us focus on reducing airfare for Canadians and protecting Canadian jobs rather than focusing on blue sky agreements.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it makes me laugh a little to hear the members of the NDP talk about competition when they are always against free trade agreements.

We need to look past all the self-congratulation in the Conservative motion. The sky is blue and so they paint everything blue. In reality, the purpose of this motion is to encourage free trade and bilateral agreements.

It was our government that signed the first agreement with the Americans in 1995 when Doug Young was the transport minister. For our part, we are going to ignore all the hoopla, all the Conservative government's self-congratulation and talk of blue skies, and we are going to support this motion because we are in favour of free trade agreements. We are in favour of these bilateral agreements.

Unlike others, we think that this will have a positive impact on the entire economy, for customers and for the general public. Clearly, there will always be problems in terms of price.

[*English*]

The bottom line is whether we are in agreement with the bilateral agreement, yes or no. That is what the motion is all about.

As a Liberal, we were there in 1995. We are supportive of that. When I was minister of immigration, we were talking with the Chinese government regarding tourism and of course there is always a link between transport and tourism. There was an agreement eventually but we already started to negotiate at that time. So it is to open the sky, to open the market and it is good politics. It is not a partisan issue; it is a matter of what is in Canada's best interests. Are we going far enough? That is an issue we have to take a look at, but clearly I believe, and we on this side believe, that those accords and agreements are essential.

[*Translation*]

We could talk for hours and hours. There are always things that could be improved, but let us be realistic. This is not a law; it is a motion. As such, these are wishes. It may be wishful thinking, but this motion is a way for the government to say that it wants Parliament to indicate what policy it would like to have in the future. Once again, the member opposite, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and I—we should write this down somewhere—do not tend to agree on things, but we agree on this motion.

*Private Members' Business*

I would, however, like to share some key messages. Neither the U.S. Open Skies policy nor the Canadian blue sky policy should permit cabotage, under which a foreign airline may carry domestic traffic between two points in another country. This is something that should be examined later. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities must take that into consideration when negotiating agreements if he truly wants to guarantee this procedure. At the time, Jean Lapierre, who was the transport minister, had already begun discussions and negotiations in this regard. I think that we need to take that into consideration.

We know that bilateral air transport agreements are negotiated jointly by Transport, Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canadian Transportation Agency. We must also send clear messages not only to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, but also to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to ensure that what happened in the United Arab Emirates does not happen again. Because of problems caused by broadening the agreements, we lost Camp Mirage, which was supporting our troops in Afghanistan. These are important things that must be taken into account.

To the thousands of listeners stampeding over here to listen to my speech and other speeches—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** People need to have a little fun every now and then. I have had a busy day, Mr. Speaker.

Most industry players, including the Canadian Airports Council, the Montreal Economic Institute, the National Airlines Council of Canada, as well as the tourism industry and the entire business community, support blue sky.

Our role is also to represent concerned citizens. I think that in that sense, I am helping my colleague and his motion. That can be taken into consideration. He is not alone. He may have used the word “blue” a little too much. Nevertheless, we are supportive of the “sky” part, at least.

All the same, there are some facts that must be taken into consideration. In speaking to this motion, there is an opportunity to send messages. Those who vote in favour of the motion must take into account the fact that the western provinces, especially British Columbia, are concerned about the lack of progress to date in relaxing restrictions on air services between Canada and major destinations in Asia, such as India. That must be taken into account.

A number of bilateral air transport agreements negotiated under the blue sky policy are not as liberal as those negotiated under our southern neighbour's open skies policy. That may have to be taken into account.

I think that this is a step in the right direction. This is the right thing to do. We have to vote in favour of this motion.

•(1825)

[*English*]

The bottom line: Are they in favour of the free trade agreement or not? If they are against that motion, they are sending a clear message that they are against free trade. So we have to take that in order and that is the reason the members of this party believe in free trade. We

believe in those accords. We signed the first one and we will be pleased to support our colleague from Fundy Royal.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my purpose in this place has been to expand freedom by reducing the obstacles that government puts in its way. There are a number of different freedoms that we have. There is freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of expression. There is also something called freedom of enterprise. It has proven to be the most powerful machine for generating prosperity and opportunity in the history of humankind. While we might speak about it in those grand eloquent terms, we must also remember that it is expanded through the grinding hard work of officials who daily remove its obstacles.

One way in which obstacles to free enterprise and freedom of trade can be removed is through more access to choice for air passengers and more access to markets for air carriers. That is what the blue sky policy does. That is why I rise today to support this motion and its consequential contribution to freedom and free enterprise in our country.

I would like to congratulate the motion's sponsor, the member for Fundy Royal.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** The member is deserving of applause. Let me tell my colleagues that they should also feel comfortable interrupting my comments with their applause at any time throughout my remarks.

Let me talk about the success of the blue sky policy. So far, the government has negotiated 70 reciprocal air agreements that allow foreign carriers to provide choice to Canadian passengers and Canadian carriers to reach foreign markets. This means lower prices and more travel opportunities for Canadian vacationers. It means more job-creating and wealth-generating opportunities for Canadian airline companies.

Our government's policy approach to air transport negotiations with other countries has involved a proactive effort to expanding these agreements. It seeks to negotiate reciprocal open sky agreements when it is in the overall interest of Canada. We promote long-term sustainable competition in this important sector of our economy because it is when choice and options for travellers and shippers grow that the benefits flow to the Canadian people. The policy is therefore pro-consumer in its outlook.

Embedded in the policy are the particularities of the Canadian aviation system. We have a low population density and a large territory. All of our carriers are private companies. We commercialized our main airports and we are now liberalizing our relationships with international partners in an orderly fashion.

*Private Members' Business*

The decision by successive governments, Liberal and Conservative, over the last two and a half decades toward a liberalized, free enterprise, pro-market air transportation system has been an unmitigated success for the country. Our airports prior to this transformation were money sucking state-supported institutions that were dilapidated and had fallen behind. Now, if we look at the enormous success of our airports, they actually employ more people, provide far greater traffic and they are recognized as some of the best in the world. The Ottawa international airport, under the wise leadership of Paul Benoit, has been one such example.

However, the success in commercialization and liberalization should not stop there. We need to expand its reach so that the Canadian people can benefit from literally a world of choice when seeking air carrier options and Canadian air carriers can benefit from a world of consumer demand.

• (1830)

Canada is at the forefront of letting market forces determine the level of air services. This also means that we pay attention to situations that create an unlevel playing field for the industry. We have carefully and prudently analyzed country by country and we have managed to conclude that 70 countries are compatible with us for these air agreements.

In this context, the blue sky policy is not a one-size-fits-all approach to air transportation. We evaluate each on its own merits to determine how far we will go. We consider the commercial interests of Canadian carriers and airports; the likelihood and extent of new Canadian and foreign services, giving preference to early start-ups; the size and maturity of air transportation markets and potential for future growth; foreign governments' requests for negotiations; Canada's trading objectives; safety and security; and Canada's foreign relations.

Our policy puts a legal framework within which carriers make their own decisions based on their commercial considerations. We do not dictate which airline will offer service and where. Instead, we will negotiate an air transportation agreement and work closely with our partners to ensure carriers make use of the flexibility offered to them. In other words, we are unleashing the power of free market competition to create jobs for people who work for the airlines and choice for the passengers who fly on them.

The results speak for themselves. Canada is now at a point where 72% of our international passenger traffic is covered by an open agreement. Before blue sky, we had an open agreement with two partners. We now have open agreements that cover more than 43 countries.

In addition, Canada has concluded or offered open agreements to countries representing collectively 91% of our international two-way merchandise trade. This is proof that the implementation of the policy has supported our trade objectives.

The implementation of the policy has also benefited the tourism sector. All of the priority markets of the tourism commission have been added to the expanded air transport agreements. In 2011 alone, Canada expanded agreements with Brazil, Mexico, Japan and China, which will be the largest outbound tourist market in the world by the

end of this decade. In the future our efforts will continue, with focus on Asia and Latin America.

The policy is consistent with a number of our economic action plan objectives. It expands trade, builds on the gateways and corridors initiative and reaches out to the Americas.

Stakeholder engagement is key to the implementation of this process. For example, aviation industry stakeholders are regularly consulted and they have been supportive and have formed part of the process.

Several foreign airlines have either entered or expanded their services into Canada. For their part, Canadian carriers have increased their total number of outbound international flights by 56% since 2006 and the number of direct international destinations by 11%. These are the results of an open, free enterprise, global trading economy that we are building in this country.

I will close by pointing to the conclusions of this evidence. Free enterprise competition expands choice for consumers, opportunity for investors and jobs for employees. We must always look for opportunities to knock down the barriers of government, to expand freedom for Canadians and to allow the prosperity that always comes with freedom to bless our land.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Conservative Motion No. 387 is to further liberalize international commercial air service through a new open sky agreement with other countries. The goal is to further open up the Canadian market to foreign passenger airlines, which will supposedly result in a net benefit for Canada.

The government's blue sky policy is commonly referred to as an open sky policy elsewhere in the world. I will therefore refer to it as the open sky policy for the rest of my speech.

Generally, open sky agreements lead to greater competition and expanded air services around the world. Deregulating commercial aviation is not a new phenomenon. In the 1970s, several countries including the United States began negotiating bilateral agreements in order to further liberalize international commercial air service.

When the government introduced its blue sky policy in 2006, this provided a framework for subsequent open sky agreements. The goal was to approach things in a more structured way, compared to what had been done in the past by other governments. This led to the negotiation of a number of new bilateral agreements regarding air transportation, including with the United States and members of the European Union.

*Private Members' Business*

It is important to note that agreements represent 87% of all international air traffic in Canada. Other agreements have been reached more recently with a number of other countries. However, the policy that led to the bilateral agreements negotiated since it was adopted is rather protectionist. We simply have to compare it to the American open sky policy and it soon becomes clear that it does not go far enough and it is not as liberal.

What is important is that this not hurt our aviation industry or Canadian consumers. We must ensure that foreign competition is fair, balanced and manageable. How can we have that assurance when Motion No. 387 does not provide for any measures in that regard? In fact, the motion does not mention any concrete measures. Nor has any assessment been done since the blue sky policy was introduced in 2006. We have no idea if deregulation has had any positive spinoffs for the Canadian economy.

Before we go any further, we need to know how successful the government's policy has been since it was implemented. This motion only calls for more bilateral agreements. It does not call for the adoption of more specific measures. And it comes from a backbench Conservative member, which says a lot.

Furthermore, this motion reveals a strange paradox, since the member who moved it does not have an international airport or an airline in his riding. We have to wonder where he suddenly got this idea that signing more bilateral agreements should be a priority for the government, at a time when there are much more serious issues before the House.

We know that for purely ideological reasons, the Conservatives want greater deregulation of the Canadian air market. The question is why this motion is being debated now. There is no reason for the government to put it before the House, and it seems to be another tactic to distract people from other more important and pressing issues.

What is important to know is whether this will truly lead to lower fares and an increase in the number of passengers flying out of Canada instead of the United States. But we have no idea. There is no analysis of the commercial gains this will entail for airlines. There is no evaluation showing what kind of effect open sky type agreements have had on the Canadian airline industry and the prices paid by consumers. We need proof and studies confirming the effects of previous agreements before we open up the market even more.

Since 87% of international air traffic is already covered by such agreements, is there any real potential here? I should point out that the only main exceptions are China and India. These are emerging powers with large markets, but in recent years, bilateral agreements have been signed with much smaller countries.

• (1840)

We are talking about opening up the market to Chinese airlines that enjoy significant state subsidies. These emerging countries are important players, and this kind of foreign competition could have long-term negative consequences for a market like ours and for our airline companies. This would become a problem if they were in a position to offer lower fares, which would affect the market.

In the past, we refused to open the market to the Emirates airline, which receives considerable political and financial support. I do not

see how the situation is any different today. Moreover, Air Canada does not have the same means to operate in other markets. Thus, these agreements would lack so-called reciprocity.

This motion is also being introduced at a time when we know very well that the government is abandoning stakeholders in the aerospace sector. We must protect the workers in this sector and defend our aerospace industry.

Canada also has its share of problems in the commercial airline industry, such as air security, poorly serviced rural communities, wait times and the exorbitant prices that consumers end up paying. These are the consequences of the Conservatives' policies, budget cuts and layoffs.

These policies adversely affect both consumers and airlines. We believe that the integrity of our airlines and jobs in the sector must be protected, while ensuring that consumers have access to competitive prices. In that regard, we know that Canadians travel to the U.S. to take cheaper flights. A recent report released by the Conference Board of Canada indicated the extent of the problem. Approximately five million Canadians cross the border to fly out of American airports because it is much cheaper.

This situation is not sustainable for airports or for Canadian carriers. According to the Conference Board of Canada, changes to Canadian policies could alter this situation significantly and bring back two million passengers to our airports.

The decrease in Canadian passengers could have other serious consequences such as less frequent flights, higher travel costs and, inevitably, inferior service for all Canadians.

As a result, we must be sure to provide our Canadian airline industry with adequate support in order to make it effective, safe, prosperous and viable. We need to know the net benefits that the agreements entered into under the policy may have yielded since the policy was implemented in 2006. But we do not. We do not know what effects the policy may have had on job creation, income, GDP growth or the reduction in airline ticket prices.

I can guarantee that any open sky policy that clearly demonstrates that Canadians will obtain a net benefit, such as a decrease in the cost of airline tickets for consumers, would be welcome. However, right now, there is no study or assessment to demonstrate that such is the case. We do not have any guarantees from the Conservatives with regard to existing jobs and routes. How can we know that the increase in competition will not affect certain routes, which will then be deemed to be non-competitive?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

I am opposed to this motion for all these reasons. The government must conduct an analysis of the performance of the agreements that are already in place before making new ones. For now, the government should focus on resolving existing problems in our air services and our aerospace industry.

The NDP opposes the motion for many reasons, particularly because it pushes for a more open Canadian passenger airline market without providing for any measures to protect Canadian consumers or the aviation industry and without any evidence that previous deregulation was good for the Canadian economy.

• (1845)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned the party's position on how important it is that we establish air transportation and its many different benefits, both for Canada and other countries, as we move forward and look at possible agreements. There I was pleased to hear the presenter of the motion talk about countries where there has been some progress. He referred my question about the Philippines, which I do appreciate.

I want to highlight one of my pet peeves. The New Democrat member talked about how the number of people visiting has actually gone down significantly over the years. This reminded me of the many issues with temporary visas that I deal with as citizenship and immigration critic. All members of Parliament hear of the great frustration of people abroad who want to travel to Canada, but who are required to get visitors visas to come to Canada, many of which are rejected for a wide variety of reasons. It is a multi-faceted problem that we face when looking at trying to increase the number of people coming to Canada through our airline industry. Part of that increase is through visitors. If and when we see visas rejected, ultimately family members in Canada go to those countries as opposed to their family members coming here. I want to emphasize that point.

Having said that, Winnipeg has a brand new international airport and CentrePort, an initiative that the provincial government, in co-operation with Ottawa, planned for what we believe is a wonderful economic opportunity for the province of Manitoba. The airlines, both cargo and passenger, are absolutely critical to the success of CentrePort. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. We are talking about the future of thousands of jobs for the community of Winnipeg and beyond. Ultimately when we talk about these types of jobs and numbers, all of Canada benefits as a result.

For CentrePort and the Winnipeg International Airport to prosper in the future and for us to realize its potential, it is critical that we look at the ways we can enhance air travel and cargo. For decades, I remember Gary Filmon, a former premier of Manitoba, talk about Winnport. Winnport used the idea from the east coast of an airline transporting fresh lobster from the east coast to Europe in a 747 aircraft.

• (1850)

I recall the debate in Manitoba about why we could not export some our merchandise in a much larger fashion. I remember people saying "Why not even look at pork products and having fresh pork products?" That was back in the 1990s.

Winnport never really got off the ground, but CentrePort has. In essence, it is the same concept that we talked about in the 1990s. The difference now is that multiple or different levels of government have invested millions of dollars to ensure—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please.

I do not mean to interrupt the hon. member. However, there is really too much noise in the chamber. I am sure that other hon. members wish to hear the member for Winnipeg North. It is awfully difficult to hear at this end of the chamber.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that this multi-million dollar investment, which includes all different levels of government in one way or another, is an attempt to try to say to the rest of the world that Winnipeg is open for business. When we talk about the potential of air cargo and passenger business into the future, it is phenomenal.

Therefore, I was glad when my colleague stood as the critic and a member of the Liberal Party's Quebec caucus and talked a bit about the history of where the Liberal Party has come from in recognizing the importance of this. In dealing with this motion, we want to deal with it in an apolitical fashion, believing that it does have the support of at least two political entities inside the House of Commons. However, more importantly, by passing this motion pass we would really be encouraging economic development in an important industry.

I know that Manitoba is not alone. There other provinces, Saskatchewan in particular, and the province of Ontario through the Toronto international airport. My colleagues will talk about the province of Quebec and other jurisdictions as well, but particularly the Montreal airport and its potential.

I think that we underestimate the potential. That is why we find many of my Liberal colleagues talking about the importance of the air cargo and passenger business because the potential for job creation is there, the potential for generating additional GDP for our country is there. Both of those are very real, which I just wanted to have the opportunity to emphasize.

• (1855)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** As he may wish, the hon. member for Winnipeg North will have two minutes remaining to resume his speech when the House next considers the question.

[*Translation*]

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

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[Translation]

## FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to talk about a question that I asked on June 19 about the Rio+20 conference and the Conservatives' catastrophic record.

May 22 was the International Day for Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, issued this appeal: "Rio+20 must galvanize action to improve the management and conservation of oceans."

Rio+20 was held in June 2012, the 20th anniversary of the Earth Summit. Two very important environmental proposals were on the table, but unfortunately, the Conservatives fiercely opposed them, which angered Canadians and the people in my riding of Drummond.

The first environmental proposal on the table at Rio+20 was to eliminate over \$1 billion in subsidies that the Conservatives give every year to fossil fuel companies—both oil and gas companies. The people in my riding are sick and tired of seeing their tax dollars subsidize billion-dollar oil and gas companies. Unfortunately, at Rio+20, the Conservatives opposed that proposal.

The second environmental proposal was to better protect marine biodiversity in extraterritorial waters, as called for by Ban Ki-moon. Instead of protecting our environment and our health, the Conservatives have another agenda. They are continuing the destruction that they began with Bill C-38. Let me remind the House what that bill included: the Conservatives withdrew Canada from the Kyoto protocol; they eliminated the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy; and they abolished the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

With Bill C-45, they can do more of the same by attacking the Navigable Waters Protection Act this time. For instance, only 97 lakes and 62 rivers in all of Canada will now be protected. That is unbelievable. This means that 99.7% of lakes and 99.9% of rivers in Canada will not have any protection whatsoever. On top of all that, of the only 97 protected lakes, 89% are located in Conservative ridings, which is even more shocking. Of the remaining rivers, the one that runs through Drummond, the Saint-François River, is not protected. People from Drummond are calling me and asking me what the repercussions of this will be. They are shocked to learn that the river will no longer be protected.

Furthermore, I would like to come back to Fisheries and Oceans Canada and more specifically the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, located in Mont-Joli in the Lower St. Lawrence, which has experienced some cuts. This is another example of the vague budget cuts imposed on Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Near Rimouski, more than 120 scientist jobs are affected, including about 30 that will be eliminated altogether. This important institute is one of the main francophone marine science research centres in the world. As I was saying, it plays a very important role, not only here in Canada, but also around the world.

My question is the following: how can the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans claim that the federal government oversees the sustainable development of the oceans, when it is shamelessly

cutting anything to do with the environment, whether it is with Bill C-38 or Bill C-45? Can he show us that he truly cares about protecting the oceans?

● (1900)

[English]

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I stand today to inform the hon. member about our government's approach to protecting marine biodiversity in Canada's oceans, as well as in international waters.

Canada remains committed to the sustainable development of the oceans, both domestically and internationally. We continue to make progress in the responsible management and protection of our oceans. The government ensures that our national waters are protected and preserved through our strong regulatory regime that governs responsible resource use and development, and ensures high standards of environmental protection. We will continue to collect the scientific information necessary and provide advice to support informed decision-making regarding the issues of greatest concern to Canada's oceans.

Integrated ocean management plans have been completed for two ocean areas and three more are nearing completion. These plans provide a basis for decision-making, recognizing the importance of natural ecosystems while balancing the needs of resource users. There are currently eight Fisheries and Oceans marine protected areas and seven additional areas that are under active consideration as potential marine protected areas. In fact, among federal, provincial and territorial governments, 810 marine conservation and marine protected areas have been established to date.

Our government will continue to work together with the provinces, territories, aboriginal peoples, industry and all of our stakeholders in developing Canada's network of marine protected areas. We have made significant progress in implementing a strategic approach to oceans management in collaboration with other levels of government and stakeholders. We have worked together with our partners to deliver results, increase surveillance of marine pollution through acquisition of specialized equipment and the provision of emergency and safety services to local operators.

Internationally, we are taking our domestic experience and approaches and working collaboratively in global processes to protect the biodiversity of the world's oceans. Canada is an active member of the North American Marine Protected Areas Network, a Canada–U.S.–Mexico project to advance the development of an effective system of North American Marine Protected Areas Networks, to enhance and strengthen the protection of marine biodiversity.

Last year, with the support of the United Nations General Assembly, we endorsed an expert process to assess the best tools and mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability of the world's oceans. Canada participates in a United Nations working group established to deal with these issues and looks forward to contributing to analysis of the best options. Developing networks of marine protected areas, as we are doing with our North American partners, is one example of an effective tool.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We believe it is important that existing agreements and mechanisms be implemented and a thorough analysis of options be conducted before a new international treaty is negotiated. We prefer to take a pragmatic and practical approach that can lead to action sooner rather than later. Canada does not want to abandon the agreed upon United Nations process that will build global understanding of this complex issue.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette:** Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to remind the hon. member that the Conservatives collected fossil awards at the Rio+20 conference. The Minister of the Environment's shelf holds a collection of environmental fossil awards. It is thus difficult to say that the Conservatives have done what is necessary for the environment.

The most recent budget cuts found in the two mammoth budget bills, Bill C-38 and Bill C-45, show that they have not. These bills make radical cuts to the environment and there is nothing in these bills to protect our marine areas. On the contrary, the Navigable Waters Protection Act has been completely gutted. Canada has also take a major step backward in terms of environmental science. As I mentioned, the Conservatives are making serious cuts in this area. This will do nothing to help protect our oceans. Oceans cover a large portion of our planet. They are the very essence of life. Water is the essence of life, and that is why we must protect it.

According to the hon. member, if the government has done everything it can, why was it given so many fossil awards?

• (1905)

[*English*]

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to make progress on our responsible management and protection of our oceans, using high environmental standards and a strong regulatory regime. The integrated ocean management plan provides a basis for decision-making, recognizing the importance of natural ecosystems while attempting to balance the needs of resource users. In addition, we are pursuing the development of a network of marine protected areas.

We prefer a practical approach that could lead to action sooner rather than later. Canada supports current efforts within the United Nations to build global understanding of this complex issue which needs to be done before a new international treaty is negotiated.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to revisit my question from last June on the subject of mercury poisoning and the plight of the people from the Grassy Narrows and Whitedog First Nations.

At the time of my question, a Japanese study had just been translated into English that was an update to an earlier study. It showed how the health effects of mercury poisoning still ravage these communities a full 50 years after the contamination that initially poisoned the food supply began.

The studies were published by mercury poisoning expert, Dr. Masazumi Harada, who passed away this past summer. Dr. Harada's recent work in Grassy Narrows revealed that 59% of people tested had mercury poisoning and 34% of those tested would have been

diagnosed with Minamata disease. Of those people tested between the ages of 21 to 41, 44% were affected by mercury poisoning even though none of them were alive 50 years ago when a pulp mill in Dryden dumped about 10 tonnes of mercury into the Wabigoon River.

Incredibly, Health Canada studies in the 1990s showed that 0% of patients examined were deemed at risk due to the levels of mercury in their system. Needless to say, Dr. Harada's update gave completely different results.

Worse, Health Canada issued a statement declaring that poisoning due to methyl mercury contamination in these communities was a "minimal risk".

As recently as 2010, when I raised the issue in the House of Grassy Narrows mercury poisoning, the Minister of Health stated that the mercury levels were safe. We now know that was simply not true.

We do know that Canada has yet to acknowledge a single case of Minamata disease despite acknowledging the waterway that fed these first nations communities is polluted.

Despite all of Dr. Harada's research to the contrary and his significant reports that were released in English in 2005 and 2012, if people were only to listen to the Canadian government, they would hear that there has not been a single case of Minamata disease in Grassy Narrows.

What may be worse is the way that clear-cut logging is complicating the problem and adding to the risk of mercury poisoning. Science shows us that clear-cut logging causes boreal land to shed its mineral load into its waterways. This increases mercury levels in boreal fish and yet clear-cut logging persists in the Grassy territory despite clearly stated and consistent opposition from the community.

In fact, this December 2 is the 10th anniversary of the Grassy Narrows logging blockade, which has been led by mothers and young people trying to protect their treaty rights to hunt and fish in the face of industrial clear-cut logging.

Grassy Narrows recently won its court case at the Ontario Superior Court after a decade of legal wrangling. Now Canada is appealing. In doing so, it is arguing against the treaty rights of Grassy Narrows to fish and hunt. Having their own government appeal their victory can only be seen as piling on the people of Grassy Narrows.

Dr. Harada is on record saying that even if the pollution itself could come to an end, the impact on the health and socio-economic life of the people throughout the area is immense.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Despite pushing ahead with licences for clear-cut logging, Ontario is moving forward on the issue of mercury poisoning and has formed an inter-ministerial committee to deal with the phenomenon. Canada and Health Canada have been invited to join them at the table but they have refused. The government also refused to comment to the CBC when it was reporting on developments in the story in June of this year. Why is the government silent on this?

Why will the government not admit that there is an ongoing problem with mercury poisoning, admit the existence of Minamata disease in Grassy Narrows and Whitedog and then get to work on dealing with the problem?

Will Canada come to the table to resolve ongoing mercury issues?

● (1910)

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to the question from the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung. Let me assure the hon. member that the health of first nations communities is an absolute priority for the Government of Canada. Addressing the concerns of mercury contamination in Grassy Narrows First Nation is no exception. Our government takes the issue of mercury poisoning and its potential health effects seriously.

The Government of Canada continues to work with the Mercury Disability Board and the Government of Ontario to support the work of the board in addressing the issue of mercury contamination. The board was established in 1986 in response to mercury poisoning of the English-Wabigoon River system. The board supervises administration of the fund from which benefits are paid to claimants whose health may have been affected by mercury contamination. Since 1986, Canada has contributed more than \$9 million in compensation to Grassy Narrows First Nation, which was affected by mercury contamination.

Health Canada has made progress on addressing contamination issues by working with willing partners to achieve tangible results. Through the First Nation and Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada monitors the exposure of first nations to environmental contaminants, including mercury. Our government knows that for communities like the Grassy Narrows First Nation, access to safe water, land and contamination-free traditional food sources is of utmost importance.

The health, safety and security of all Canadians and the environment are important for our government. That is why we, along with the Province of Ontario, first nations, scientists and industry, are working together to invest in initiatives to monitor the effects of mercury contamination on the environment in the English-Wabigoon River system in northwestern Ontario.

We are committed to the health of first nation communities. We are working with our partners to ensure that first nations and all Canadians across the country have access to a safe environment, which in turn results in long-term prosperity for us all.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the fact that the government is very concerned and its priority is the health and well-being of first nations. I have to ask whether her practical approach is with respect to ensuring that waterways, such as the

English-Wabigoon River system, which has not made the very short list of mostly cottage-country rivers and lakes, will receive the protection of the new navigation protection act. Whether that is a practical approach or not, is fighting a court decision that would stop pollution of these lakes and rivers what she would call a practical approach?

When I talked about Dr. Harada, his life's work was making sure that the well-being of people was being addressed. Obviously, the government is not addressing that. When will the member stand up for the people of Grassy Narrows? When will Conservatives admit that there is Minamata disease, and when will they stop appealing the decision?

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government takes the health of first nation communities seriously. That is why Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch has funded a number of research projects at Grassy Narrows and nearby communities over the last decade. The research examines the current levels of mercury contamination in the environment and wildlife, as well as human exposure.

We also continue to work with the Mercury Disability Board established in 1986 and the Government of Ontario to address the issue of mercury contamination. Understanding and minimizing the effects of mercury contamination are essential to ensuring the health of all first nations communities affected by contamination. Along with our partners, we are committed to supporting the Grassy Narrows First Nation with the aim of improving the long-term prosperity and health of all community members.

● (1915)

## BORDER SECURITY

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I will speak to a hugely worrisome and important issue that has unfortunately received little attention. In June, I asked a question about the government's leaked plans to "ease Canadians into the idea" of U.S. agents operating on Canadian soil as part of a sovereignty sharing perimeter security deal with the United States.

Tonight is Halloween. Imagine the fright ordinary Canadians would get if they are at home and all of a sudden their door bursts open and U.S. drug enforcement agents storm into their house, arrest them and abscond across the border with them, where they can be charged with things that are not even crimes in Canada.

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That is exactly the horror show that the government is bringing to Canadians. It might not just be the DEA. It could be the FBI or U.S. customs and immigration agents or the bureau of alcohol, tobacco and firearms or even the CIA. We cannot be certain of who all would be involved because the government is keeping Canadians, and the House, largely in the scary dark.

Who needs due process and extradition treaties when they can just waltz into another country and arrest whoever they want? Marc Emery would see the problem with this scheme.

This is all part of the “beyond the border” initiative, which will hugely expand the nature and scope of joint law enforcement operations and information sharing.

One of the dozens of non-budget items in this year's omnibus budget was changes to permanently allow for U.S. agents to operate on Canadian soil. The shiprider program has crawled out of the water and onto the land.

Cross-border co-operation between law enforcement to stop crime is a laudable goal. However, it must be done in a way that respects Canadian sovereignty. After fiascos like the FIPA, the Canada-China foreign investment protection treaty, it is clear that Canadians are skeptical about closed door agreements being negotiated that impact Canada's sovereignty. These plans must respect the rights of Canadians.

A joint resolution from the federal and provincial privacy commissioners urged transparency and respect for Canadian privacy standards regarding this initiative. It was very apt, considering the severe consequences Maher Arar suffered because basic standards were not followed. The resolution said:

Any initiatives under the plan that collect personal information should also include appropriate redress and remedy mechanisms to review files for accuracy, correct inaccuracies and restrict disclosures to other countries; Parliament, provincial Privacy Commissioners and civil society should be engaged as initiatives under the plan take shape; [i]nformation about Canadians should be stored on Canadian soil whenever feasible or at least be subject to Canadian protection; and [a]ny use of new surveillance technologies within Canada such as unmanned aerial vehicles must be subject to appropriate controls set out in a proper regulatory framework.

They mention aerial drones because it has emerged that they could be part of this cross-border initiative. Do we really want to have U.S. predator drones flying deep into Canada, spying and carrying out missions at will?

None of this is being discussed in the House because the government is not following the privacy commissioners' directives. Parliament is not being engaged or informed about this cross-border law enforcement scheme.

Questions remain. Will the private information of Canadians only be stored in Canada? How will disclosures to other countries be restricted, or files corrected for inaccuracies? When violations occur, what redress or mediation measures are being put in place under the beyond the border plan?

I know the plans are currently on hold as legal—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please. The time has expired for the hon. member.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to the Halloween night fearmongering of the independent member, I would like to reiterate that Canada and the U.S. share a long history of law enforcement co-operation. That has been very helpful and productive at the shared border. The Canadian and U.S. law enforcement agencies often work together to combat the trafficking and smuggling of everything from illegal drugs and tobacco to firearms and people. We want that to continue. It is a good initiative.

However, border law enforcement operations have been traditionally hindered by the fact that law enforcement officers are bound by jurisdictional limitations. In other words, they cannot enforce the law beyond their own border. This becomes an impediment to effective border policing, especially since criminal organizations are well aware of these limitations. It seems the hon. member wants those limitations to continue. We do not.

Organized crime groups use those limitations to their advantage. They do so by committing crimes in one country, then fleeing into the other country, knowing that they can often evade arrest and prosecution once they cross the border. To combat this law enforcement gap at the border, this government has made significant investments in recent years to strengthen border security co-operation with the United States.

In fact, when the Prime Minister and the U.S. President announced the declaration on a shared vision for perimeter security and economic competitiveness in February 2011, the concept of integrated cross-border law enforcement was included as one of the four pillars of enhanced bilateral co-operation, specifically the regularization of integrated cross-border maritime law enforcement operations, also known as shiprider in 2012. Shiprider allows specially trained and designated RCMP and U.S. Coast Guard officers to work together to enhance the domestic law of both countries, which I would think the opposition and the member would support, to enforce the domestic laws of both countries under the direction and control of the host country's law enforcement officers.

I want to be crystal clear on this point. While operating in Canada, U.S. officers would assist Canadian officers in the enforcement of Canadian law and would be under the command of a Canadian officer at all times. The reverse would occur when integrated operations occurred in the U.S. The vessels are jointly crewed to share resources and intelligence to better identify, interdict, investigate and prosecute criminal activity in shared waters.

Parliament was also consulted on integrated cross-border maritime law enforcement operations for the required 30-day period in October 2009, following the signature of the shiprider framework agreement in May 2009. Regularized shiprider operations between Canada and the U.S. signal the beginning of a new era of co-operation for border law enforcement, an era in which resources are maximized, co-operation increased and border security vastly enhanced. I would think that all of us would want that. Canadians have asked us for that.

Shiprider strengthens border security, which facilitates the flow of legitimate people and goods, and protects the safety and security of Canadians and our economy.

• (1920)

**Mr. Bruce Hyer:** Mr. Speaker, I support shiprider. My question is not about shiprider.

Far too many questions remain and Canadians are largely being left in the dark. This is a crucial and expanded agreement, one that will well impact our sovereignty and the rights of Canadians like few others in our history. It must not be written and signed in secrecy.

In the interests of transparency and accountability, will the government agree to lay out what is exactly being negotiated under this cross-border law enforcement initiative and the government's position on each issue being negotiated? Will it respect existing Canadian laws and treaties, such as the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and the Canada-U.S. extradition treaty? Finally, will the government bring any agreement to Parliament for review and approval of this crucial document and agreement?

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians can rest assured that integrated cross-border law enforcement operations in no way

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

compromise our constitutionally protected rights and freedoms. They do not cede or diminish sovereignty in any way. In fact, these integrated operations serve to augment our sovereignty by ensuring that threats are identified and interdicted prior to entering our jurisdiction or reaching our communities.

We have taken concrete measures to ensure proper oversight and accountability of these operations in Canada.

First, all operations taking place in Canada are conducted in accordance with all Canadian laws, including privacy laws. All designated officers are subject to our laws, including privacy laws.

Second, all operations taking place in Canada would be conducted under the control, direction and command of Canadian law enforcement officers.

Third, the current Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP or any subsequent review body for the RCMP will be mandated to review the conduct of participating officers in Canada.

The opposition member can rest assured that we are standing up for Canadians, keeping our borders open to legitimate trade and travel, but stopping criminals and those wanting to take advantage of us.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:25 p.m.)



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