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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, November 26, 2012**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 26, 2012

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)  
[English]

### INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from September 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-399, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (volunteers), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to rise today in the House of Commons to speak to the subject of volunteerism.

Every member of Parliament is obviously proud of their own community and the people they represent. This certainly holds true for me. I am proud to represent the people of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Next year marks the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown conference, the meeting where the idea of Confederation was first discussed. It is an occasion that we, in the House, can all be proud of, particularly as Charlottetown is the capital of Prince Edward Island and the birthplace of Canada.

The heart of a country is its people. As I walked to Parliament in the snow today, I was reminded of how much work and effort it took to make this country. From the pioneers out west to the French and British peoples who ventured to an unknown land, it was not easy. The climate and conditions were harsh and isolated. They helped build this country bit by bit, knitting a fabric of generosity and community, and building a better place for future generations. Today we are so grateful to live in a country that is the envy of the world.

We do not face the same challenges in modern Canada as those of many generations ago. Nonetheless, we do have challenges. For all its wealth, power, modernity and success, Canada is still a place where prosperity is not shared equally and where far too many Canadians live in poverty. As a country and a government, we can do more.

I believe the government can and has been a force for good in the past. Government has a role in helping our communities by providing opportunity and hope to those Canadians seeking a better life but living on the margins. Income inequality is the great

challenge of our day. Income inequality and poverty do not care much about the federal division of power, nor do they argue over who is responsible. For the poor and those living on the margins of Canada's success, it is that lack of hope and opportunity that is the major challenge of our time. As a country, we must take steps to close the gap.

Just as government can play a role in helping build our communities, I am convinced that its people are the heart of those same communities. In cities and towns across Canada today, hundreds of thousands of Canadians are volunteering in their communities.

At this time of year one thinks of hockey, not about the NHL strike but rather local hockey, which is so important to our communities. On weekends, in the evenings and in the early mornings in communities all across Canada and in Charlottetown, volunteers are selling raffle tickets and volunteer coaches are running young girls and boys through their hockey practices getting ready for the next game. The early bird tournament was held this weekend in Charlottetown. There were teams from all across the Maritimes filling up the hotels and restaurants of our fair city. Next month will be the George Trainor invitational tournament. In January, will come the big Spud AAA tournament, where dozens of teams from all over the Maritimes will be competing in Charlottetown.

These hockey tournaments, as well as those of all other sports that are held in many walks of life, only happen because of dedicated volunteers. In hockey and in all kinds of sports, there are moms, dads and others making them happen. In the summer, parents bring their kids to soccer practice where volunteer coaches are teaching kids teamwork and the value of sportsmanship. Again, there are volunteers there to make it happen.

In my own experience, having taken up running about 15 years ago and competed in road races and marathons, I can attest to the great efforts of volunteers that go into the success of these races and the impact they have on our communities. Events such as marathons rely on volunteers. They make them happen. Amateur sports could not exist, let alone succeed, without the work and efforts of parents and other volunteers. They simply love sports and know that kids need these activities in their lives.

*Private Members' Business*

Sport unites Canadians. It is healthy, but at times it can be expensive. For many young Canadians with skill and ability, living without the means to participate is profoundly unjust. How much potential is lost in Canada in all aspects of life as a result of poverty and the lack of opportunity? Yet in communities across Canada, people are helping one another. Whether it is a program such as KidSport or other fundraisers, people are helping others gain access.

Outside of sport, volunteers in our community are helping immigrant groups and newcomers. Volunteers are at the heart of helping immigrant communities succeed and adjust. Newcomers are vital to our country. Immigrants make a contribution to our economy, bringing with them much needed skills and labour. However, we should not fall into the trap of viewing immigrants solely as economic contributors. They also bring their cultures, their values and their sense of community that enhance and make Canada the unique and diverse country it is.

In Charlottetown, volunteers are helping newcomers learn English and integrate into our society. I look at my own riding of Charlottetown and think of how much immigration has helped to make Charlottetown a more diverse and vibrant place. At the heart of welcoming these new immigrants, and usually in the background, are the volunteers.

It is obvious as we look around our shops and stores that we are now fully engaged in the Christmas shopping season. I hope that it will be a successful one for our businesses and for those seeking work or others looking to earn some extra cash. I hope they will be able to do that at this time of year. All members of the House of Commons would agree with me that Christmas is a period of time to reflect on the value of our family and friends and the importance of our communities. It is also a time to count our blessings for what we have, the real things that matter.

In my community, not everyone shares in those blessings, and indeed for some, Christmas can be a difficult time. Mums and dads without much money struggle to provide for their families and put gifts under the tree for their kids. Yet in the midst of the hustle and bustle of Christmas, volunteers can be seen helping others who are less fortunate. Whether it is the Salvation Army, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul or volunteers in a working group for a liveable income, or in my province, the Cooper Institute, throughout the city of Charlottetown volunteers are giving of themselves to make life a little better. I would ask Canadians to remember the less fortunate and to seek opportunities to help. It is important.

In closing, let me just say that the thrust of this initiative before the House today dealing with volunteers and recognizing their contributions is important. The act of giving of one's time and effort in the service of others can never be understated. In the opening of my speech today I spoke about the contribution made by our forefathers, who helped to build this country. We are grateful to them for their courage and spirit. Today, we take the time to thank the hundreds of thousands of people who are serving others, building communities and making Canada a better place.

• (1110)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the bill. I would like to congratulate

the member for Repentigny for moving it. It is a great idea to have a tax credit for volunteers.

To summarize, the bill would allow a tax credit between \$500 and \$1,500 for volunteering a minimum 130 hours with 12 trips throughout the year. This is a modest tax credit in recognition of service to one's community. A lot of people volunteer in communities and this is a way to show our appreciation. It certainly would help.

I know that volunteers do not do this for money. Before I was elected to the House of Commons, I did a lot of volunteer work in my community. I certainly did not do it for money and no one else does it for money. However, it would certainly encourage more people to volunteer if there were a tax credit.

[*Translation*]

I would like to take a few moments to talk about some volunteers in my community. At an event Friday evening, I had the pleasure of meeting a volunteer named Michel Piette who lives in Chelmsford. Every day, Michel volunteers at the Alliance St-Joseph elementary school, where he helps out in many ways, including making photocopies for teachers and helping the children get dressed in their winter clothes. Last week or the week before, he even made taffy for St. Catherine's day. The teachers and students alike all appreciate everything Michel does for them.

[*English*]

I would like to mention three people from my community: Patty Smith-Taylor, Cathy Castanza and Reg Devost. They have been volunteers at the youth centre in Rayside-Balfour since its inception. This is a centre that was built in the late 1990s to give youth a place to go after school to do their homework, play games and get counselling from some of the volunteers. These three volunteers have been there from the start and they are still there today. Although there are others who help at the youth centre, these three people do not and never did have any kids who went to the youth centre. They are doing this out of the kindness of their hearts, which is certainly appreciated.

As well, the Sudbury Regional Hospital is manned by so many volunteers I do not know the number. They help people as they come in the door, give them directions and even take them exactly where they want to go. It is a big hospital and can be very confusing for seniors to navigate. These volunteers help them get to their appointments.

On Friday night I went to an event that celebrates co-ops.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

The event centred around the Caisse populaire des Voyageurs. As we all know, Desjardins was built by volunteers, and many volunteers are still very active in this co-op. It has become quite an institution in Canada.

[*English*]

I do not think that we need to convince anyone in the House that volunteers play a very important role in all communities.

*Private Members' Business*

I would like to give an overview of what volunteers do. They run committees and boards of directors, provide advice and consulting and mentoring services, visit with seniors, prepare and deliver meals, provide transportation, advocate for social causes, and lead sports activities for children and teens. In short, volunteers contribute to the development of their communities and help non-profit organizations provide programs and services to millions of Canadians.

According to the United Nations' State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2011, "Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation".

Perhaps the biggest benefit people get from volunteering is the satisfaction of incorporating service into their lives and making a difference in their community and country. Volunteering gives a retired person something to do after retirement other than sitting at home. It is a proven fact that volunteering keeps seniors younger.

According to Statistics Canada, the number of hours people spent volunteering in 2010 was 2.1 billion. That is a lot of hours for people to be volunteering. That is equivalent to 1.1 million full-time jobs. If we had to pay these volunteers for 2.1 billion hours, just at minimum wage of \$9 an hour, that would be \$18.2 billion. That is a lot of money. However, I said a while ago, these volunteers do not expect to be paid but if they were given a tax credit it would help organizations recruit more volunteers.

Most of us here in the House of Commons have a lot of volunteers in our offices. I have Stéphanie Pépin who does my e-newsletter. In my office in Sturgeon Falls, I have a young fellow by the name of Stéphane Bissonette who is 13 or 14 years of age. He does my French website. He does it because he can first of all and because he enjoys it. We are not expected to pay these people and they do not expect to receive any money but I wanted to give members a sample of what volunteers can do.

I have Holly Fryer and Sam Faubert in my office in Ottawa who are doing volunteer work as part of their program at the University of Ottawa. They are certainly enjoying themselves doing this. I also have Ray Pellerin and Denis Noël volunteering in my office in Sturgeon Falls. With the Christmas season coming, we will be having a Christmas parade in Sturgeon Falls and Ray has volunteered to drive the truck and Denis is getting the float ready. This is another good example of volunteerism.

I would like to thank the Ontario Trillium Foundation for providing start-up funding for our newest program called social enterprise in collaboration with the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. The purpose of this program is to provide training and support for local non-profit groups exploring social enterprises. Social enterprises are businesses owned by non-profit organizations selling goods or services in the marketplace for the purpose of generating income and/or creating social, environmental and cultural values.

We support Bill C-399. We hope to send it to committee to make some changes to it. All private members' bills can be amended to include other things and to make them better.

● (1120)

Volunteers must make 12 trips of one kilometre to the place of volunteering. In a small community, like some of the communities in my riding, one kilometre is not very far. We certainly want to look at that.

I thank all of the volunteers from coast to coast to coast for doing what they do.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the NDP private member's bill, Bill C-399. While we can all agree that volunteers strengthen Canada by bringing positive change to their communities, this poorly written bill would do nothing more than provide costly and duplicative tax breaks for all the wrong reasons.

Despite this bill's numerous technical flaws, which I will explore later in my remarks, it is at odds with the very definition of service. Why do people volunteer? Why do Canadians selflessly give their precious time to organizations that help the less fortunate? It is because they seek personal growth and character through compassion for others. We know for certain that people volunteer because they are passionate about a cause and want to do something good for others, not because they are looking for a tax break.

While I am sure this is obvious to the millions of Canadians who volunteer, there is hard evidence to back it up. Recently, Volunteer Alberta commissioned a study on the potential impact of tax credits for volunteer participation funded by the Muttart Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to strengthening the charitable sector. The results were clear. Speaking to its findings, Karen Lynch, executive director of Volunteer Alberta, stated:

There is no evidence that a tax credit incentive would increase the level of volunteerism and in fact, it would change the definition of volunteering fundamentally. Volunteering would no longer be the free giving of a person's time....

Notwithstanding the member for Repentigny's misguided assumptions about why people are motivated to help their fellow Canadians, this bill appears to have been drafted on the back of a napkin. It proposes to give a tax break to volunteers who perform 130 hours of service a year, helping "vulnerable populations". It is important to note that the bill gives no further definition, leaving it up to the government to arbitrarily decide which organizations may or may not qualify with no objective rules or guidelines.

It has been a long-standing practice that the Income Tax Act treats all charitable purposes equally, meaning that the government stays out of the business of deciding which charities are more or less deserving of special treatment, meaning that all registered Canadian charities have access to the same benefits.

*Private Members' Business*

However, Bill C-399 would require the government to determine what is a vulnerable population and which charities serve it. All charitable work is worthwhile and no volunteer is more valuable than another. Is the NDP member suggesting that the work of a charitable clothing shop is more important than an environmental conservancy? Should orphaned children be considered vulnerable and Canadians with disabilities not? As written, this bill pits Canadian charities against one another and is nothing more than a costly distraction from the important work that they do each and every day to contribute to the health of their communities.

Furthermore, the bill would allow non-profit organizations, or NPOs, to issue certificates for tax purposes, which is also problematic. While the CRA has the tools it needs to regulate Canada's 85,000 registered charities and ensure compliance, this is not the case with NPOs. The Canada Revenue Agency does not keep information on organizations of this type, so it would be almost impossible to determine which NPOs deal with vulnerable populations and which should be permitted to issue certificates. This would raise significant compliance concerns that would almost certainly result in fraud and abuse.

Not only that, non-profits would be responsible for tracking the hours and expenses of their volunteers, burdening charities, many with limited human resources already, with the responsibility of providing this information to the CRA and giving rise to concerns from the sector. Annette Vautour-McKay, executive director of the Volunteer Centre Southeastern New Brunswick in Moncton, stated, "From a management perspective, I would imagine the requirements of the bill would be quite taxing".

When we think about it, this measure is completely opposed to the bill's intended purpose in its misguided attempt to get more people to give their time to charitable causes. It would increase the administrative workload for volunteers. Charities have an essential role to play by providing valuable services to vulnerable people. While this particular bill is clearly flawed, our Conservative government fully supports the work of the charitable sector and provides it with significant support. In fact, tax support for registered charities in Canada is considered to be among the most generous in the world, providing almost \$2.7 billion in tax assistance in 2010.

Since 2006, we have introduced countless measures to make the tax system easier on charities by easing the administrative burden and cutting red tape, cracking down on fraud and introducing more ways for Canadians to give.

● (1125)

For example, in budget 2010 we significantly reformed the disbursement quota rules for charities by reducing administrative complexity and helping organizations focus their time and resources on the people in need. In budget 2011, we brought in a range of measures designed to combat fraud and abuse in the charitable sector, increasing Canadians' confidence that their donations would go toward supporting legitimate charities and would be used for charitable purposes. However, there is always more we can do, and I know this from my colleagues who sit on the House finance committee, where they have been hard at work studying ways to further increase charitable donations.

I take this opportunity to recognize and thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo for his Motion No. 559, adopted by Parliament in March 2011, which inspired our Conservative government to request that the finance committee undertake this study. I am pleased to report to the members of this House that the committee has heard from more than 50 witnesses, held half a dozen meetings and met with Canadian volunteers from all across the country. Charities have had the opportunity to make their voices heard, bringing forward important proposals on how our government could make things a little easier for volunteer organizations to do their work, along with innovative ideas to encourage Canadians to give even more of their time and hard-earned money.

However, not once in the course of this study did Canada's charities suggest anything even close to resembling what the NDP member is advancing here today. Not once did they propose a tax credit, which is contrary to the essence of service and the spirit of volunteerism, and not once did they recommend that the government saddle them with more red tape, which would make it difficult and costly to provide Canadians with the services and support on which they rely. In fact, Ruth MacKenzie, chairman and CEO of Volunteer Canada, a pre-eminent national voice on volunteerism since 1977, has lamented that this bill's sponsor never bothered to get in touch with her organization. Not only that, but Volunteer Canada is clearly opposed. Ms. MacKenzie stated:

Our thoughts on this bill are in line with our general thoughts on the broader issue of tax incentives for volunteering—that it would not be something we'd support.

Mark Blumberg, a noted lawyer in the field of charities and non-profit law agrees. I believe his words sum it up nicely, when he says, "I wish they would spend some more time consulting with the sector before introducing private members bills ostensibly to the benefit of the sector".

Our Conservative government is dedicated to ensuring that charitable organizations, whatever their purpose, have the tools they need to do their work. What they do not need is a costly duplicative tax break for volunteers, pitting charities against one another and creating needless red tape without benefiting the sector or the Canadians it serves.

I look forward to the finance committee's report, and I am confident that its recommendations will help our government build on its outstanding record of support for charities.

•(1130)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill, which I support, is to recognize the value of volunteer work. Providing volunteers with a tax credit in respect of travel expenses is an excellent way to do that. Organizations across the country are working hard to increase volunteerism.

This bill also provides an opportunity to improve the relationship between government and the volunteer sector, a relationship that could do with some improvement because the volunteer sector has been neglected for too many years. A more strategic relationship would support volunteerism. This bill could be a starting point for that conversation.

We must recognize how important this sector is to vulnerable populations, particularly in times of crisis. Consider the 1929 crash and, more recently, the record floods that devastated the Montérégie region in 2011. Thousands of volunteers lent a helping hand to the victims and the cleanup effort.

This front-line sector needs human resources because it meets the urgent needs of vulnerable populations. It mitigates the effects of crises, austerity measures and economic slowdowns like the one we are experiencing now through the commitment of the volunteers and the services and support they provide.

However, the sector faces major challenges that must be addressed before they begin to threaten its viability. By supporting volunteerism, the government would be investing in the common good and the greater welfare of the community, as well as in social integration and participation.

Volunteers give their time to vulnerable populations and help people in need. They make our communities better places to live. Historically, volunteerism has always been about people helping people to meet a community's needs.

This bill would provide from \$500 to \$1,500 to volunteers who perform at least 130 hours of eligible volunteer services and make at least 12 trips in order to do so during the taxation year. I believe that people who volunteer for organizations that help people with disabilities are deserving of at least a little recognition on the part of the government. People volunteer for organizations whose mission is to help those in need.

We know that not enough volunteers are being recruited. Therefore, we must encourage people to volunteer by acknowledging their experiences, sacrifices and the benefits to communities. Most organizations that rely on volunteers work with vulnerable populations.

Many organizations could not operate without volunteers. It is difficult to recruit volunteers, and this jeopardizes the activities of organizations and their very existence. Charitable organizations that provide social services have a growing need for the unpaid work of volunteers.

In times of economic slowdown and fiscal austerity, volunteering takes on a whole new meaning. Helping those in need allows people to put into practice the principle of solidarity. In such times, having the help of as many people as possible is crucial. In difficult times,

### *Private Members' Business*

the demand for services of some organizations is at its peak. That is the case for food banks, soup kitchens, emergency shelters and many other organizations.

The financial uncertainty of charitable and non-profit organizations is alarming. The most recent recession and the government's austerity measures have wreaked havoc. With the weakening of the social safety net, people are turning to such organizations for help.

There is a need for more volunteers and more volunteer hours. Thus, it is crucial that the importance of volunteerism, of giving of oneself, be recognized in these difficult times. Volunteerism has an impact on the quality of life of many Canadians and the vitality of many communities.

Volunteerism is a basic component of civic engagement that is closely tied to the social and economic development of Canada. Volunteerism, especially when it comes to helping vulnerable groups in society, is most definitely a crucial form of community participation, and must be valued appropriately. Tangible measures must be taken to attach value to civic engagement.

There is no denying that, in recent years, stagnating donations of time and money have posed a challenge.

•(1135)

I also want to point out that a small proportion of volunteers account for the largest proportion of volunteer hours.

Organizations have fewer and fewer resources, yet demand for their services continues to grow. The viability of the sector is in jeopardy right now.

As a result, it is time for the government to reconsider its relationship with the volunteer sector, and this bill opens the door to a discussion.

The government should develop a strategic approach. Our policies and regulations for the volunteer sector are lagging far behind those of other countries. It is time to correct this situation and for the government to stop neglecting this sector. After all, Canada's volunteer sector is the second largest in the world, representing 7% of the GDP.

Volunteers make a significant contribution to society, but the Canadian government has yet to provide proper recognition for this civic engagement. We must recognize the contributions volunteers make to our country's economic and social cohesion. The economic value of volunteering is widely recognized and measurable. When we value volunteer work, we acknowledge the value-added feature that it represents. In all types of charitable missions and volunteer organizations, volunteers play an important role in helping to strengthen and energize local communities, which benefits the country as a whole.

*Private Members' Business*

Organizations that recruit volunteers recognize the importance and value of what these volunteers contribute. Now is the time for the government to do so. We need a vision for this country's volunteer sector, and it is up to the government to develop one. There is a lot to be done in our communities and we must support those who want to make things better for the most vulnerable members of their communities. These people want to help improve quality of life in their communities. They are pillars of our society and we must enable them to continue to actively participate in our country's social life.

If the federal government has even the slightest interest in the volunteer sector, it must demonstrate that interest by taking real action and providing support for the people who give their time to charitable organizations in their communities. It is also known that, in some cases, the volunteer sector is able to reach certain segments of society more easily and more effectively than the government can.

The services provided by volunteers can thus meet the needs of certain segments better than services provided by the government.

Part of the reason why the volunteer sector exists is to fill a gap; however, that gap is becoming increasingly difficult to fill in the absence of real action by the government. By taking real action to promote volunteer work, the government would also promote community development.

Recruitment is often problematic for many organizations, which threatens their sustainability and that of this sector as a whole.

In these times of fiscal restraint, when thousands of households are living in situations of insecurity and poverty, the demand for such services will increase and must be accompanied by practical measures from the government.

The volunteer sector has deep roots in Canadian society, and it must be allowed to reach its full potential, which it is not doing currently. We must stop underestimating the volunteer sector's contribution to society and to the well-being of Canadians.

That is why the government must strengthen its ties with this sector. One good thing about this bill is that it brings up important issues, such as how to get started on strengthening these ties, by initiating a strategic discussion on the relationship that could be developed between the public and volunteer sectors, and potentially the private sector as well.

This discussion must take place if we want to guarantee that we have a rigorous, active and sustainable volunteer sector.

Naturally, we know that volunteer work in our communities is becoming increasingly important. Volunteers are people who are extremely involved. We find them in every area, helping people with disabilities, helping with sports, and so on. Volunteer work plays a huge role in our communities and small towns. It really is very important. We must ensure that the government takes practical measures and helps these people and organizations to have more backup because right now they do not have any. Asking people to take money out of their own pockets in order to volunteer is no way to encourage them.

We are thus of the opinion that real action needs to be taken.

● (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-399.

It is a costly proposal. It would seek to amend the Income Tax Act and create a new non-refundable tax credit for select volunteers and individuals who perform volunteer service, although it is unclear from the bill exactly whom it would benefit.

Let me begin by saying that there is no question that charities and non-profit organizations contribute to all aspects of Canadian life, including education, health, faith, human rights and the environment, as well as arts and culture. Not only that, I think we can all agree that charities and the volunteers who support them face unique challenges during uncertain economic times.

However, not only is there absolutely no evidence that this costly bill will engage more Canadians in helping others, but charities themselves have also gone so far as to suggest that it may harm volunteerism and result in fewer people giving their time to those in need.

Let us first look at the cost. It is important when members of this House are considering legislation for them to consider the cost of legislation. The opposition has simply deferred this, estimating that it would cost roughly \$430 million annually. That is a lot of money. For the people of my riding that would represent about \$4,000 per constituent or thereabouts. The would come from their pockets. Even worse, Canadian charities are questioning the wisdom of the idea, as costly as it is.

According to Volunteer Alberta, the voice of volunteerism in that province, a province that the Liberal Party may not want to listen to but I think has an important voice here in Parliament, the proposed tax credit could actually reduce volunteer motivation by attaching a tax benefit and an economic value to something that is otherwise altruistic. That really is at the heart of volunteerism. It is something that we all do because we want to give back. There is something innate within Canadians in actually wanting to help each other. We actually want to be there for our neighbours.

Not everyone volunteers. It is concerning in that regard that some service clubs have seen declining memberships. However, I do not think this is a sign of the people involved seeking to be reimbursed or some kind of cost return to their volunteering. It may be a bit of a statement about how our society has become busier and people perhaps living lives that are a little less interpersonal than before. Frankly we all act interact so much digitally now, with text messages seeming to replace phone calls and Facebook replacing a lot of time people might otherwise spend congregating with their neighbours.



*Private Members' Business*

Maybe these are things that we should be looking at in considering how we can restart the growth in volunteerism and service clubs. Nonetheless, I do not think I have ever heard anyone who volunteers or anyone from a service club indicating that they would do more or support their community more if someone would just pay them to do it.

Since 2006, we have demonstrated our commitment to strengthening the charitable sector by enhancing the incentives for people to donate to registered charities and making a number of improvements in the way charities are regulated. These measures include the elimination of the capital gains tax on donations of publicly listed securities to charitable organizations, public foundations and private foundations; the elimination of the capital gains tax on donations of ecologically sensitive lands to public conservation charities; and the reform of the disbursement quota to reduce the administrative burden on charities.

This has really worked, whether it was the hospital foundation in Peterborough that has raised a very significant amount of money based on these specific tax changes, or the local university, or local museums that have raised significant funds as well. These have helped charitable organizations.

Then of course there is the donation of ecologically sensitive land. The Otonabee Region Conservation Authority, which oversees very significant wetlands in my part of the province, has in fact received donations of land.

• (1145)

These changes have helped and are bringing about very significant societal benefits.

I am very fortunate and I think a lot of us feel the same way. I have said many times in my own riding that a city and a town are really a collection of buildings, streets, infrastructure and businesses. However, what makes them a community is the people, the people who come together to help each other. I come from such a strong community where volunteerism is something that we do, where donating to charity is something that we do disproportionately, and I am proud of it.

We could all say of our communities that there are people who go above and beyond, because they feel it is their calling. One of the things that I am afraid of, frankly, is that we will start to put some of these folks into a category where they should receive a benefit for what they are doing. The benefit they are getting from what they are doing cannot be measured in dollars and cents or in tax credits. It is a benefit they receive from the hearts of others, a benefit they receive by knowing they have made the community better. Many of them do not want recognition at all. That is one of the remarkable things about so many volunteers. They just want to know in their own hearts that they have made a difference, and believe me, they do.

Not only would the bill place an undue administrative burden on charities, but also, volunteer organizations across the country have spoken out against the idea of a tax credit. For example, Ruth MacKenzie, the president and CEO of Volunteer Canada, the respected national voice of Canadian volunteerism since 1977, has said:

I don't think tax incentives are necessarily the way to encourage it. More importantly, I don't think it's going to increase the quality of the contribution volunteers make or the degree organizations benefit from volunteer engagement.

Not only does Volunteer Canada oppose this costly and ineffective NDP proposal, but it has been quick to point out that the charitable sector does not appear to have been consulted at all by the NDP in its hasty drafting of this legislation, which could actually impede charities' ability to serve vulnerable Canadians.

While decrying the bill in a recent interview with CharityVillage, Ms. MacKenzie agreed with the government's position on the bill, noting that "no one...directly consulted with me or Volunteer Canada" about Bill C-399.

I think this is a core function of ours as members of Parliament. I do not doubt that in its conception, the intent of the bill was that it would do something very positive for people who volunteer. I will not impugn the motives of the person who brought forward the bill; I just happen to think it is a bad bill.

It is really essential that when we bring forward legislation that will have a direct impact on a sector, especially a sector as large as the charitable sector in Canada, one that is relied upon by so many as a sign of the strength of our communities, that Parliamentarians consult with them. It is clear that consultations have not taken place.

When I speak to volunteers in my riding, they are not seeking this kind of tax credit. If the government is to make that kind of \$430 million investment, they would like it to go to the people they are volunteering for, not themselves. They are not seeking that, which is remarkable.

The other thing that I think is quite profound is that here we are debating an NDP tax credit, a very expensive one, of \$430 million, when it is more often the case that the NDP are simply bringing forward tax increases, such as the idea of a \$21 billion carbon tax that would take money from every Canadian, including from volunteers and charities. There is also the potential increase in the HST that has been talked about by one of the NDP members from Toronto, the member for Trinity—Spadina. The NDP talks about tax and spending increases constantly. It seems at odds with that for NDP members to be contemplating a tax reduction in this sector. It is absolutely ironic that this is what we are debating.

We believe that taxes should be as low as possible for every single Canadian, and we believe in supporting the charitable sector.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Repentigny introduced a bill that is very important for all volunteers in Canada. The purpose of Bill C-399 is to provide a tax credit of a minimum of \$500 and a maximum of \$1,500, in respect of travel expenses to individuals who perform a minimum of 130 hours of eligible volunteer services and make at least 12 trips in order to do so during the taxation year.

*Private Members' Business*

I would like to thank my hon. colleague for introducing this bill, which, I hope, will receive support from the other parties in the House, because volunteer work is often what makes our communities so dynamic. This work, which is done by very generous people either out of charity or solidarity, strengthens ties between people and builds on the values of communal living. There is no doubt in my mind that the volunteers in my riding deserve a tax credit like the one proposed by my hon. colleague, especially those who live in the regions and who have to travel in order to help people.

Whether they are helping young people, seniors, those less fortunate or even veterans, volunteers in Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel give of their time to help organize celebrations, to help with fundraising or to commemorate important sporting, environmental or cultural events, and they therefore deserve to be celebrated, encouraged and thanked. They often work very hard and have to travel a lot. It is possible that they can no longer afford to volunteer.

Papineau has the CR3A, or Comité régional du troisième âge de Papineau, whose mission is to help seniors remain in their homes with respect and dignity, and to end social isolation among seniors. Seniors who still live at home have an even harder time in the regions, since they can often no longer drive. Thus, it is very hard for them to get out of the house to go and see their family and friends. Our wonderful volunteers go and get them and take them to the grocery store, to see their friends, or even just out for coffee. It is very important to end the isolation that seniors sometimes fall victim to when they cannot get around on their own. As long as they can take care of their homes, they do not necessarily have to move into a big institution or seniors' home. It is better for seniors to stay at home and maintain their dignity.

The Centre d'action bénévole d'Argenteuil provides almost the same services. The Coup de pouce co-operative in Argenteuil is made up of volunteers who are trying to improve the lives of people who are isolated because of their age or a physical limitation. It can be very difficult for people who live in the regions to get around because of the large distances that have to be covered.

It is important to point out that this bill takes transportation into account in the granting of the tax credit. In my opinion, that is the most important part of this bill. Of course, volunteer work is already demanding, but people really put their hearts into it. However, the travel required to help others in remote and rural areas is often not taken into consideration. We do not think about how much travel is required. Whatever the cause or objective, volunteers in my region have to travel long distances to do volunteer work.

Sometimes really dedicated volunteers simply can no longer afford the cost of gas, particularly in difficult economic times. Yet it is in more difficult economic times that we need volunteers the most. That is why people who dedicate their time and talents to helping the most vulnerable members of our society must be recognized. We must also encourage other people to get involved and lend them a hand. These volunteers, who are often retired, get involved because they love their community and their fellow citizens, and it is true that they will do this work with or without a tax credit.

• (1155)

However, without these people, life in our cities and towns would not be the same. We must therefore recognize their work and

encourage this type of involvement. We must actively respond to the challenges faced by the volunteer sector in these difficult economic times. For example, the cost of gas is increasing, and we are not doing anything to go to the people who are isolated and help them to get out. I am using this example because it clearly demonstrates how this tax credit will really support this type of volunteer work and will allow volunteers to travel more in the regions to help the less fortunate.

Clearly, vulnerable people have even more need of help and volunteers when times are tough, but right now, the government is abandoning these people. They often have to turn to charity. But volunteers are also being affected by the difficult economic times, which are forcing them to limit their volunteer work when needs are on the rise.

The total amount of donations and volunteer hours has not really changed since 2007. However, during this same period, needs have skyrocketed. For example, the number of people who need food aid is on the rise. The NDP wants to tackle this problem. This motion is the first step in the fight to support the volunteer sector.

I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of this bill, which will really help our rural communities in particular.

**Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the members of all parties represented in the House. I would like to thank my honourable NDP colleagues for their support, but I would also like to thank the Liberal and Conservative members. To me, the fact that we sometimes disagree and have different approaches is essential. I also think that this debate about what is happening with organizations across Canada is essential.

Bill C-399, which I call Madeleine Nadeau's bill after my grandmother, is a very important and well-drafted bill, despite what they might say. People have thrown around numbers like \$430 million, but the fact is that the Department of Finance and the Parliamentary Budget Officer assessed the cost of the bill at \$130 million. Those numbers are miles apart.

The whole point of this bill is to recognize a problem and try to solve it. Across Canada, volunteer numbers are stagnant. Most of the volunteers I talked to during the consultations I held told me that the reason they stop volunteering is that they can no longer do it. Volunteers pay, and that does not make sense. Volunteers provide vitally important services. They are the last bastion of our society. Volunteering produces real results, and the people who do it, who put their hearts into it, have to draw on their own funds just to show up. They are not asking to be paid or to receive tax credits. They just want us to come up with solutions.

MPs were asked to support sending this bill to committee so that committee members can study the range of problems in order to amend and improve the bill so that it meets the needs of all Canadians.

*Government Orders*

Last week, on November 15, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting with approximately 50 organizations, just over 120 volunteers. That is the point I want to raise. This meeting was attended not by volunteers and organizations, but by the volunteers that make up these organizations that they manage on a day-to-day basis. These people were very clear about their support for the bill and said that it represents a step forward. They are looking to move in a certain direction and to get results.

Institution or volunteer? Machine or person? In this place we often have this philosophical debate. The government always says that it provides support to organizations, as though the answer to any problem was to throw money at it in the hope that perhaps the people, the poor citizens, will finally be happy with the results. However, no organization, no foundation can exist without the support of people, without the contribution of volunteers. They are the ones suffering at this time.

Our population is aging, the number of young people getting involved is declining, the economy is very fragile and people have less and less money in their pockets. The government will soon introduce Bill C-458, which has a \$400 million price tag. We applaud the effort that has been made. The bill would establish a national charities week and would allow for an additional three months to collect even more money, even though people do not have more.

We will get results by encouraging volunteerism in the community and a human presence.

Knowledge and expertise are important parts of philanthropy and volunteering. Many people at the end of their career give their time and knowledge and share all of the experience they have gained over the years. They are the ones we want to have in organizations because of what they contribute.

In our region, a project to help animals did not succeed, while the same project was a success in another region because of the expertise of the volunteers who got involved. They were former bank directors, committed people who knew how to get money. They managed to purchase a building and create an entity because they invested their time. They never calculated how much money was required. They made the most of what they had.

In conclusion, Bill C-399 is a bill for volunteers. What I am hearing in this House is that we support volunteers and are listening to them. We want the bill to be sent to committee so that we can find the solutions together. Let us work together: that is the message we are sending. We must not use cost and red tape as excuses. On the contrary, the bill was designed to put the onus on volunteers to claim the credit if they are interested.

• (1200)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 12:03 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 28, 2012, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1205)

[English]

### NORTHERN JOBS AND GROWTH ACT

**Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC)** moved that Bill C-47, An Act to enact the Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act and the Northwest Territories Surface Rights Board Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, our government's priorities reflect the primary concerns of all Canadians, which are jobs and economic growth. Northerners, like all Canadians, want good jobs and access to the economic opportunities that will allow them to prosper for generations to come. The north is home to world-class reserves of natural resources, representing tremendous economic opportunities, not just for northerners but for all Canadians. Our government is committed to doing its part to allow northerners to take advantage of those opportunities.

During his recent trip to the north, the Prime Minister stated, "Our government is committed to ensuring that northerners benefit from the tremendous natural resource reserves that are found in their region". For the benefits to flow, it is necessary to get resource projects up and running in an effective and responsible way and to put agreements in place with territorial governments to ensure that revenues generated by the initiatives stay up north.

Since 2007, we have taken concrete steps toward this objective. For instance, in 2007 we announced Canada's northern strategy, which recognizes the unique place the north holds in Canada's great history and the important role that it must play in the future for our country. The northern strategy is focused on fulfilling four key goals: first, exercising our Arctic sovereignty; second, promoting economic and social development in the north; third, protecting the north's environmental heritage; and fourth, improving and devolving territorial governance. Building on these priorities, we launched our action plan to improve northern regulatory regimes in 2010. The action plan committed our government to addressing some of the regulatory impediments to job creation in the north.

*Government Orders*

On November 6, 2012, our government introduced the northern jobs and growth act. This act would fulfill legislative obligations flowing from land claim agreements and it would contribute to improving the conditions for investment that will lead to jobs for Canadians while ensuring the north's resources are developed in a sustainable manner.

An improved regulatory regime will allow aboriginals, communities and others to better participate in decision-making concerning the use, management and conservation of land, water and natural resources in the north. We have been working with our northern partners to develop such a regulatory regime. I am pleased to report that we are well on our way to success.

Bill C-47 represents an historic contribution to an improved regulatory regime for the north. Through this bill, we would create a regulatory regime for resource development in the north that is consistent across the three territories, that is based on sound science, that has clearly defined timelines, that safeguards the environmental health and heritage of the region, that is founded on balanced input from the people who have a stake in development projects, that includes meaningful consultation with and contributions from aboriginal people, that reflects the intent of the land claim agreements, and that puts northerners in an ideal position to reap the benefits of resource development, more well-paying jobs, increasing levels of prosperity and greater long-term economic growth.

As Jane Groenewegen, the MLA for Hay River South in the Northwest Territories said following the introduction of Bill C-47:

But what we have in place here, right now in the Northwest Territories, does not work, so good on the federal government for finally figuring out a way to streamline this and let's get on with business.

We have had support from others as well. Nunavut Premier Eva Aariak called Bill C-47 "an important milestone in establishing an effective and streamlined regime for Inuit and government to manage resource development in Nunavut together".

• (1210)

The private sector, too, has recognized the importance of this legislation. The Mining Association of Canada's Pierre Gratton said:

The new regulatory regime will help to enhance the territory's economic competitiveness for mineral investment, while ensuring projects go through a robust assessment and permitting process.

Those are just a few examples of the support for our northern jobs and growth act.

We believe that we have garnered such strong support from the people it would impact the most because we developed it by listening to northerners. Our government recognizes that northern Canada is unique and that resource development must be pursued in a manner that reflects the political, economic and cultural aspirations of the northern people, and that reflects the unique environmental challenges of northern development.

With this legislation, we would fulfill our legislative obligations to the people of Nunavut under the landmark 1993 Nunavut land claims agreement. Specifically, Bill C-47 would fulfill the Government of Canada's obligation to enact legislation governing the development of land use plans and the conduct of environmental

assessment processes for resource development projects. With Bill C-47, we would meet our final legislative obligation related to the agreement by legislating the roles and responsibilities of the Nunavut Planning Commission and the Nunavut Impact Review Board and clearly defining the powers, duties and functions of those two bodies. This would provide the legal certainty and predictability required for resource managers and industry, as well as ensure the sustainable development of northern resources, while promoting economic development by boosting investor confidence. This would provide long-term benefits for Nunavummiut.

Furthermore, the approach proposed by Bill C-47 would establish the Nunavut Planning Commission as the single point of entry for all projects that seek approval. In addition, Bill C-47 would make it possible for territorial and federal governments and Inuit organizations to manage northern resources and lands wisely. The bill would affirm the power of governments and Inuit organizations to nominate members to the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Nunavut Planning Commission.

We would also fulfill our obligations to the people of the Northwest Territories by using Bill C-47 to establish the Northwest Territories surface rights board. The board would contribute to greater certainty and predictability for long-term economic growth and job creation in the territory. I want to make it clear that the board would not grant mineral or oil and gas rights. The Northwest Territories surface rights board would, on application, make orders related to terms, conditions and compensation only where it has been requested to do so and only after such rights have been previously issued. By putting in place the board and the rules under which it would operate, Bill C-47 would fulfill the Government of Canada's obligations arising from the Gwich'in comprehensive land claim agreement and the Sahtu Dene and Métis comprehensive land claim agreement, both of which refer specifically to the need for the creation of a surface rights board.

The provisions of Bill C-47 are also consistent with the other two comprehensive land claims and self-government agreements in the Northwest Territories: the Tlicho agreement and the Inuvialuit final agreement. Establishing this new board means that the Government of Canada has fulfilled its obligations to the aboriginal peoples of the region.

That is not all. Since orders of the Northwest Territories surface rights board would be final and binding, rights holders, land owners and occupants would have a powerful incentive to negotiate and agree on terms, conditions and compensation for access that would benefit all parties.

*Government Orders*

•(1215)

Most importantly, the establishment of a surface rights board in the Northwest Territories would not only fulfill land claim agreement obligations, but it has the potential to improve timely access to surface and subsurface resources. It would also increase the predictability and consistency of the northern resource management regime, which in turn would lead to long-term economic growth and job creation in the territory.

The benefits of setting up this new process go far beyond the limits of smoother transactions. By setting up the Northwest Territories surface rights board, Bill C-47 would create a single, clear, balanced and fair dispute settlement mechanism for access disputes for all of the Northwest Territories.

The Government of Canada has worked with our northern partners to develop this improved regulatory regime. In a very real sense, the bill before us is created by and for northerners. To create the legislation that governs planning and project assessment in Nunavut, we worked closely with a variety of people and groups throughout the territory. The focus of our efforts was the Nunavut legislative working group, which comprised the Government of Canada, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and the Government of Nunavut, supported by the participation of the Nunavut Planning Commission and the Nunavut Impact Review Board. Our government also consulted with the public, with industry officials and with representatives of local governments, aboriginal organizations and environmental organizations.

The same extensive consultation went into developing the Northwest Territories surface rights board. Beginning in 2010, we distributed a series of draft legislative proposals to our counterparts in the territorial government, representatives of many industry associations and leaders of 13 aboriginal groups and governments.

We followed up with information and consultation sessions with aboriginal groups and governments with settled claims, those negotiating claims and transboundary groups with interests in the Northwest Territories. We also met and consulted with industry associations, environmental non-government organizations and the Northwest Territories government.

Bill C-47 responds to a chorus of other groups calling for action. Territorial governments have asked for better coordination and clearly defined time periods for project reviews. Resource companies have urged us to make the review process more streamlined and predictable. All Canadians want to make sure that promising opportunities will no longer be delayed or lost due to complex, unpredictable and time-consuming regulatory process.

So much is at stake. Canada has tremendous potential in minerals, oil and gas. As The Conference Board of Canada points out:

The world is hungry for Canada's resources, and much of what we have—gold, silver, copper, zinc, diamonds, oil, and gas...are to be found in our vast Northern spaces...

The Prime Minister drove home that point during his recent annual visit to Canada's north. He said,

Those who want to see the future of this country should look north. ...that great national dream—the development of northern resources—no longer sleeps. It is not down the road. It is happening now.

Right now the mining and energy sectors account for 25% of territorial GDP and directly employ 5,000 northerners. The future looks bright.

•(1220)

Currently, there are 25 advanced mining projects in Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. These projects, worth more than \$38 billion in potential new investment, are awaiting federal regulatory approval. If developed, they would create more than 8,000 new direct full-time jobs, the majority of which would go to northerners. Thousands of additional jobs would be created for northerners in sectors that serve and support large-scale mining operations. Not only would this create employment, but development would have a positive multiplier effect in the region and in the rest of Canada by contributing to long-term economic growth and prosperity.

Bill C-47 is the way we turn that potential into reality. Let us seize that promise, and let us generate more jobs, increased prosperity and greater long-term economic growth in the north. Let us fulfill our obligations to northerners. Let us adopt Bill C-47.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, New Democrats have some concerns with the fact that two very specific acts were lumped together in one piece of legislation. It certainly may cause some difficulty at committee. We need to have a fulsome discussion of this particular bill at committee, because there are many aspects of it that are extremely important to northerners.

I want to ask the minister a question. Quite obviously, land use plans are an integral part of the Nunavut Act. Over the past dozen years, the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act has been implemented, and one of the provisions in that act was land use plans in the various regions of the Northwest Territories. Every group that has looked at it, including the government's own independent consultant who looked at environmental assessment throughout the north, recognized that these land use plans had to be put in place in order for the legislation to work properly. However, to this day, there are no land use plans in place in the Northwest Territories, and the government is considering other changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act that would change the very structure of environmental assessment in the north.

How can the minister guarantee that this Nunavut Act is going to work in a good fashion if the fundamental principle of it is to get the land use plans in place? The federal government has been incredibly slow and inactive on this file. We have a situation where the legislation looks good, but how can we guarantee that the implementation of the legislation is going to move any faster in Nunavut than what has occurred in the Northwest Territories?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure where the member is coming from with his question. There is growth in the GDP in Yukon and Nunavut, and the only jurisdiction in Canada in which there was a shrinkage in GDP was the Northwest Territories, which is the very area the member represents. If anybody has a vested interest in streamlining regulations, it is the member for Western Arctic.

The legislation we are putting forward has no critics in Nunavut or Yukon. This is widely accepted as a straightforward proposal. There is one issue. In the NWT, there is a series of comprehensive land claim agreements and some unsettled areas and we are overlapping that with some serious devolution negotiations right now with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

When I met less than two weeks ago with some of the aboriginal groups in the Northwest Territories, it became very clear that they are at the point of adopting their land use plans. We are looking at major progress there. I do not see this as any kind of impediment. All I see is great progress and great excitement in terms of this legislation.

• (1225)

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his leadership, particularly in this area. I am thinking back to the work on the Eeyou marine agreement. The member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou has worked with us to move this kind of legislation, which considers large swaths of land in the northern parts of the provinces for the purposes of the northern jobs and growth act in the western Arctic and across Nunavut. We know there are challenges in the north. Notwithstanding something like a carbon tax, which would increase expenses and operations in the north, there are other things like land claims and the environment and of course regulatory frameworks that seek to strike a balance on a number of these issues. I wanted to take this opportunity to appreciate that and to then pose a question to the minister.

During the consultation process, we understand the Nunavut land claims agreements needed some amendments and that the Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. organization was required to accommodate some amendments. Would the minister elaborate on the agreement that was struck with NTI and Canada to ensure that the bill conforms with its land claim agreements, all for the purposes and super-ordinate goal of unlocking the potential for economic opportunity across vast regions of northern Canada?

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's question is a good example and illustration of the support this legislation has with respect to the Nunavut territory.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. is the organization that represents the Inuit in their land claims settlement. It worked very closely on this working group. It is my recollection that it had to make 21 changes to the land claims agreement in order to accommodate what this legislation is proposing. It did that more than willingly, which is what has allowed us to move forward, along with the co-operation of all of the other partners.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank both the minister and the parliamentary secretary for their roles and participation in this morning's dedication ceremony of the beautiful stained glass window in the outside foyer commemorating the apology for the residential schools and the efforts to reconcile that. It was a great ceremony.

However, I have a question about this legislation. Would the minister describe the extensive consultation process that took place leading specifically to the development of the bill in relation to the Nunavut planning and project assessment act? Would he share that consultation process with us?

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, work on the Nunavut planning and project assessment act began in 2002, so there has been over a decade of diligent negotiations. In my speech I spoke to the Nunavut legislative working group. Obviously, it was the major workhorse in getting this bill together in draft form in the summer of 2006.

There have been several iterations of the bill since 2006. Therefore, many people have had an opportunity to share in this legislation. There have been public meetings since that time. The industry sector also had a good chance to kick this around. I detect wholesale agreement that we have the best possible legislative package, in this case.

• (1230)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is a prime example of a mining economy. When the minister talks about our GDP going down this year, that is because the capital investment in the mines took place in the previous year.

We all know the mining industry in the Northwest Territories. We understand its pitfalls and benefits. However, the minister is denigrating the Northwest Territories on its economic performance, when it is really about how the mining industry works. When diamond mines invest hundreds of millions of dollars in one year to do their underground works and then do not invest the next year, yes, we see a drop in the GDP.

Does the minister not agree that is the sort of work we have to deal with in the Northwest Territories and the mining industry throughout the north?

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, there are many statistics out there.

Recently, I met with members from the Mining Association of Canada and there were representatives there from the north. It is very clear that the economic indicators are of concern for NWT and that is why they are embracing the legislation, which is one of the reasons we are starting to see renewed confidence.

I think this is all good. I am certainly a booster of NWT, the NWT government and the aboriginal organizations, which are working with a spirit of co-operation that I would say is enlightened and progressive.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this particular bill. It is a bill that is very important to the people of the north. As a northern representative, I look forward to dealing with our northern regulatory issues in good fashion, in a fashion that can promote development but can also protect our environment.

Northerners have lived through all of that. There is no question that in the Northwest Territories we understand the nature of the mining industry. As I mentioned to the minister earlier, it is an up-and-down industry. Mines are created. There is huge capital investment in the mines. Afterwards there is an ongoing process with operations and maintenance of those facilities. That creates an up-and-down nature in the gross domestic product of our very small territory. Our territory has 45,000 people in it. Adding in a very large capital investment causes the GDP to rise. We are accustomed to that. We have lived through these boom-and-bust cycles with the mining industry over and over again.

It is very important that we understand the mining industry. It is very important that we know what mine plans do to our economy. It is very important to understand how much mining will benefit the north and where that line can be drawn. When the minister talks about 8,000 jobs in the mining industry going to northerners, he is not really being accurate. It is pretty hard to fill the existing mining jobs in the Northwest Territories with northerners. We run about 50%, and we are topped up. We are topped up in the mines that we have already.

We do have some room to add on mining jobs in the Northwest Territories. However, when we talk about 8,000 jobs, we are talking about increasing our population by a very large extent if we want to fill those with northerners. When the population of the Northwest Territories is increased, enormous pressure is put on the government because the cost of living and the cost of providing facilities in the north is so high.

We view mining very carefully. It is important for our economy. We live with the results of mining. When it comes to the environment, throughout the Northwest Territories we live with the results of mining. We live with the results of bad decisions, decisions improperly made or made too quickly. Those decisions have led us to projects such as the Giant Mine, the worst environmental nightmare in Canada. The only solution for the 270,000 tonnes of arsenic underground is to perpetually freeze it in place so that future generations can deal with it.

The government is on the hook for billions of dollars for the Giant Mine over the foreseeable future. What we see there is what happens when environmental assessment does not work right. What we see with other projects is the same thing. We can look at the Pine Point Mine and the result of that. There is no money left for reclamation. The site was left abandoned. The investment in the community was abandoned.

These are things that we live with in the Northwest Territories. We understand mining very well. We understand its relationship to the environment. Probably more so, the Yukon has the same understanding. Nunavut is just moving into an understanding of mining and how it will work out in its vast territory. I am glad to see that the Nunavut land claims agreement is moving forward, considering that

it has been in preparation for almost two decades. We can perhaps understand the frustration of those people who live in Nunavut, in getting their legislation in place and in understanding how that is going to work.

That is one of the reasons why I would love to see the bill split. Nunavut could move forward very quickly. There would be minor amendments, which we understand people are interested in making. That would open an opportunity for Nunavut's people to have a better hold on their regulatory process, a process that, as I pointed out earlier in my question to the minister, is focused on land use planning.

● (1235)

Land use planning is the key element. It is certainly very important. However, we have seen little progress in the Northwest Territories on approving land use plans, which have been worked on for a dozen years. Whether in the Sahtu, Gwich'in or Inuvialuit areas, land use plans need to be developed. In the unsettled claim area of the Dehcho in the Northwest Territories, an interim land use plan was proposed to deal with the issues. That has not found success with the federal government.

We want to see the bill move forward as quickly as possible. It is a start in the right direction for Nunavut. However, let us hope that when it is put in place the land use plans come very quickly. These land use plans are not written in stone. They are amendable over a certain period of time so that people can adjust them accordingly, so that they work for people in a good fashion. That is exactly what should happen with them. Let us go ahead with Nunavut and get that through.

With regard to the Northwest Territories and the surface rights board, it is a much more difficult issue in some ways. Unlike Nunavut and the Yukon, we have unsettled areas where there has not been an agreement to have a surface rights board. That is not in place yet. That has not been negotiated between the traditional land-owners, the first nations of the Dehcho or the Akaitcho, which is quite a large area of the Northwest Territories. Therefore, what we would be doing with the act is putting in place legislation that has not gone through the process that it has for the Tlicho, the Sahtu and the Gwich'in, where this was negotiated and agreed to by both parties. What we have is a situation where it is going to be put in place, regardless.

Within the bill there is a clause that says the minister must review the act upon the creation of any new land agreement with any party in the Northwest Territories. However, is that review sufficient for the people of the Northwest Territories, for the Dehcho and Akaitcho people, who are still negotiating their land claims? Is it sufficient that this would simply be subject to a review? Without qualifications to a review, without understanding what a review could accomplish for those two groups, that question needs to be further outlined in committee. It needs to be answered for a very important part of the Northwest Territories. There are things that have to be done there.

*Government Orders*

In the briefing, it was indicated that the municipalities have not been engaged on this issue. There was a feeling from the department that they did not have a role here. That is not correct because we have existing mines that are located within municipal boundaries, so there are some surface rights that extend into municipal areas. Therefore, access is important to municipalities. As landowners they have to be part of it. They do have a role here. Consultation has not taken place with them, so we will have to do that at committee as well, in order to understand how municipalities feel about and understand the legislation, which could affect their role.

There are private landowners as well, although not many in the Northwest Territories, that may have some interest in the legislation. Hopefully, we can accomplish this in a fulsome committee examination. We could do the work of government for them at committee. I think that is fair enough.

• (1240)

The minister says this is all about economic development, that the government in effect is passing environmental legislation all about economic development. Is there not something wrong with that statement? Should we not be passing environmental legislation to protect the environment, to ensure for future generations that projects are conducted in a good fashion that yields a good result, and that when companies leave their disturbances are taken care of? That is just what needs to be done.

Good development also ties in with the needs of the people of the region. In the three territories, we have a problem, because we are not provinces. We cannot go to developers and tell them that we want a road in an area as well, that we will work with them to create the infrastructure because it will benefit our people later on. No, under the NWT Act, any new road has to be approved by the federal government; it is a federal government responsibility.

How do we see it playing out in the Northwest Territories? With the diamond mines, which are a great economic development opportunity for the Northwest Territories and for Canada, we have seen very little public infrastructure developed.

Now that fuel prices have gone through the roof, companies are saying that they cannot make a go of it in the future with these prices. However, if we had done it in an orderly, planned fashion, we would have put in hydro-electric power in the Slave province area where the three diamond mines exist right now. That did not happen. The federal government was in charge of that environmental assessment. It chose not to even examine hydro-electric power at the time in 1998, and now today the economy of those mines is suffering. The economy of the Northwest Territories has missed an opportunity to develop more infrastructure and more resources.

Therefore, resource development is a very important tool for human development as well. We miss the connection when we do not have a good say over development. When we do not take a long and careful look at how development would work, we miss the opportunity that could actually enhance and build our territories, which could also perhaps some day become provinces.

These are not areas that are simply set aside for resource development. That attitude should not prevail. The attitude should be one in which the north is for northern people and that they should be

served first by development, so that development works to enhance the lives of every single northerner. That is what we look at when we talk about development.

We can look at the past and see that there was one great example of a properly developed resource, although the company did not do a very good job after it finished. That was the Pine Point Mine. The company developed a hydro-electric system and a road and railway, and all of those legacy items remain today as part of the infrastructure and economy of the Northwest Territories.

We want to see that kind of development continue, but we do not want to see big holes in the ground filled with water that have an environmental impact. We have some real goals with environmental assessment, and they are not predicated on slamming things through the system but on careful planning. That is how we make success for the north. We do not make success simply by throwing the doors open, getting through the process as quickly as possible, getting the shovels in the ground as quickly as possible without planning carefully what we are doing.

I do not see that attitude from the government at all. I do not see that planning attitude implicit in what it is doing, and the federal government still holds all the cards when it comes to northern development.

We need to take the part of the legislation dealing with the proposed NWT Surface Rights Board and give it close examination in committee. That is where we want to go. We will find out there what people really think and how to make this work for us. That is our goal.

• (1245)

We had hoped that the bill could be split so that the territories could be dealt with as separate entities. We are not all the same. I do not agree with the minister's attitude that the three territories should be dealt with as one unit; we are not one unit.

Nunavut has one common government and one land claim. It has a system it has designed for itself. The Yukon has a completely different system of party politics, which has been established over many years. In the Northwest Territories, we are different. We have six major claims areas that are going to have self-government and a large say in the resources and the development of those particular regions. We do not want that changed.

If the members were to talk to people in the Northwest Territories, they would see that they are not talking about giving up their unique identity. They are not talking about getting in line with the other two territories and marching to the same drum as good little soldiers for the federal government's plans. No, we have our own way of dealing with ourselves, just as Alberta has its own way and puts up with the representation it has.



*Government Orders*

We have our own way. I have been elected three times by the people of the Northwest Territories on a strong environmental platform. I did not get elected simply on resource development; I got elected because people knew I would stand here and speak up for the values that we hold in the Northwest Territories. That is what I am going to do every day I am here. I do not care what Albertans say, I do not care what Ontarians say: I am here for the people of the Northwest Territories.

We look forward to the bill coming to committee, but it needs a fulsome discussion there. If the Conservative government thinks this is simply a slam dunk, it can forget about it.

• (1250)

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I did not think I would feel this way, but I am truly inspired by the member's speech, especially his finishing statements. Unfortunately, his voting record does not necessarily reflect that kind of enthusiasm, such as on things like the Tuktoyaktuk highway. However, in fairness, he did talk about the 8,000 jobs and the exercise of ensuring that northern Canadians, particularly in the western Arctic and Nunavut, capture most of them.

I have a question and a comment for the member.

My comment to the member is that he has a rare opportunity. Indeed, the bill has two essential components, one of which deals with the Northwest Territories surface rights board act, which we will be dealing that at committee. I look forward to not just continuing the working relationship we have but also to moving forward on this component.

However, does the member think that introducing a carbon tax, if the NDP has its way, would be helpful to northern Canadians? I see it as stifling small business and growth in that vast region, where things are already very expensive.

Will the member be supporting this act? Will he look at getting this to committee as quickly as possible so that we can talk about the issues he raised and move forward on this bill in the same manner his colleagues did with the Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou relationship on the Eeyou marine agreement? Will he move forward to take care of these kinds of agreements that deal with environmental sustainability and responsible resource development?

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, there were a number of points made, one of which was on a carbon tax.

In the Northwest Territories over the last decade, the price of fuel oil, the prime element in our energy system, has gone up by almost 400%. How much has that changed consumption patterns in the Northwest Territories? Not so much. Therefore, I see a carbon tax as probably not being that effective in moving us from that.

However, what we need from the Conservative government is some commitment to invest and provide incentives for renewable energy throughout the whole of northern Canada. We do not need a carbon tax, but we do need the incentives to change. That is one element that I think is quite clear; indeed, our party has always said

that cap and trade is a good idea because it promotes renewable energy.

The parliamentary secretary also said that he hoped that we would work well together in committee on this. That is my record. I will continue to do whatever is good for the people of the north, whatever fits with their values, which is what I was elected to represent, and ensure that is taken care of at committee.

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Western Arctic always stands up for people in the north.

I was curious to hear the parliamentary secretary point out to the member that he had a rare opportunity to support this legislation. If this is a rare opportunity, it is because the Conservative government has not brought in legislation, policies or programs that could help develop our northern territories in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way.

The member for Western Arctic has constantly spoken up for northerners and is very familiar with the file. Could he describe the government's record in the northern Arctic?

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to contract some work the other day looking at the impact of Bill C-38 on northern Canada. Under environmental assessment, it is clearly just a terrible disgrace what is happening in the north. What is happening across Canada is only magnified in the north, because northerners do not have the strength of being provincial governments that hold the cards. In so many respects, we are reliant on the federal government to do the heavy lifting when it comes to environmental issues, and the Conservative government is not interested in heavy lifting on environmental issues and quite obviously is setting us up for some very difficult times.

This is something that the government is going against. The development of environmental legislation was all-encompassing through the government. The Department of Transport website always used to talk about the environment until the Conservative government removed those words. We have within Canada an understanding that environmental concerns are holistic, covering all aspects of life. The government is trying to push these aspects down into one little spot and take them away. That is not the direction to go.

What the Conservatives are doing will hurt in the end because they are not going to be here forever. When we get a decent government that understands Canadians' values, it will go back to more environmental protection. How is that going to leave the certainty of what is going on in this country? You are disturbing the certainty of our country.

• (1255)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would again ask all members to address their comments to the Chair, not to each other.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member commented to the parliamentary secretary that he would like to see incentives for renewable energy. I will just inform the member that there is such an opportunity in Bill C-45, where there is a capital cost allowance incentivizing the use of more machinery in producing renewable sources of energy. First of all, I would like to know if the member will support that legislation as it proceeds.

Second, I understand the importance of having local say in decision-making. As a former city councillor, I am supportive of land management because it does provide a lot of environmental protections, as those closest to the resources and the issues should have the most say. Would my colleague agree that the minister has done a good job of consulting widely in bringing this together?

Third, I would like my colleague to answer the parliamentary secretary's question. Are he and his party going to support this important legislation so that we can change some of these processes and see more development that is environmentally sustainable and provides jobs and growth for people in the north?

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, tax incentives have been in place for a variety of renewable energy sources for many years. I am glad to hear there is a new one. However, the government is hanging its hat on one little bit of legislation when changing northern energy systems requires a major effort on the part of all of us. There are 300 communities across northern Canada that are totally reliant on diesel fuel right now. The cost of that diesel fuel has gone up 400% over the last decade. Who is paying the bill in a lot of those communities? It is the federal government. Therefore, the government should have a vested interest in converting these communities to cheaper energy forms. It is absolutely the case.

In the Northwest Territories, we are moving a great number of our large buildings to biomass heating. Has the federal government converted one building in the north yet to biomass heating? No. It has not engaged in that program. I raised that issue with the Minister of Public Works and Government Services months ago. Where is the participation? It is not good enough just to put out one little tax incentive for somebody to do something. We need to get behind these programs. We need to invest money because we will get a return on that. I thought the Conservative government had an interest in making government more effective. I do not see it in the north.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the chamber and thank the government for the beautiful ceremony this morning for unveiling of the stained glass window for residential school survivors. It was most appropriate. It was a moving ceremony. There is clearly a lot that we must do together, as the window says, in looking forward.

The Liberal Party understands and supports the goal of bringing further clarity to the regulation of land use in the north and, in particular, the dispute resolution process for surface and subsurface rights. However, we also want to ensure that this legislation accurately reflects the wishes of the residents of all three territories and respects the concerns of the first nations, Inuit and Métis that will be impacted.

I see my job, in French it always sounds better, as *porte-parole*. My job is not to read a 200-page bill and then decide whether it is good or bad. My job is to ensure that the people affected by the bill

have had time to read it and have had time to explore the consequences or the unintended consequences, or to show us gaps or areas that need further tightening. It, therefore, will be hugely important, as we go forward, that we hear not only from the governments of the territories but also from the people who live there.

In 2008, the McCrank report stated that one of the regulatory problems in the north was a lack of surface rights legislation to resolve disputes between land owners who did not want to grant access to their lands for development projects. It is clear that this is a legislative gap that must be filled.

Over the next decade, the Mining Association of Canada estimates that the new mine development across Canada's north could bring in more than \$8 billion in investment. There is no question that resource development in the north, if designed with northerners, for northerners and in close consultation with aboriginal peoples in the north, could represent a tremendous opportunity.

This legislation is more than 200 pages long and deals with fundamental changes to how development will occur in the north. It would create frameworks to regulate how environmental assessment and permitting processes in Nunavut and Northwest Territories will proceed. It would also amend the Yukon Surface Rights Board Act to create a dispute resolution mechanism for surface and subsurface right holders and land owners or occupants in the Yukon; grant legal immunity to individual board members and employees of the Yukon Surface Rights Board from prosecution; and remove the requirement for the Auditor General to audit the Yukon Surface Rights Board and allow independent auditors.

Any decisions made by the boards contemplated by this legislation would be final and could override first nations, Inuit and Métis decisions on development. Given that, we must be absolutely sure that consultations on the structure of these boards and the appointment process were comprehensive in each of the three territories.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Even though, of course, there was extensive consultation regarding the parts of the legislation that have to do with Nunavut, the Liberal Party wants to ensure that the process related to the Northwest Territories and Yukon also reflects the opinions expressed by the residents of those territories, especially aboriginal populations.

*Government Orders**[English]*

We are concerned that already the Liidli Kue First Nation in Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories, seems to be caught off guard when Bill C-47 was first tabled and hope that the way the legislation was tabled does not reflect the consultation process for the proposed legislative changes for the whole of the Northwest Territories. Provisions in this legislation would cover aboriginal land settled under land claims agreements: unsettled land, commissioners' land, crown land and municipal land.

The Liberals also have some concerns regarding how these changes would impact lands that have yet to be dealt with by the land claims agreement and, as always, we have concerns in the way that land claims processes are being carried out at the moment with this very top down, take it or leave it approach and the so-called negotiators not really having the power to negotiate.

Given the scope of the changes contemplated in this legislation and the technical nature of many of the provisions, this bill will require close study and review in the broader context of the government's approach to northern development.

- (1305)

*[Translation]*

As for the broader question of northern development, the Liberals believe that a lot more needs to be done besides simply streamlining regulations related to surface rights and dispute resolution mechanisms in order to develop the enormous economical potential of the north.

*[English]*

For example, the federal government still has no plan or capacity to clean up a major spill in icefield waters. Canada must develop the capacity to respond to environmental threats, such as an oil or gas spill resulting from resource extraction in the Arctic. These emergency response capacities must be part and parcel of any streamlining of the regulatory process for land use in the north.

Northern economic development would also require investments in basic needs, like education, housing and health, but also the infrastructure that is required to support a growing population and economy. The Prime Minister does not actually seem to understand northern development. It is more than military deployments and extracting natural resources.

Northern development must also deal with the social and economic welfare of the people who live there. For instance, Canada has a serious food insecurity problem in northern communities. Some estimates put it as high as 79%, or 8 out of 10 people, without sufficient food. The recent Food Banks Canada report, "HungerCount 2012", helps bring that struggle into disturbing focus. The report notes that one of the few long-standing food banks in the territories has seen an alarming 18% increase in use over the past year and that residents in Iqaluit spend 25% of their total expenditures on food compared to the Canadian average of 11%. However, the Conservative government has stubbornly refused to admit that nutrition north Canada, the Conservative government program that was supposed to deal with the situation, has failed to bring down the cost of weekly food budgets.

The stark reality of Inuit education today is that roughly 75% of children are not completing high school and many find that their skills and knowledge do not compare to those of non-aboriginal graduates. Low educational outcomes are associated with adverse social implications, including greater unemployment, greater numbers of youth entering the criminal justice system and greater incidences of illness and poverty.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami released its national education strategy on June 6, 2011, outlining a plan to improve student success in Canada's four Inuit regions by tackling low school attendance and graduation rates, while producing more bilingual Inuit youth. A year later, however, all we see is the government reining down legislation like this. It is only about regulation. It is only about thou shall. It is only about mechanisms as opposed to really understanding the realities and the funding that is required to make so many of these things happen, like fresh drinking water and waste water management.

More than a year later, after the ITK education paper, there has been no commitment from the federal government to support these initiatives, financially or with other concrete measures. Without equal access to education and training, northern Canadians will not benefit from the employment opportunities that resource development would create. We will yet again have jobs without people and people without jobs.

Instead developing appropriate programs to address this need, the Conservative government is cutting existing support. For example, the Conservative government has ended the successful aboriginal skills and employment partnership. Canada's resource sector companies were some of the most active participants in this program and have criticized its cancellation.

- (1310)

*[Translation]*

Furthermore, regarding transportation, some serious flaws remain, including for instance the fact that plans to establish a deep water port in Nanisivik have been abandoned in favour of creating a refuelling station that will operate only part time in the summer.

*[English]*

Iqaluit remains without a deepwater port and Nunavut Premier Aariak recently made it clear that the lack of ports and roads connecting its communities to each other and the south is constraining economic and social development. She has also pointed out that the thriving fishery industry in Nunavut is forced to offload its catch in Greenland because of the lack of port infrastructure.

*Government Orders*

In short, unlocking the tremendous potential of the north is much broader than streamlining the regulatory process for land use and development.

[Translation]

This government needs to take a much more comprehensive approach to the whole question of northern development.

[English]

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contribution to this important legislation that represents an opportunity to balance the interests for northerners with respect to economic development and sustainability. I look forward to working with her on committee to that end.

The member mentioned previously that the unsettled groups had the Northwest Territories Surface Rights Board imposed on them. I would like to square the record on this.

The ability to negotiate land claim agreements continues to exist. This bill would apply to any future settlement claims consistent with any final negotiated agreement. Section 7 of the agreement was created to address the concerns of groups negotiating claims in the Northwest Territories.

Like the EU marine agreement and now these two, which represent huge swaths of land in our territories, this is an opportunity to continue a very important, heavily consultative process with respect to aboriginal land claims negotiating agreements, putting in place regulatory framework underpinned by a real spirit, as we heard from the member for Western Arctic, and enthusiasm to focus as well on northern economic growth.

I want to clear the record. Does the member have any comments with respect to that point and does she feel like she was probably wrong on that point?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, the comment was really based on what had been heard from people involved in land claims negotiations with the government. They feel it is a "take it or leave it" approach where the negotiators at the table really do not have the power to negotiate. They come in with the final offer, and that is the best any of the negotiators are allowed to do. Therefore, the progress that ought to be made on these issues is not being made because of an attitude of inflexibility and refusal to listen to the real concerns that are part and parcel of the give and take of a real negotiation of land claims.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the Liberal position on this, as I did with the NDP position.

I am from northern Alberta. I feel I know northerners. I have a trap line. I have trapped for some period of time. I am an avid hunter. I know one thing aboriginals have spoken loudly about in northern Alberta and in the Northwest Territories is the ability to carry guns in an environment that is not like downtown Toronto or Vancouver. Certainly they have dangers that pose real risks to them on a daily

basis in their backyards, as much as Fort McMurray was with bears coming into the backyards. It is just a different type of lifestyle.

Indeed, the only people who seem to stand up for aboriginal Canadians across the country in regard to the different lifestyle that they have as a result of where they live, and specifically with the gun registry, is the Conservative government. We saw the NDP vote en masse to keep the gun registry and the promise to bring it back. The Liberals brought the gun registry in the first place, in essence wasting \$2 billion of taxpayer money.

Could the member comment on her position, as to where she lives, and why she and her party have for so long ignored the rights of aboriginal Canadians to have the opportunity to carry guns in a different environment and to have that ability to have long guns as needed to protect themselves and for their aboriginal lifestyle to continue?

• (1315)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, as a family doctor, and it is coming up to December 6, the anniversary of the horrific Montreal massacre, it is not a rural or an urban issue, but a gender issue, the issue of the number of women who are killed by their intimate partners every year. Every year on December 6, we look at the numbers invoked in this. In some estimates, it is 11 times greater if there is a gun in the house. We believe hunters should be able to hunt. We are very clear that the guns must be kept safely and that there has to be rules around it that are enforceable. This is what the gun registry did.

As a family doctor, we needed to know whether someone who was suicidal or homicidal had access to a gun. That is what the police wanted.

It is quite interesting that the member raises this issue when I would rather talk about the fact that when I was at the chamber of commerce in Yukon, not very far away, its issue was no affordable housing, on which the government is completely deaf, and the fact that its hotels were now filled with miners and mining engineers instead of tourists. I hope the member would take the issues of tourism and housing in the north much more seriously.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the last question really did not seem to be on Bill C-47. However, could my colleague very briefly tell us the shortcomings in the bill and even beyond the bill? What are the shortcomings of the government in terms of dealing with the issues that are affecting the aboriginal communities in our country?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, the concerns we have with all of the bills that have come forward is the lack of consultation. My colleague should know that on Friday we received a notice that at 10:15 this morning there would be the technical briefing on the bill. This is not new to the way the government does business, but it is completely insulting to parliamentarians who are otherwise committed.

This morning we had a round table on economic opportunity for women and girls, particularly aboriginal women and girls. That is not something I can get out of because all of a sudden we are called to a technical briefing.

*Government Orders*

The bill was tabled November 6. Debate on the bill started this afternoon, but on Friday we were informed that a technical briefing would be this morning on a 200 page bill.

In some ways it is the lack of respect in all of these bills. It is irritating to members of Parliament not to be treated as adults or for us not to be able to ask our questions and then go out and check them with the people affected by the bill. After we have had the briefing is the time to consult before we are asked to stand in the House of Commons and speak to it.

It is a process issue, my colleague should know, and the process is clear in every way that the government so-calls consults. Every consultation we have heard about across the country is actually an information session. It is a one-way dialogue, it is the government's way or the highway and it ignores everything it hears and tables the bill exactly as it is.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot appreciate the member's frustration. What is exciting about legislation is that there was been extensive consultation, in fact, consultation so extensive that some of the organizations made certain accommodations, as did the Government of Canada, to ensure that we could focus on a sustainable northern environment with economic growth and opportunity.

I am not sure what the member's frustration is around that, but one interesting thing that has gone in the debate is we heard the member for Western Arctic be very clear. Contrary to his leader's statements and publications for a carbon tax, he now says that a carbon tax would be ineffective.

Given the challenges and the increased costs in the north, does the member support a carbon tax in the context of this northern development and the challenges we face and, as we say in the Eeyou marine agreement, is she willing to get on board, get this to committee and move this legislation through so we can see real economic growth in northern Canada?

• (1320)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, it seems a bit astounding. On this bill, the parliamentary secretary obviously knows very well that he too is straying into members' statements land on ridiculous conversations about something totally irrelevant and quite inaccurate in terms of the whole principle of a carbon tax as opposed to speaking thoughtfully on a price on carbon. It is completely different. The members' statements are misleading.

I would hope the parliamentary secretary would begin to focus on the quality of life of aboriginal people and the fact that there are 14 people living in one house with no running water. This is where I would put my attention.

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have the opportunity to rise today and voice my support for Bill C-47, the northern jobs and growth act.

I want to do two things in the time that is allotted to me, to outline the key elements of the bill and to describe the benefits it brings to the people of the territories, especially the people of my home riding of the Yukon. In Canadian law, the northern jobs and growth act enshrines institutions and processes that northerners will use to

manage a variety of aspects of resource development in each of the three territories of our country.

Let us first turn our attention to my home of the Yukon. The northern jobs and growth act amends the Yukon Surface Rights Board Act. As its name indicates, the Yukon Surface Rights Board Act sanctions the operations of the board itself, which has been serving the people of the Yukon since 1993. It is an independent five-person tribunal, similar to the NWT board, that resolves access disputes between those owning or having an interest in surface and subsurface lands and those who have access rights to these lands. Usually, the latter are members of Yukon first nation communities.

While a negotiated solution is always the best solution, that is not always possible. The board is intended to be a tool of last resort when holders of surface or subsurface rights and the owner or occupant of the surface cannot reach an agreement through negotiation. Indeed, the board has only been used on rare occasions. It has only been used three times since 1993.

Bill C-47 amends the Yukon Surface Rights Board Act in three key ways. First, the bill changes the act to grant employees immunity from prosecution for decisions they have made in good faith. This change results in board employees having the same or similar protection as those on other northern boards. It will also likely encourage qualified men and women to work for the board.

Second, the bill amends the Surface Rights Board Act to enable board members whose terms have expired to be eligible to render final decisions on hearings in which they have participated. Under existing provisions, such members would not be allowed to continue to hear a matter before the board, which requires the hearing to be restarted with a new member present. Obviously, that is a sensible change that is clearly in line with our government's decision to move forward in a number of key areas, such as reducing red tape and barriers to success. That change makes a lot of sense with respect to maintaining consistency and commonality within the hearings. The current situation adds additional costs to hearings and results in unnecessary delays that could be costly to a proponent of resource development with respect to both time and resources.

Third, Bill C-47 replaces a previous requirement for the Auditor General of Canada to audit the board annually with an independently performed annual audit. Allowing the board to hire its own auditor saves time and is cost-effective for both the board and the Office of the Auditor General, which is responsible for auditing the accounts, financial statements and transactions of much larger and more complex organizations than the Yukon Surface Rights Board. If we go back to the fact that the board has only been utilized three times since 1993, this again is a sensible amendment and a strong cost-saving measure to reduce the burden of red tape. It is a great common sense amendment.

*Government Orders*

While the three amendments may seem administrative in nature, they will also enable the board to consider applications and render decisions more quickly, consistently and reliably. The changes will also align the board's operating framework and rules with similar institutions and processes in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. These improvements could not be more timely for the people of the Yukon. Our natural resource sector is experiencing a revival, and 2011 was a record year in the mining industry in the Yukon. We had the most mining claims staked in a single year. Most of those claims are in good standing. We also set a record high for exploration dollars spent in a single year with 307 million dollars' worth of exploration being conducted.

● (1325)

The importance of the mining industry to the prosperity of the Yukon cannot be overstated. Five per cent of all employed men and women in the territory are employed in the mining industry. Many hundreds, if not thousands more hold jobs in industries that rely on a vibrant mining sector. In terms of overall production, 9% of the territory's gross domestic product is generated by the mining industry.

As the Conference Board of Canada made clear a few months ago, a global boom for the minerals that Yukon produces, copper, gold, silver and tungsten, is helping make the territory a growth leader in our entire country. The workers, companies and partners in the Yukon are helping meet that demand in mines such as: Minto, Wolverine and Keno Hill. These projects are also providing employment and training opportunities for thousands of northerners. The efforts of our mining workers, companies and partners, along with others involved in resource development in Yukon, translate into genuine economic gains for my territory and its people.

According to the Conference Board, real GDP in the Yukon will increase by 3.7% in 2012 and the pace of growth is forecast to accelerate in both 2013 and 2014. Over the next decade several new mines will come into production. Between 2013 and 2020, mining output in the Yukon will grow by an average compound rate of 10.7% per year.

That is just the start. As the Prime Minister pointed out during his visit to Minto Mine in August:

—such is the magnitude of the North's resource wealth that we are only, quite literally, just scratching the surface.

We must get beneath the surface and dig deep with both hands. We must bring the benefits of resource development to life for the people of the Yukon. We must maintain the positive momentum of job creation and economic growth in the territory and indeed throughout the entire north.

In the Northwest Territories, the northern jobs and growth act would set up a NWT surface rights board. Similar to the Yukon Surface Rights Board, established in 1993, the board would be empowered to resolve disputes between holders of surface and subsurface rights and the owners and occupants of surface lands when agreements on terms, conditions or compensation for access cannot be reached by the parties in question. In resolving any disputes the board would make orders that set out the terms and conditions of access and compensation to be paid with respect to that

access. Board jurisdiction would be applied to all lands in the territory, both settlement and non-settlement.

With this addition to the regulatory regime for resource development in the Northwest Territories, Bill C-47 fulfills an outstanding obligation found in two land claim agreements. These agreements call on the federal government to enshrine in law a surface rights board in the territory. The Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement and the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement both provide for interim arbitration measures to resolve access disputes to land and waters. These measures were intended to be temporary, to be replaced by a law of general application, as provided for in the claims.

The board is also consistent with the letter and spirit of the Inuvialuit final agreement and the Tlicho agreement. These two land claims and self-government agreements are the other two major accords that apply in the Northwest Territories. The Tlicho agreement anticipates, but does not mandate, a new surface rights board. The Inuvialuit final agreement specifies that any interim measures related to access across Inuvialuit lands will be replaced when a law of general application is enacted.

What benefits does the new board bring about? With the Northwest Territories surface rights board, the people of the territories would have a single process to resolve access disputes that is fair, balanced and clear. The process would assist in resolving access issues to surface and subsurface resources and increase predictability and consistency in the territories' resource management regime. It would provide incentives for companies in the resource industry and other rights holders to negotiate terms and conditions of access and compensation for that access with landowners and occupants, to the benefit of all parties. It would ensure that rights holders would carry out resource exploration and extraction according to requirements set down in agreements they have struck with landowners and occupants.

● (1330)

We must have this improved resource development regime in place as soon as possible. In the Northwest Territories the economy is forecast to grow by almost 6% this year and employment is expected to increase by nearly 4% annually for the next two. That is certainly great news for that territory. We need to continue to establish a fair, balanced and clear regulatory process that enables us to maintain this positive economic momentum in the Northwest Territories. We must pass Bill C-47 and bring the benefits of resource development to light for the people of the Northwest Territories.

Finally, in Nunavut, Bill C-47 would formally establish the Nunavut Planning Commission and the Nunavut Impact Review Board. The bill describes in detail the process under which these two bodies will operate. Under the new regime all prospective resource development projects in Nunavut will enter the planning and review process through the Nunavut Planning Commission. All project proposals will then be sent to the Nunavut Impact Review Board for screening, public review or a federal review. The board is also responsible for preparing project certificates after conducting a public review. Federal and territorial regulators are charged with making sure the terms and conditions set out in the project certificates are implemented in permits and licences.

*Government Orders*

While Bill C-47 would enshrine these two resource co-management boards in its own federal law, the Nunavut Planning Commission and the Nunavut Impact Review Board are not new. The people of Nunavut have used them to carry out land use planning and environmental assessments in the territory since 1996 albeit under the comparatively broad provisions set out primarily in articles 11 and 12 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Bill C-47 would improve, clarify and codify that process, enshrining in law a modern process that adds detail, consistency, predictability and certainty to the regulatory regime for resource development in Nunavut.

The bill would also take care of an outstanding commitment to the people of Nunavut that springs from the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, the landmark accord that led to Parliament making Nunavut a territory in 1999. The 1993 agreement requires the Inuit of Nunavut and the federal government to establish, under law, a regime to manage the land, water and natural resources in the Nunavut settlement area and in what is known as the outer land fast ice zone. The 2002 Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act addresses a portion of that obligation. Bill C-47 would do the rest. It would fulfill the remaining legislative requirement of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

In fulfilling these requirements, Bill C-47 would create a land use planning and impact assessment process that gives the people of Nunavut the legal authority and the expanded planning and assessment tools they need to manage the development of their lands and resources. It would also provide them with the authority to take increasing control of their economy, their lives and their future. Most important, the bill would empower them to build strong, healthy, self-reliant communities for themselves and their families. That is what makes Bill C-47 so important and that is why it is a landmark achievement for communities throughout Nunavut.

Not only is Bill C-47 a milestone in the history of Nunavut, but it also comes before us at an important time in Nunavut's development as it looks to the future as Canada's youngest territory. For thousands of years, right up to the latter half of the 20th century, the Inuit have lived off the land. Much has changed in just a single generation. Nunavut is now a stand-alone territory. The discovery of significant mineral deposits is opening up the region to mining development and increasing levels of exploration. The population of Nunavut is young and one of the fastest growing in all of Canada. Eighty-five per cent of its more than 33,000 residents are Inuit and roughly half of the total population is under the age of 25. Almost one-third is under the age of 15.

As a result of these rapid demographic and social changes, Inuit communities in Nunavut today face a variety of unique challenges. Yet one stands head and shoulders above the rest: communities in Nunavut must be able to generate and take advantage of resource development opportunities to provide for a sustainable future. Complicating this challenge is the reality that the Inuit have a deep and respectful relationship with their land and its resources, a land that is beautiful, bountiful and fragile. Resource development must be undertaken in harmony with conservation and protection of the environment and the ecosystems that it supports.

● (1335)

To develop and maintain strong, healthy, safe and self-reliant communities, Nunavut needs planning and assessment tools that will enable it to find the necessary balance between resource development and environmental protection. The members who make up the government understand the challenges that face Inuit communities as they balance a traditional subsistence lifestyle with a wage-employment economy. We also understand their strong desire to advance economically in a way that protects and preserves their cultural heritage and respects their ties to the land.

That is why we in this government have worked and are working with the Inuit people to help them take greater control of their resources, generate enduring economic growth in their territory and build strong, healthy, self-reliant communities for themselves and for their families. The northern jobs and growth act would be a key product of our collaborative work. It would establish a process that would give communities throughout Nunavut the opportunity to participate in resource development decisions that address community needs, goals and aspirations, to make decisions that would spur economic development in communities throughout Nunavut, to make decisions that would increase the number of good jobs and the amount of training and business opportunities available, and to raise the level of family incomes throughout the territory.

There is one fact I know for certain: when resource and other economic opportunities exist, young men and women remain in their communities to raise families of their own and contribute to building a better life for future generations. If those opportunities do not exist, young men and women either leave their hometowns to pursue the brightest futures or remain behind. I am happy to see that the future is bright for the young people of Nunavut. According to a recent report of The Conference Board of Canada, construction of the proposed Mary River and Meliadine mines will cause real GDP in the territory to surge by 17% in 2013 and 14% in 2014; and between 2012 and 2016, the construction industry will grow by an average annual compound rate of just under 23%. We must make sure the people of Nunavut can realize this forecast and the promise of years beyond.

By passing Bill C-47, we would bring the benefits of resource development to life for the people of Nunavut. We must pass Bill C-47 and fully tap the rich potential of Canada's north. I urge all members of the House to support Bill C-47, and I look forward to answering any questions they may have about the three great territories of Canada.

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, certain stakeholders are questioning why the bill is necessary, given land access disputes have been resolved satisfactorily for years in the Northwest Territories. Can my colleague clarify why the creation of the Northwest Territories surface rights board is needed now?

*Government Orders*

● (1340)

**Mr. Ryan Leef:** Mr. Speaker, it is a good question. Canada has an obligation that is set out in the Gwich'in comprehensive land claim agreement and the Sahtu Dene and Métis comprehensive land claim agreement to establish this surface rights board. It is not just the timing to spur on the growth that we know would come with this, but it is actually a legal obligation that has been set out that we need to meet.

Because of the legal obligation, it has also allowed our government to negotiate and work closely with all three territories to ensure that in meeting this obligation we have their best interests at heart. Their correspondence, communication and consultation have been taken into consideration in this bill, which has provided us with a great opportunity, in a three-way partnership across these territories with the federal government, to ensure we would meet the needs of the north every single day.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the member.

First, obviously the movement of Bill C-47 and the agreement for this legislation to go forward and to be voted on in this place is very important to the north, but important to Canada as well. What is the member's opinion and the reaction of the people in the north to a couple of investments our government has made, in particular \$71 million to the Mayo B, which was done in the Yukon? I know there was a tremendous reaction from the premier of the Yukon at the time and others, because it takes five communities off dependence on diesel. It is all about clean infrastructure being built and green infrastructure being built out of the green infrastructure fund. Another thing that has happened in the north is the northwest transmission line in northern British Columbia, \$141 million. Again, it is green infrastructure going into place to create more green infrastructure and green energy for the people of the north.

Finally, in relation to the gun registry itself and the destruction of the data, we promised to do that for so long. How important is that to the northern people, getting green infrastructure, ensuring we make these plans so we have the green, clean energy that goes into the north instead of polluting diesel? How important are these things, along with the gun registry data destruction, to the people in the north whom the member represents?

**Mr. Ryan Leef:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised a really good example of the Mayo B hydroelectric project in terms of the needs of the north. It was the largest green infrastructure project completed in Canada at the time, a \$71 million investment, which directly dealt with the issues concerning the north in terms of providing green, clean energy to the Yukon. In that region in particular, there is lots of exploration and mining growth, and Yukoners wanted to know, particularly the first nations in those communities, that those projects were undertaken with clean, green energy. It is an investment in the long-term growth of the community.

The long gun registry is another example of our government listening to the first nations and aboriginal cultural heritage and traditions of the north. It is not just our government, though. I want to acknowledge the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, who

heard that himself, stood up for his constituents and voted against the long gun registry.

We know exactly what is meaningful to the history, heritage and culture of the fine people of the north, and our government will continue to protect those needs and interests. I am quite certain that the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River will continue to follow our lead on those things because he is such an excellent member of the House.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to get the comments of the member for Yukon. Previously the member for Western Arctic complained and indicated that he did not see the reason for this bill and he did not know why the status quo was not the preferred option. I am wondering if the member can tell me what are the elements of the Northwest Territories' surface rights board bill that make it better than the status quo and why we should take the lead of the great member for Yukon over the member for Western Arctic, who seems to prefer the status quo.

● (1345)

**Mr. Ryan Leef:** Mr. Speaker, certainly status quo is really not an option for us and it is not an option for the great people of the Northwest Territories.

Let me read a couple of the elements of that bill that would help make some changes. It would provide jurisdiction to the board to make orders setting out terms and conditions for access and the appropriate compensation to be paid in respect of that access. That is obviously great for the stakeholders and people impacted by surface and subsurface claims. It would provide the board the ability to make rules and bylaws, including rules about procedures to be followed. It would allow the board to set compensation for unseen damages resulting from access. It would require the board to provide periodic reviews and the ability to terminate orders when access is no longer being used.

All of these things do not exist in the status quo. They also fall under obligations that our government has to meet in specific land claims agreements. To ignore those land claim agreements and our obligations would not be a responsible step for the government. We certainly recognize that. We do not just want to do this in isolation. We want to do it in partnership with all three territories. That is exactly what we are doing, and I am not sure why the member for Western Arctic would want to only maintain the status quo, because that is not good enough for the people of the Northwest Territories.

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we heard earlier today from the member for Western Arctic who, contrary to his leader's position on a carbon tax, said clearly that he does not support a carbon tax. It appears as though he understands that in the context of northern—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Malpeque, on a point of order.



*Government Orders*

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, this question has absolutely nothing to do with this bill. We are hearing this time and time again from members on the government side as they try to propagandize. It is not against my party; it is against the one next to me on this side. It is wrong for them to go on with that propaganda and misinformation when they are supposed to be debating a bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary can continue with the question.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Just to finish, Mr. Speaker, it is important that there is context to these kinds of agreements because they are balancing sustainable development with real economic opportunity and growth. Therefore, we do not want anything, as a matter of policy, to get in the way and increase costs. We know those challenges exist in the north.

I have a two-part question for the member for Yukon. First, does he agree with the member for Western Arctic, contrary to the NDP carbon tax plan, that this would not help this terrific agreement advance forward, and second, does he think that combining the Nunavut and the Northwest Territories pieces is a better, more comprehensive way to advance regulatory framework land claim agreements and the like in an effort to unleash or unlock this tremendous economic opportunity for northern Canadians?

**Mr. Ryan Leef:** Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member for Western Arctic that a carbon tax is not the direction to go. I clearly campaigned on the fact that we would not support or introduce that. I clearly campaigned on a low-tax plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

I am proud to stand behind a government that is going to move our country forward and move the economy forward without raising taxes on Canadian families, without the government telling Canadians how they are going to spend their hard-earned dollars, creating an environment for opportunity for Canadians to grow. That is the role of government.

The role of government is to produce and create opportunities and an environment in Canada for Canadians to succeed and have a choice to pick where they want to go and what they want to do. A carbon tax does not do that. A carbon tax would take money directly out of the pockets of Canadians and would start to direct them on where they have to go and what they have to do to find opportunities, controlled by a government.

We do not believe in that kind of plan. We will never support that kind of plan. I certainly will not stand behind that sort of plan. I do find it interesting that everything we are doing is paring off, trying to make sure Canadians have an environment where they can choose and where they can realize success. On most occasions, the opposition is voting against that.

I would encourage the member for Western Arctic to stand behind these things and realize that the opportunities and environment being created by the government is what government is supposed to do.

• (1350)

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand to speak to Bill C-47, An Act to enact the Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act and the Northwest Territories Surface

Rights Board Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.

Article 19 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

The reason I am reading that into the record today is that, with the legislation, it is very important since the Government of Canada did sign on to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we would hope that it would expect that free, prior and informed consent. I raise it in the context of the Northwest Territories Surface Rights Board Act. I raise that because it seems that some groups and organizations from the Northwest Territories feel that they have not been adequately consulted on this legislation.

The New Democrats will support sending this legislation at second reading to committee so we can fully review it. This is lengthy legislation and it would make some amendments to other acts.

Part of this legislation was originally introduced in 2010. It was Bill C-25, Nunavut planning and project assessment act. I will read from the legislative summary because it is still applicable to the legislation that we have before us. It is an important part of where we are going with this bill. I will focus mostly on Nunavut. My friend from Western Arctic covered some of the issues around the Northwest Territories.

In the legislative summary of Bill C-25, which is applicable to Bill C-47, it reads:

In a landmark ruling in 1973 the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that Aboriginal peoples' historic occupation of the land gave rise to legal rights in the land that had survived European settlement. In 1982, the Constitution was amended to "recognize and affirm" the "existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada." "Treaty rights" include rights under land claims agreements.

The Nunavut land claims agreement of 1993 took numerous years in order to be negotiated but there are some key objectives to the agreement that are related to the legislation before us.

The objectives of the agreement are:

to provide for certainty and clarity of rights to ownership and use of lands and resources and of rights for Inuit to participate in decision-making concerning the use, management and conservation of land, water and resources, including the offshore,

to provide Inuit with wildlife harvesting rights and rights to participate in decision-making concerning wildlife harvesting,

to provide Inuit with financial compensation and means of participating in economic opportunities, [and]

to encourage self-reliance and the cultural and social well-being of Inuit.

Under the provisions of the Nunavut land claims agreement, there are a couple of things:

Among many other things, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement provides for the federal government and the Inuit to establish a joint regime for land and resource management (articles 10 to 12). Article 10 sets out the criteria for the land and resource institutions to be created, while article 11 sets out the parameters for land use planning within the Nunavut Settlement Area, and article 12 details how development impact is to be evaluated.

### Statements by Members

Under article 10, the federal government undertakes to establish the following government institutions to administer the regime:

- Surface Rights Tribunal;
- Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC);
- Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB); and
- Nunavut Water Board.

Canada partially fulfilled its obligations by establishing the first and fourth of these institutions when Parliament enacted the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act 11 in 2002. Bill C-25 [which is now Bill C-47] fulfills the government's obligations with regards to the other two institutions, the NPC and the NIRB. Note, however, that both of these institutions already exist. They came into being in 1997 under the Nunavut Settlement Agreement. Bill C-25 formalizes their establishment in legislation and sets out how they will continue to operate.

•(1355)

Again, the legislative summary indicates that:

Work on the Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act began in 2002. To fulfill its obligation for close consultation with Inuit, the Government of Canada established the Nunavut Legislative Working Group, consisting of the Government of Canada (represented by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada), Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the Government of Nunavut, and supported by the participation of the NPC and the NIRB.

The Working Group met regularly through to 2007 to discuss and resolve policy issues, gaps the bill should address, and resolve questions and legal interpretation of the agreement and how these solutions should be reflected in the bill. When these issues were satisfactorily advanced in 2007, drafting of the bill began with oversight and direction from the Working Group.

I will use the government's backgrounder to quickly summarize the key elements in the bill that are relevant around the Nunavut planning and project assessment.

The proposed legislation will:

Continue the functioning of the Commission and the Board and clearly define and describe their powers, duties and functions, including how their members are appointed. It will also clearly define the roles and authorities of Inuit, federal and territorial governments;

Establish timelines for decision-making in the land use planning and environmental assessment processes to create a more efficient and predictable regulatory regime;

Define how, and by whom, Land Use Plans will be prepared, amended, reviewed and implemented in Nunavut;

Describe the process by which the Commission and the Board will examine development proposals; and

Harmonize the assessment process for transboundary projects by providing for review by joint panels and providing an opportunity for the Board to review and assess projects outside the Area that may have an adverse impact on the Nunavut Settlement Area;

Provide for the development of general and specific monitoring plans that will enable both governments to track the environmental, social and economic impacts of projects;

Establish effective enforcement tools to ensure terms and conditions from the plans and impact assessment process are followed; and

Streamline the impact assessment process, especially for smaller projects, and provide industry with clear, consistent and transparent guidelines, making investments in Nunavut more attractive and profitable.

Generally speaking, there is fairly wide support for the Nunavut part of the bill. Again, this goes back to 2010 when, before the aboriginal affairs committee of the day, the Nunavut Water Board appeared and indicated some support. Other organizations, as well as some of the mining companies, had indicated some support. However, some concerns are still being raised.

In a letter that we received from legal counsel from NTI, it anticipated that a number of amendments would be required to ensure the bill's compliance with the Nunavut land claims agreement. NTI intends to make submissions to the parliamentary committees on these aspects of the bill. It stated that it would be important that adequate time and space be available for NTI to make oral and written submissions to the committee, as well as NTI's regional Inuit associations, the NPC, NIRB and the Government of Nunavut if it so desired.

It is important to note that, although there is support, people still feel there are some amendments that are required to this particular section of the bill.

A number of concerns had been raised about funding and I will turn to the testimony that came before the committee back on May 13, 2010. The members of the NIRB indicated at that time that funding was always a concern. Once again, we have legislation where funding has not been built into it, and, of course, it is often not. However, there has not been a commitment around funding.

In response to questions posed at the committee to the deputy minister in 2010 about the commitment the government and the department had toward funding, the deputy minister provided assurances—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan will have approximately 11 minutes when we resume debate on this bill.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, only a few citizens of Canada have earned the distinction of winning a Nobel Prize, and one of them is our honorary Canadian citizen, the 14th Dalai Lama, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

The reason I raise this today is that Saturday, December 8, there is a commemoration of this achievement by His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Tibetan Cultural Centre at 11 a.m. in Etobicoke in the city of Toronto.

The Nobel Peace Prize is the most prominent recognition of a life dedicated to peace and understanding.

As chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, which includes members of this House and the upper chamber of all political stripes, it is my honour to congratulate the Dalai Lama on this commemoration and also to encourage fellow Canadians to take part in this day of celebration on December 8.

*Statements by Members*

●(1400)

[Translation]

**LAVAL UNIVERSITY ROUGE ET OR**

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Grey Cup week ended yesterday with the coronation of the 100th Grey Cup champions, the Toronto Argonauts.

The Vanier Cup final was also held just days ago, with the Université Laval Rouge et Or defeating the McMaster University Marauders. This was the Rouge et Or's seventh Vanier Cup win—in just 14 years—a Canadian university football record.

That was not the only record broken. Despite a hostile environment—I know because I was there—the Rouge et Or rolled up 605 yards of total offence, including 373 yards rushing.

Maxime Boutin and Arnaud Gascon-Nadon—a future Hamilton Tiger-Cat—performed impressively, but the key to victory was on the line of scrimmage. The offensive linemen dominated their opponents, giving the star players a chance to shine. What an outstanding example of what can happen when everyone works together to win victory.

Congratulations to the Université Laval Rouge et Or on its exceptional achievement. It is a great team. For such a young team, it has established a great tradition.

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[English]

**HOLODOMOR**

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week marked the 79th anniversary of the Holodomor genocide. I had the opportunity to commemorate this important event with my colleagues from all parties at a very moving ceremony right here on Parliament Hill.

The Holodomor embodies a period in which Stalin's Communist regime engineered a devastating famine on the Ukrainian people. Stalin's government ruthlessly confiscated supplies down to the very last seed, inciting food shortages across the land.

Soviet armed units surrounded the Ukrainian population in the Kuban region and Ukraine preventing the people from obtaining food in neighbouring Soviet regions. The result was death in the millions in what can only be described as one of the most horrific genocides in history.

I hope that every member was able to take a moment to remember the men, women and children lost in this tragedy.

[Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following translation:]

And to our brothers and sisters of the Holodomor, may their memory be eternal.

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative candidate, Joan Crockatt, said some amazing things. She said:

If you're in Mexico and you lose your passport, do you want to call an opposition member of Parliament? Or do you want to call someone who can walk across to the minister's office?

Joan Crockatt is trying to blackmail and bully voters by telling them that only Conservative voters will get help from the government. Westerners do not like to be threatened.

Will the Prime Minister force his candidate to apologize for these ridiculous, threatening statements, or is this an accurate reflection of his own personal views?

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**QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL**

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, November 16, Michelle Wright performed in my riding at the Capitol Theatre in front of a full house.

Everyone is proud of our hometown girl from Merlin who grew up listening to the Motown hits coming out of Detroit and the country music songs played by her parents.

Michelle has amassed a total of 25 top ten hits in Canada and a top ten hit in the United States, *Take it like a Man*. She was the top female artist in 1993 and, in September 2011, Michelle was inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame.

Michelle is active with World Vision and is always quick to donate her time and energy, helping to raise money for our local hospital and the Victorian Order of Nurses.

That is why it was such an honour to present to her, in front of all her fans, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. Everyone in the house agreed that Merlin's hometown girl is a worthy recipient.

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[Translation]

**FOOD BANKS**

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, life is not a bed of roses for people living in the Lanaudière region. According to Statistics Canada's most recent data, in 2006, more than 4,000 young people were living below the poverty line after taxes.

One-fifth of Lanaudière's population has an annual income of less than \$10,000, and thus food banks have become a necessity. These organizations do not have meat and vegetables for people in need.

I hope for a better redistribution of wealth. In the meantime, I would like to recognize the work of Moisson Lanaudière, which helps provide food aid to 20,672 people every month.

*Statements by Members*

●(1405)

*[English]***NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA**

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this Wednesday. This not-for-profit organization is dedicated to protecting our most precious natural areas and the species they sustain.

Since 1962, this organization and its partners have helped to conserve more than 2.6 million acres, or 1 million hectares, from coast to coast to coast. Most recently, in 2007 the Government of Canada partnered with the Nature Conservancy of Canada through the natural areas conservation program. I have had the pleasure of seeing this successful program at work in my own riding.

For more than a century, the Frolek family has ranched in the Thompson Nicola Valley. They rely on B.C.'s disappearing native grasslands for their livelihood. Today, the Frolek Ranch is in large part conserved through this important program and partnership. A proud family heritage and nature will both continue to thrive.

I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating the Nature Conservancy of Canada for 50 years of diligently working to ensure a natural legacy for all Canadians.

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*[Translation]***LAVAL UNIVERSITY ROUGE ET OR**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that, on November 23, the Université Laval Rouge et Or won a spectacular victory, beating the McMaster Marauders 37-14 in a hard-fought game at the Rogers Centre in Toronto.

This is the Rouge et Or's seventh Vanier Cup, which makes them the most successful university football team in the country. This is a remarkable achievement, and I would like to congratulate this extraordinary football team, which is the pride of Quebec City and the entire province.

I would also like to make special mention of Maxime Boutin's contribution: a record 253 yards on 24 carries. He made an electrifying run that sports analysts will certainly be talking about for years to come.

Congratulations to Maxime and the Rouge et Or on an outstanding season.

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**EMPIRE SHIRT**

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Empire Shirt, a company from my riding, approached me to share its concerns about the Tailored Collar Shirts Remission Order. This order is very important for the survival of companies like Empire Shirt, which has been in business for over a century.

This order enables the company to keep a high percentage of its production at its Louiseville factory instead of importing it, which

benefits the region's economy and provides jobs. The Conservatives are saying that this program costs too much, but why not look at a better way to manage the program to benefit the companies that really need it? This way, the program would be much less expensive and would be sustainable.

On behalf of Empire Shirt, its employees and other business in my region, I urge the government to maintain this program that will expire on December 31, 2012. This is a perfect opportunity to take real action to save Canadian jobs.

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*[English]***RAOUL WALLENBERG**

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to mark the opening of the Raoul Wallenberg exhibit, called "To me there's no other choice", at the Canadian War Museum here in Ottawa.

A Swedish diplomat, Raoul Wallenberg risked his life to save 100,000 Hungarian Jews from death during the Holocaust. It was a selfless act for a greater good during one of history's darkest periods.

This exhibit will offer Canadians the chance to learn more about Raoul Wallenberg and his legacy in standing up for our fellow men and women against the horrific evils of anti-Semitism.

Raoul Wallenberg was the first Canadian to receive honorary citizenship in 1985. Last month, our Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism was on hand with members of Mr. Wallenberg's family at the naming of the Raoul Wallenberg Room at Canada's embassy in Stockholm, Sweden.

Our government is committed to continuing his legacy of standing up for the natural rights and freedoms of all, and rejecting hatred and prejudice.

I ask that my colleagues join me in welcoming this important exhibit to our nation's capital.

\* \* \*

●(1410)

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, founded in Canada in 1991, the White Ribbon Campaign is now a world wide network uniting men and boys seeking to end violence against women and girls. Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about gender-based violence. The campaign seeks to promote education and action between now and December 6, which is Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

*[Translation]*

Jack Layton was one of the co-founders of this campaign. He was passionate about the need to challenge the negative aspects of masculinity.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

In that spirit, I urge us all to see a continuum connecting such daily events as sexist comments, gender-based bullying or transphobic discrimination, the sexual harassment of female Mounties, the epidemic of disappearances and killings of aboriginal women, and the targeting for murder of brave girls like Malala.

*[Translation]*

I invite men of all ages to visit the website at [www.whiteribbon.ca](http://www.whiteribbon.ca) to learn more about the campaign.

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*[English]***GREY CUP**

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to congratulate the Toronto Argonauts on their tremendous victory in winning the historic 100th Grey Cup. The Argonauts are North America's oldest existing professional sports team. They have appeared in 22 Grey Cup games, winning their first cup in 1914, and have now won a remarkable 16 times.

Bustling with fans from across our great nation, the Rogers Centre was an ideal venue to showcase the warm, welcoming hospitality of Torontonians as millions across Canada were riveted to their TV sets for this spectacular annual national sporting event. Football fans were treated to an outstanding cultural experience as renowned Canadian artists performed for the appreciative fans both present and watching from coast to coast to coast.

I congratulate both teams for an excellent display of sportsmanship, but especially the Argos for becoming North America's fourth "winningest" sports franchise.

Go Argos go!

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**RAOUL WALLENBERG**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to pay tribute to the life and legacy of Raoul Wallenberg, Canada's first honorary citizen and a Swedish non-Jew who showed that one person with the compassion to care and the courage to act can transform history.

His life is celebrated in a new exhibit at the Canadian War Museum entitled, "To me there's no other choice". Canada Post has also unveiled a stamp in his honour as we mark the centennial of his birth.

While Wallenberg rescued so many during the Holocaust, he was not rescued by so many who could. Let this moment of remembrance also be a reminder of the need for action.

While Russia continues to maintain that Raoul Wallenberg died in 1947, the evidence is clear that Wallenberg did not then die, but was alive into the 1960s and 1970s and disappeared into the Soviet gulag. Accordingly, the time has come for Russia to open up its archives and to unlock the secrets of history so that we can finally learn the truth about this disappeared hero of humanity. For us there should be no other choice.

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast are disgusted with the divisive comments by the Liberal MP for Papineau. His anti-Alberta remarks display an Liberal arrogance that is deeply ingrained in that party's beliefs.

This is the same Liberal arrogance that makes that member and his party think they are entitled to run Canada and that those who do not agree with them are un-Canadian. It is the same Liberal arrogance used to justify their funnelling of millions of taxpayer dollars into their party's coffers under the guise of national unity.

We on this side of the House will always stand up against that kind of divisive arrogant attitude that is damaging to our country.

It is time for the Liberal amateur sports critic to show some real contrition for his arrogant divisive comments and to follow the lead of his Liberal Ottawa South colleague and resign.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***ALBERTA AND QUEBEC**

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to the interesting friendship that has emerged between Alberta and Quebec. Both provinces have often benefited from the hard work of Albertans. In particular, former premier Peter Lougheed and former Progressive Conservative leader Joe Clark come to mind.

Alberta is also a popular and magnificent destination for thousands of my constituents, including young Quebeckers, who have long dreamed of setting off in search of the legendary Canadian west, or people who, perhaps a little more down to earth, go there to learn a trade and leave their sweat on the various work sites in the province.

Despite their obvious differences, Quebec and Alberta share many similarities. Both provinces are stubborn and know what they want. They want to be respected for their convictions and their unique cultures. They also do not want Ottawa to come barging in and trample all over their plans.

We in the NDP believe in a strong, united Canada that embraces the diversity that exists in both Alberta and Quebec.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

*[English]***LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, some things will never change; take the recent anti-Alberta comments from the Liberals as an example.

### Oral Questions

We have always known the Liberals had a profound ignorance toward Alberta. After all it was their party that introduced the national energy program that cost countless jobs in my province. It was their party that imposed a wasteful and ineffective long gun registry on Canadians. It was their party that long ignored western farmers' desire to market their wheat and barley.

The anti-Alberta attitude runs deep in the Liberal Party. Just last week the member for Ottawa South and the top leadership contender for the Liberal Party showed us once again how their party truly feels toward Alberta.

The member for Ottawa South had to resign as senior spokesman for natural resources for telling us to go back to Alberta if we wanted to defend the interests of Albertans.

The member for Papineau said:

Canada isn't doing well right now because it's Albertans who control our community and socio-democratic agenda. It doesn't work.

These remarks are equally unacceptable, and I call upon the leader of the Liberal Party to start listening to Albertans and fire his sports critic as well. When will he do it?

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the latest Conservative budget attacked the Fisheries Act. Conservative attacks on environmental protection were so harsh that the recent budget implementation bill helped fix the mess, at least in part.

The Conservatives rejected all of the NDP amendments that would have fixed the mistakes still in the bill. Why rush bills through Parliament when they know they will have to change everything six months down the line?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely wrong. As she said, the government is committed to environmental protection and conservation. We do not need Fisheries and Oceans officials to inspect every little puddle on every single farm. Waterway regulation needs to be based on common sense, and we will make sure it is.

[English]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we will always vote against reckless Conservative budgets that gut our environmental laws.

The Coastal GasLink pipeline in northern B.C. will cross over 300 waterways and will affect the habitat of over 100 species at risk. However, after the Conservatives are done gutting environmental protections like the Navigable Waters Protection Act, this massive project will not even face an environmental assessment.

How can Conservatives claim that cancelling environmental assessments for projects like GasLink have nothing to do with the environment?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Again, Mr. Speaker, the Navigable Waters Protection Act is about navigation. We deal with environmental protection and regulation with different statutes and instruments and we want to ensure that there is a strong but sensible application of environmental laws so we do not end up unintentionally harassing farmers for crossing a dry creek bed.

This has been happening for far too long. It is a massive waste of resources. Let us focus our resources on environmental protection where it really matters and let us focus the regulation of the Navigable Waters Protection Act on those waters that are actually navigable. It is called common sense.

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### THE ECONOMY

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives just cannot get their budget stories straight. The Minister of Finance says that the budget will not be balanced as promised, but then the Prime Minister says that it will. The Minister of Finance says that there will not be more cuts, but the Prime Minister says that maybe there will. Now the Minister of Finance says that he has contingency plans to deal with the threat of another recession, but he gives no details.

Will the Minister of Finance table these details or should we just wait for the Prime Minister to correct him?

• (1420)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance will table, in due course, the next budget for the government, which will continue the success of our economic action plan that has seen the creation of over 820,000 net new jobs since the global economic downturn, which has seen Canada leading the G7 in growth and which sees Canada as having the lowest debt of the major developed economies in the world, the strongest financial institutions, the strongest growth projections.

We know what the NDP contingency is for the economy. It is to spend at least an additional \$56 billion that comes through either a massive increase in our national debt that will have to be paid for by our grandkids or through job-killing tax hikes. Which is it?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FOREIGN INVESTMENT

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has been two years since the Conservatives promised to bring in new rules for investments in Canada, in response to pressure from the NDP. On the weekend, Canadians learned that there will be new rules, but only after the Conservatives approve the sale of Nexen to CNOOC. That is very irresponsible.

*Oral Questions*

How can the Conservatives claim to be acting responsibly when they refuse to consult Canadians about CNOOC's takeover of Nexen and our natural resources?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our government is being responsible. On the one hand, we have the NDP who would object to any type of foreign investment because, based on its agenda, it opposes trade. On the other hand, we have the Liberals who would blindly welcome any type of foreign investment.

I can assure the House that Canadians can count on a responsible government, one that takes the time to very carefully study the merits of transactions on a case-by-case basis.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have an agenda all right, but it seems to be an agenda of incompetence when we look at their record. They missed the national security deadline and have made decisions at midnight. Now the *Financial Post* tells us that Conservatives are now scrambling to come up with new foreign takeover rules. With one hand, Conservatives are promising to limit foreign state ownership of our resources, but, with other hand, are signing a deal to sell off Alberta's oil resources to a Chinese state-owned company.

Is this really what Conservatives came to Ottawa to do, to sell out Canada and sell off Alberta's natural resources? Why will they not consult Canadians?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have improved the act and the NDP has virtually opposed everything we have done. For example, providing new provisions on national security, it opposed that.

On one side is the NDP that would stop any form of foreign investment in the country and on the other side the Liberal Party would rubber stamp any form of investment, as we heard last week.

Canadians can count on a responsible government to ensure that each transaction is carefully scrutinized. This is exactly what we are doing in the best interests of Canadians.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's decision to deny health care services to certain refugee claimants faces very stiff opposition. Doctors, nurses and every significant health care organization in Canada says that the decision is wrong. Media editorials say that the immigration minister has dropped the ball. Most especially, provincial governments are universally critical, such as Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba. The premier of Saskatchewan describes federal refugee cuts as "un-Canadian".

Before this gets worse and people die, will the government correct itself and reinstate sensible health coverage for refugee claimants?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to provide health coverage to refugee claimants. We provide the same package of basic hospital and physician services that are typically available to

Canadians. Not every province funds all the same services precisely the same way. However, if provinces want to provide additional insurance for certain services to asylum claimants, they are more than free to do so.

I would remind the member that, for example, we have no federal insurance at all for people who are here illegally, for temporary visitors, for newly arrived permanent residents or for Canadian citizens who are re-establishing themselves. They get no federal, or for that matter, provincial coverage. However, provinces are always free to provide insurance to people where they think it is appropriate.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister says that health service was cut for refugees because refugees were eligible for some services that other people did not get. Listen to Premier Wall on that topic. He said,

"We can't see a lot of evidence for that frankly. And you know what, even if that was the case, who cares? This country is rich beyond measure compared to the countries where these refugees are fleeing from and so it's our view that we should just be there to help and that's kind of a basic Canadian value".

Why does the federal government not share the same values as Premier Wall?

• (1425)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, there are many foreign nationals in Canada who have absolutely no public insurance, such as those who are here illegally, such as temporary residents, such as people who have recently arrived and even Canadian citizens when they have lived abroad and have come back. They do not have insurance.

Each province has constitutional responsibility for health care. If they want to make exceptions, if they want to provide expansive health insurance for foreign nationals who are here, out of status or temporarily, they are welcome to do so. We have no objection to that whatsoever.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative policy on refugee health care is incoherent mass confusion. The Saskatchewan government has been told by Ottawa that there are 11 different pigeon holes into which these most vulnerable refugees need to fit themselves before they will be treated by the Conservative government. If they die waiting, apparently that is okay with the Conservatives.

However, it is not okay with Premier Wall. He says that this government's treatment of refugees is unbelievable and un-Canadian. Why will the Conservatives not fix the problem and provide chemotherapy to the cancer victim in Saskatoon?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, provinces are free to use their jurisdiction in health care to finance those services they deem appropriate to whichever category of individual.

When he speaks about refugees, he is blurring a very important distinction here. Asylum claimants are not refugees unless they are deemed to be so by our fair and generous legal system. Sixty-four per cent of asylum claimants turn out not to be refugees and are ultimately removed from Canada. The largest source of those asylum claimants come from the European Union where, by the way, people have comprehensive health insurance and almost all of those claimants are rejected by our fair and generous legal system. There are limits to our capacity to—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's military ombudsman is the latest on a long list of watchdogs who the Conservatives are blocking from doing their jobs. The ombudsman apparently had the audacity to request documents while investigating care for reservists, documents for an investigation. The Conservatives said no. The excuse was cabinet confidentiality.

We are talking about the care provided to men and women who offer to serve our country, so why not co-operate?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** We do, Mr. Speaker. I commend the report to members for reading. We have made progress on 10 of the 12 recommendations.

With respect to the production of documents, we continue to have a very productive and transparent relationship with the ombudsman and his office. We respect his work and that of his office with respect to the Department of National Defence and that under his purview. We will continue to work with his office within the mandate and the review of the law.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when the ombudsman investigates an issue that the government does not like, it tries to interfere. Suddenly, the documents he wants to examine become classified.

Care for wounded reservists is very important. Need I point out that only 4 of the 12 recommendations from the ombudsman's 2008 report have been implemented in the past four years?

Why are the Conservatives choosing to interfere instead of improving care for our reservists?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is incorrect. We have made progress on 10 of the ombudsman's 12 recommendations. We have continued to work on this issue.

[*English*]

As I just said a moment ago, we continue to work very productively with the ombudsman's office and we will do so within

his mandate and within the law. It is that simple. That is what would be expected.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister should support the ombudsman instead of protecting himself.

The statement of operational requirements, which was fixed to ensure that only the F-35s would meet the requirements, was always classified. We recently learned that it could be discarded. As long as there is no new statement of operational requirements and we do not have an open and transparent process, the government will continue to choose the F-35.

Can they confirm that the statement of operational requirements has been rewritten? Will they make it public?

● (1430)

[*English*]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in the past, one of the parts of our seven-point plan that we are undertaking before a purchase is made to replace the CF-18s is doing a full options analysis. As I said last week, the statement of requirements will be set aside while a full options analysis is completed.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first the Conservatives told Canadians not to worry because they were following the rules. Not so much says the AG in a very thick report. Now they tell us not to worry because they will throw the rules out. The minister should know Rob Ford called and he wants his media strategy back.

If the secretariat is going to look at other options, it is going to need to find requirements first. Could the minister tell us how the government would perform an options analysis without that?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** As I said, Mr. Speaker, as part of our seven-point plan, the Department of National Defence, overseen by the secretariat, will be performing a full options analysis. The current statement of requirements will be set aside while that full options analysis is being performed.

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[*Translation*]

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Laurier-Sainte-Marie Conservative riding association's list of donors not only contains mysterious ghost donors but is also a sort of corruption hall of fame.



*Oral Questions*

The names on the list include Riadh Ben Aissa, former senior executive at SNC Lavalin and the brains behind a whole system of corruption of staggering proportions, who is being charged by Swiss authorities on allegations of \$139 million in fraud.

Are the Conservatives in contact with the Swiss authorities about Riadh Ben Aissa? Why did the Conservatives and Riadh Ben Aissa choose to do all this dirty work through the Laurier-Sainte-Marie Conservative riding association?

[English]

**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, last week the hon. member was not even halfway through his cornflakes when he read a false news article about a Conservative fundraiser that he suggested that donors had not actually donated. I have in my hands the copy of the cheques of those donations, all seven of them, which have now been proven to be real and legitimate.

I now invite the hon. member, having followed that false article right into the House of Commons with false allegations, to rise in his place and apologize for getting it wrong.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague is out of sorts because there is snow in Ottawa, but it is a bit early in the season for skating over issues like this. He can do better than that.

The Laurier-Sainte-Marie Conservative riding association is a truly fascinating phenomenon. That is why the NDP asked the Chief Electoral Officer to look into these suspicious contributions because there were enough of them to raise concerns. Although some people seem to have miraculously recovered their memories, there are still too many anonymous donors. Knowing that federal funds were used in areas that are currently under investigation, we have the right to wonder whether favours were given in return for these political donations.

Why not shed some light on this issue? Why not support the request we submitted to Elections Canada?

[English]

**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, he talks about skating. He is the one on thin ice, and that ice is quickly melting under the heat and noise that he makes in this chamber.

The member said last week that the donations never happened. We now have in our possession photocopies of the cheques that show that the donations actually occurred. We have at least one of the donors who has said to the media since that in fact he did make the donation, contrary to a report in the paper a day earlier on which the member relied for his false allegations. The member now knows that he was wrong. The honourable thing is to apologize.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am astounded that my hon. colleague would think there is

something wrong with making false allegations, when that has been his *raison d'être*.

Let us go back to claims about the seven donations. We are talking about a deadbeat riding association that funnelled \$300,000. There are still donors who claim they have no recollection of having made donations. There are still questions about the donations of people such as Riadh Ben Aissa now tied to the SNC-Lavalin investigation. This just does not pass the smell test.

Will the Conservatives come clean about what happened in the deadbeat riding of Laurier—Sainte-Marie under the Conservatives?

**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, I think it is very unfortunate that the hon. member would call an entire constituency of Canadians “deadbeat”.

He should also reflect upon the fact that he, too, repeated false allegations last week. We now have the documentary evidence, which I will, with the House's permission, table after question period, showing that the donations were real and legitimate, and that the allegations of my colleagues across the way were precisely the opposite of those two things. Why does that hon. member not do the right thing and apologize?

• (1435)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have this riding association that gets 2.5% of the vote and raises \$250,000 in cash that is funnelled back to the Conservative Party. We are talking about allegations of buying an election.

Speaking of which, I see that the Prime Minister is stepping in to help the beleaguered member for Labrador by expediting a Goose Bay military announcement. The Prime Minister promised to clean up the cesspool in Ottawa. Is his idea of cleaning it up giving plum patronage appointments to the campaign manager and a big ribbon-cutting ceremony for the no-show minister?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the strong mandate we received from Canadians to support the Canadian Forces. That includes making infrastructure investments at Goose Bay and at various military bases across the country. It involves making investments in improving programs for members of the armed forces, their families and veterans.

What we do know from the NDP, the no defence party, is that it opposes us in all of these important investments that improve the way in which the Canadian Forces carries out its important work at home and abroad.

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**ELECTIONS CANADA**

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has now been eight and a half months since the Conservatives voted in favour of an NDP motion to strengthen the Elections Act. The minister continues to say, however, that he is bringing a bill forward “in due course”. The problem is that he agreed to do so by mid-September. Canadians expect action, which is why the NDP brought forward our Bill C-453.

*Oral Questions*

When will the minister bring his bill forward?

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have promised to look at some reform to election laws. I have said that a comprehensive proposal will be put forward in due course. What really hurts Canadians' confidence in our electoral system is when they hear about scandals such as the NDP accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in illegal donations. Then NDP members stand up in the House and continue to make false allegations, which they know are not true.

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[Translation]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Conservative chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence ejected a decorated veteran from a committee meeting. Now he is defending himself by calling it a simple misunderstanding.

My question for the chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence has to do with the committee's agenda. Will it now be the norm for the committee chair to eject members of the public from meetings that are supposed to be public?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we believe strongly that all House of Commons committees should be open to the public and that certainly applied to the case in question. That was a decision that was made by House of Commons security, not a decision made by the committee chair. In fact the committee chair said that he would speak with House of Commons security to determine why that decision was made. Our government certainly wants to see that all Canadians have access to the way that Parliament works.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, regardless of the nature of the so-called miscommunication, the whole idea of ejecting a veteran is just wrong. The House of Commons belongs to them if it belongs to anyone. The abuse of power that has infested the government is so pervasive that ordinary Canadians who oppose the Conservatives or disagree with them are treated with contempt.

My question for the chair of the National Defence committee is about the agenda of the committee. Is the committee currently considering whether or not to ask the chair to apologize for his inappropriate conduct?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the basis of that question is entirely false. There was no inappropriate conduct on the part of the chair, in fact the chair has undertaken to get to the bottom of what happened by discussing this with House of Commons security, which is overseen by our Sergeant-at-Arms.

We believe very strongly that House of Commons committees should be open to members of the public and in particular to members of our Canadian armed forces, who do so much to defend us and have done so much in the past. If there is any party, any government that has ever supported them strongly and wants to see them have a say in the future of the country, it is this party.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's war on science continues. The CFIA is attempting to strip the international credentials of a lab at the University of P.E.I. because it does not like the results of its work. The lab, one of only two facilities in the world recognized for its expertise in detecting the ISA virus, revealed the first evidence of the infectious virus in B.C. salmon. After its findings, the lab was hit with two audits and a request for a suspension of the lab's status. What is the government trying to hide?

● (1440)

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is absolutely wrong. The management of the lab says publicly that it expected this audit. This was done by the OIE, an international body that accredits this type of lab. It was concerned by some of the results and this is all under review.

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**EMPLOYMENT**

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives allowed 200 mining jobs in B.C. to go to foreign workers. The minister admitted this was a problem but she did nothing to solve it. She could have suspended the workers' visas until an investigation was completed, but she did nothing. The temporary foreign workers are already arriving.

Will the minister now admit that their applications were mismanaged and suspend the visas, or will she admit that the whole program is broken?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has a very firm belief that Canadians should have first crack at every job that is available here in Canada. We want to make sure that our temporary foreign worker program works to those interests. Why are we reviewing it? To make sure that this goal is achieved.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Conservatives are mismanaging the immigration file. The minister's irresponsible decision to deny access to health care for refugee claimants is forcing provinces to pick up the tab. First Manitoba and now Saskatchewan are having to pay for refugee health care because the Conservatives abandoned those in most desperate need.

Will the minister stop the divisive rhetoric, reverse this decision and provide the necessary care to the most vulnerable people in Canada?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a typically misleading question from the NDP on this issue. In fact, asylum claimants continue to receive comprehensive, medically necessary physician and hospital services. There has been no change in that respect. They do not, however, receive supplementary and extended benefits that are not normally available to Canadians.

However, in most of the cases to which the member refers we are not talking about refugees. I repeat, they are not refugees. They are people whose claims for asylum have been rejected, people who by definition are not refugees, people who are pending deportation and are avoiding their removal. Is it the member's position that everyone who is avoiding removal from Canada should get comprehensive, extended and supplemental health benefits? If so, why does she not just say it?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' incompetence on the issue of refugee health care led to general confusion about the types of health care that are covered. Even refugee claimants who were entitled were denied access because health care providers were completely confused. The rules are not clear. Several provinces have expressed their displeasure. Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan have all complained about this ill-considered decision.

Will the minister listen to the provinces and reconsider his decision?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly clear that the New Democratic Party wants federal health insurance—not just for basic services, but also for supplemental services—to be provided to people who are not refugees and whose claims for asylum were rejected after a hearing before the IRB.

We believe that the government is under no obligation to provide health insurance to those who are avoiding their removal, but unfortunately, the NDP believes otherwise.

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it comes as no surprise that the Conservatives did not show up in Halifax last week.

They did not want to face the provinces' discontent in the wake of cuts to health care for extremely vulnerable people, cuts that were made without any consultation. But that is not all. This morning, we discovered that the minister now wants to privatize refugee sponsorship and cap private applications.

Will the minister commit to working with private sponsors and not just using them to off-load the government's responsibilities?

• (1445)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is an example of the NDP's somewhat bizarre ideology. That party seems to think that the private sponsorship of refugees program is a form of privatization.

This program has always been part of our refugee system. It was started in 1979, when Vietnamese refugees were sponsored by churches and community organizations. That tradition will remain in

place, but we also have our own government program for refugees. It is a balanced approach.

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[English]

**MEMBER FOR PAPINEAU**

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday we learned of deeply divisive and anti-Alberta comments from the Liberal critic for amateur sport. They were so bad that they were worse than his colleague's, who had to step down from his role as critic for natural resources. The minister pointed out last week that the member cannot possibly stand up for Canadian athletes who are a source of national identity and pride since his comments show that he fails to represent those values himself.

Can the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism update the House on our government's position on national unity?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our approach is that we think governments should focus on bringing all Canadians together, unlike the Liberal Party, which has made a stock-in-trade of pretending to be the party of national unity while driving regional divisions at every opportunity. Just as we heard from the member for Ottawa South, the member for Papineau said that Canada is in bad shape because Albertans are controlling our social-democratic agenda, whatever that means, and went on to say that basically Albertans do not have a right to participate in this country's government. These divisive remarks reflect what the Liberals do whenever they are in office, and Canadians reject them.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a leaked memo reveals what European negotiators really think about the Conservative approach to trade. They say CETA is unbalanced in favour of the EU, that the EU "list of offensive interests...is larger than the Canadian one" and that Canadian services are on the table while Europe's stay exempted.

We already know the Conservatives are willing to drive up Canadians' prescription prices and sacrifice taxpayers, but what is the Conservatives' response to the Europeans calling them bad negotiators who are willing to sacrifice Canadian interests in order to get a quick deal?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we have said many times before in the House, we will only sign an agreement that is in the best interests of Canadians. Sadly, the member is engaging in idle speculation. A trade agreement is expected to increase bilateral trade between Canada and the EU by 20%, which is the equivalent of adding 80,000 new Canadian jobs to our workforce.

Why is it that the NDP will not support us in doing that? The truth is that the NDP is anti-trade and anti-investment. Only this government stands up for hard-working Canadians.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the agreement with China and the Buy America provisions are proof that the Conservatives are incapable of obtaining reciprocal benefits for Canadians.

A leaked European Commission document reveals that the EU wants to prohibit the use of certain recognized cheese names by Canada. The EU also wants us to open our market to new imports, even though it maintains the right to refuse Canadian beef and pork.

Will the cheese industry suffer because the Conservatives are managing the trade negotiations badly?

[English]

**Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We have made a commitment to Canadians that we will only sign an agreement that is in their best interests. We seek a balanced outcome to make sure that Canadian interests are promoted.

I would add that over the coming weeks we will continue to engage with the EU and its negotiators. We are confident that at the end of the day we will have an agreement that is truly in the best interests of Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SPORTS**

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this summer, the Conservatives spent more than \$4 million on advertising during the London Olympic Games. That is ridiculous, especially in light of the fact that it is 20 times the total bonuses paid to amateur athletes who won medals.

Instead of spending that kind of money on advertising for an old war, why not take the money and give it directly to our athletes, who made us so proud during the Olympics?

• (1450)

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are also proud of Canada's heritage and history. That is why we are creating the new Canadian Museum of History.

We are also proud of our athletes' performances in London and in Vancouver in 2010, and we will be proud of them in Sochi. We will continue to make investments both to protect and promote Canada's

history and to celebrate and promote our athletes at international competitions.

[English]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about museums. We are talking about directly rewarding athletes who contribute to our national pride as well.

It is an issue that every party should be speaking out on, but Conservatives would rather spend more on ads than athletes. Many of our leading amateur athletes live under constant financial stress, very close to the poverty line, but the Conservatives choose to spend more money on advertising the Lucky Loonie than rewarding their successes.

When will the government get its priorities straight? When it comes to propaganda advertising, why will it not put athletes first?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do indeed put our athletes first. If we look at the Own the Podium program and the investments we have made in that, certainly after the 2010 Olympics we have been very proud of our Canadian athletes.

Of course, we take every opportunity to highlight the brilliance of our athletes. We have welcomed them here on Parliament Hill, supported their programs to ensure that they do indeed shine on the international stage, and have done so not only by supporting athletes directly but also by supporting opportunities for them. For example, this government, this Conservative Party, was proud to support the 2010 Olympics, whereas the NDP actually campaigned to stop Canada from hosting the 2010 Games. Shame on them.

\* \* \*

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the premiers have not only been critical of the inability of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism to deal with refugees in a fair fashion—a minister who is very much anti-refugee, one must say—but there are also concerns at the premiers' conference regarding this minister's failure to meet the needs of the provincial nominee program.

There are provinces like Ontario that need and want more. There are provinces like Manitoba that want to maintain the numbers they are currently getting. The minister sits on his laurels and does nothing.

My question is, why?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to refugees, the government is increasing by 20% the number of resettled refugees we welcome to Canada. We are increasing by 20% the integration assistance they get. We are introducing for the first time the refugee appeal division to enhance the fairness of the IRB, something that the Liberal government refused to do.

With respect to the provincial nominee program, we have increased that program tenfold since coming to office, going from 4,000 permanent residents a year admitted through the provincial nominee programs to over 40,000. There has never been more provincial involvement in immigration in Canadian history.

\* \* \*

#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every current and future member of the House will feel the responsibility to residential school survivors as the light from the new stained glass window, commemorating their legacy, shines down upon us.

The Prime Minister's apology stated a "desire to move forward together". Will the minister commit today to providing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the budget and time needed to do the job properly. Will he include the Métis day students and ensure that all survivors and their families have the support necessary on their healing journey?

**Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to achieving a fair and lasting resolution to the legacy of Indian residential schools. The Indian Residential School Settlement agreement is court directed and agreed to by multiple parties, including legal counsel for former students and the Assembly of First Nations. Our government will continue to honour its obligations under the Indian residential schools agreement.

\* \* \*

#### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety has very little credibility when it comes to tackling the issue of sexual harassment in the RCMP. If he were serious, he would have asked for an action plan more than a year ago and the minister would never be asking the RCMP to implement an action plan without any new resources.

How does the government expect the RCMP to pay for this much-needed anti-harassment plan: more cuts to victim services, further cuts to front-line policing? How can the minister deny the RCMP the resources for an anti-harassment plan he has not even seen and did not even ask for until Friday?

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate finally receiving a question from the opposition on this very important analysis from the RCMP. We have deep concerns about it. That is why the minister has asked Commissioner Paulson to prepare a comprehensive plan to deal with gender issues and to deal with this analysis and the concerns within it.

We have also introduced the enhancing accountability for the RCMP act, which, unfortunately, the NDP has said it will not support. This enhancement would give the RCMP the ability to deal not only with harassment but also with other serious issues in the RCMP.

#### Oral Questions

● (1455)

[Translation]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP commissioner lacks the resources necessary to meet the sexual harassment elimination objectives. We are currently in a period of fiscal austerity. That means that the commissioner does not have the means to do what the minister is asking him to do. We have two choices: either the Conservatives cut funding for national security and front-line police services or they abdicate their responsibility for eliminating sexual harassment.

What choice is the minister going to make?

[English]

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is completely incorrect. We have not cut funding at all to front-line officers. In fact, what the RCMP and the commissioner have asked for is that they have the ability to update and modernize the human resources management processes to give the complaints commissioner more ability, among other things. That is what Bill C-42 would do.

We are giving the RCMP what it has asked for, but the NDP continues to vote against common sense, reasonable measures to help the RCMP restore pride. New Democrats talk a lot about it, but when it comes to action, they do nothing.

\* \* \*

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is delivering historic tax relief for Canadian families. In fact, the average Canadian family is paying \$3,100 less in taxes a year than when we took office.

Can the Minister of State for Finance please inform the House of the latest measure we are putting in place so that Canadians will save on their taxes and keep more of their hard-earned dollars where they belong, in their pockets?

**Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today our government announced that starting on January 1 of 2013, Canadians can contribute \$500 more into their tax-free savings accounts, bringing it up to a \$5,500 annual contribution. The tax-free savings accounts have been tremendously successful. In fact, over eight million Canadians have now opened those accounts.

This is an extension of our low-tax agenda directly opposing the high-tax agenda of the NDP. It is good to note that the NDP actually voted against the tax-free savings account.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Mattawin adventure centre located in Trois-Rives, in the Mauricie region, is asking us whether qualified seasonal employees will be required to leave the centre to accept other jobs now that Bill C-38 has passed. We are still waiting for answers to give to these tourism stakeholders.

Can the minister responsible rise today and reassure the seasonal employers targeted by this change to employment insurance?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's priorities are job creation and the economy. Workers are needed to create jobs. The changes to the employment insurance system help people find jobs. Full-time jobs are better for workers, are they not? That is why we are trying to help people find jobs.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives are preparing to let an opportunity to fight climate change slip through their fingers. The international community has committed to putting money into a fund to help developing countries do their part in this global fight, but there is no money in the fund to start off with and the amounts promised at Copenhagen in 2009 are still missing.

Does the Minister of the Environment intend to take advantage of the Doha conference to push his colleagues to keep their promises or is he going to let another opportunity pass him by?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, our government is balancing the need for lower greenhouse gas emissions with job creation and economic growth.

Canada will continue working with our international partners in Doha over the next two weeks to create a new binding post-Kyoto agreement that will bind all major emitters.

Canada is halfway toward meeting our Copenhagen targets. Our plan will reduce greenhouse gas emissions without the job-killing carbon tax favoured by the NDP.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**BANK OF CANADA**

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Minister of Finance announced that Mark Carney, current Governor of the Bank of Canada, has been appointed as Governor of the Bank of England effective July 1, 2013.

Since 2007, he has guided our nation's monetary policy and fulfilled a crucial role at the international level on financial sector regulation. On behalf of all parliamentarians, I would like to thank Governor Carney for his outstanding work at the Bank of Canada

and offer our best wishes in his future role as the first foreign national to serve as Governor of the Bank of England.

I would like to ask the Minister of State for Finance to comment on what this appointment means for Canada.

**Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too am thankful to Governor Carney for his leadership. I would also like to thank the chair of the finance committee for his own leadership capabilities and the great work he has done at committee.

This appointment marks the first time that a foreign national has headed the Bank of England. It is another strong example of Canada's strength in its monetary and fiscal systems. While other countries have faced significant turbulence, Canada has consistently ranked among the soundest in the world.

There is a usual practice for selection. The board of directors of the Bank of Canada will select a committee that will search for a new governor—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have finally let the cat out of the bag. The Conservative candidate in the Calgary byelection said that if she was elected, voters would have better passport services. Passports are an essential service that must be provided equitably to all Canadians, regardless of who represents them.

But it seems as though the Conservatives think that partisanship comes before consular services. Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs agree with his party's candidate, or will he condemn her comments?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think that Joan Crockatt will make an excellent member of Parliament for Calgary. People in that constituency can count on her to fight for what is right and what is wrong. They can count on her to fight the NDP's \$21.5 billion carbon tax. The Liberal Party will finally have met its match when she arrives here in the House of Commons.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after being scolded by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance has revised his figures. He now says that the deficit will be eliminated by 2015. But for that to happen, he will have to cut billions more than he already planned.

In addition to abolishing and privatizing services to Canadians, Ottawa is making the fiscal imbalance worse by handing Quebec the bill for programs it is pulling out of. This includes the cost of prisons, the health care system and pension plans. Quebec's budget was very clear about that last week.

Where will the minister cut the missing billions, and what costs will he once again pass on to the Government of Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we have said all along, our plan is to get back to balance in the medium term. In fact, it is our goal to get back to balance in this Parliament.

We started by paying down debt when we formed government in 2006, paying down nearly \$40 billion in debt. That put us in a position where we could actually react to help Canadians who were feeling the recession. That was important.

We continue on a low-tax plan and we will not do what the opposition wants us to do, and that is to raise taxes on absolutely anything and everything.

\* \* \*

## POINTS OF ORDER

### ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wish to clarify the record. I meant to say that she would fight for what is right and against what is wrong.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier today in answer to a question about a House of Commons committee and a security decision that was made, I incorrectly stated that it was our own House of Commons security under the Sergeant-at-Arms that made that decision. In fact, I have learned since that the committee actually met in the East Block, and meeting in the East Block means it is under the Senate protective services.

It is important that, when an individual says something incorrect in the House, that individual should stand up and correct it. I look forward to the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and the member for Timmins—James Bay doing the same shortly.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1505)

[English]

### FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION FOR NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

**The Speaker:** It is my duty, pursuant to section 21 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, to lay upon the table a certified copy of the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Newfoundland and Labrador.

### Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

\* \* \*

[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to 15 petitions.

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two documents to table today.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation in the 28th meeting of the board of directors of the ParlAmericas in Valparaíso, Chile, on May 11 and 12, 2012.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation in the 29th executive committee meeting and the ninth plenary assembly held in Panama City, Panama, from August 29 to September 1, 2012.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### FINANCE

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Finance regarding Bill C-45.

[English]

The committee has studied the bill at length and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendments.

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### TASK FORCE FOR THE PAYMENTS SYSTEM REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS ACT

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-466, an act to implement the recommendations of the Task Force for the Payments System Review.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River for seconding the bill.

*Routine Proceedings*

As mentioned, the bill would implement the recommendations of the Task Force for the Payments System Review. The Minister of Finance received the task force report on the payments system a full year ago, yet has failed to act on any of the report's recommendations. This report emphasizes that the Canadian economy could realize \$32 billion in productivity gains by modernizing our payments system. According to the task force, Canadian payment regulation is being quickly outpaced by countries like Romania, Peru, 27 European countries, as well as the BRIC countries.

The task force also says that, unless Canada develops a modern digital payment system, Canadians will be unable to fully engage in the digital economy of the 21st century, leading to a lower standard of living and a loss in international competitiveness.

That is why it is paramount that we implement the recommendations of this task force to put Canada as a leader in the 21st century economy.

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-467, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (labour dispute).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce a bill that addresses an important shortcoming in the Employment Insurance Act. If a business closes following a labour dispute, workers who are laid off and thrown out into the street need to be able to count on employment insurance benefits.

This is 2012. Employees are still being denied employment insurance benefits when a company closes its doors following a prolonged lockout. That is unacceptable.

This problem has to be fixed. That is why I am introducing a bill today to fix it. Workers should not be punished because the method for determining employment insurance eligibility is not suited to their specific circumstances: job loss following a prolonged labour dispute.

The solution is simple: extend the qualifying period for employment insurance eligibility by adding the duration of the labour dispute. That would ensure that Quebecers who are suffering because of this unfair situation receive the support they need.

This is the second time the Bloc Québécois has introduced this bill. Bill C-395, introduced on May 26, 2009, died on the order paper at third reading.

I hope that all members will realize that they have to support this Bloc Québécois bill in order to help these men and women who were abandoned by the federal government.

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

• (1510)

[English]

**PETITIONS**

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from thousands of petitioners who call upon the government to save the ELA, Canada's leading freshwater research station. The ELA provides essential scientific knowledge for the development of national and international policies that ensure the future health of freshwater resources and their associated aboriginal, commercial and recreational fisheries.

The petitioners call upon the government to reverse the decision to close the ELA research station and to continue to staff and provide financial resources to the ELA at the current or higher levels of commitment.

## ACCESS TO MEDICINES

**Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on Bill C-398, Canada's access to medicines regime, signed by constituents in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country, as well as other British Columbians, calling upon the government to make life-saving, affordable medicines more accessible in developing countries.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by just under 100 Canadians, mainly from Quebec and a few from Ontario, regarding Bill C-398, which is supported by the Grandmothers Advocacy Network. That network is urging all members of the House to support Bill C-398 to amend Canada's access to medicines regime, thereby giving people in underdeveloped countries greater access to these lower-cost medicines in order to help fight against diseases like HIV-AIDS.

[English]

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have around 100 signatures from folks in Ontario who want to support Bill C-322, an act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act, thus prohibiting the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horsemeat products for human consumption.

Horses are not raised primarily as food-processing animals and are often administered drugs that are strictly prohibited from being used at any time in all other food-producing animals destined for the human food supply.

## ACCESS TO MEDICINES

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to file today.



The first petition is from people all across Saskatchewan, but most especially from the Saskatoon area, indicating their concerns with respect Canada's access to medicines regime.

The petitioners call upon the government to facilitate an immediate and sustainable flow of life-saving generic medicines to developing countries.

It is a very large petition, which was worked on across the province by an organization known as Grandmothers for Grandmothers.

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition that comes from people largely in the Regina area expressing their concern with respect to the government's abandonment of the Experimental Lakes Area project in northwestern Ontario, which is a valuable environmental project for all of Canada.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to sustain funding to allow the ELA project to continue without impairment.

## THE BUDGET

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is a large one signed by people from all across Saskatchewan, especially young people, who are expressing their concern with Bill C-45, the budget implementation bill, and the deleterious impacts it will have on aboriginal people in a number of respects.

## SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition today on behalf of members of CrossPoint Christian Reformed Church in my riding of Brampton West. They are calling on the government to condemn discrimination against girls through sex selective abortions and to do all it can to prevent sex selective abortions from being carried out in Canada.

• (1515)

[Translation]

## HOUSING

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition signed by Canadians of all ages from across the country and from all social classes. The petitioners are calling on the government to take action and adopt a national housing strategy.

[English]

## ACCESS TO MEDICINES

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to bring forward a petition from hundreds of grandmothers and women in Peterborough, Seeleys Bay, Lakefield, Keene, Omemece and Gananoque, who stand with grandmothers in Africa who are forced to watch their adult children die and then care for their orphaned children.

Petitioners are calling on the government, and all members here, to pass Bill C-398 to reform Canada's access to medications regime to provide affordable, life-saving generic medicines to developing countries. I hope all members listen to their voices.

## Routine Proceedings

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition from hundreds of residents from across Canada, coast to coast, including my own riding of Guelph, who wish the government to respect the standing of Canada's Experimental Lakes Area as a unique world-renowned facility for freshwater research and education. They call on the government to recognize how important the ELA is to our responsibilities to protect our aquatic ecosystems and request that it continue to provide financial resources.

[Translation]

## ACCESS TO MEDICINES

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to rise today to present a petition signed by over 1,600 people who support Bill C-398 to amend Canada's access to medicines regime. The House will be voting on that bill Wednesday evening.

[English]

Those 1,620 people are adding their voices to tens of thousands of Canadians' who have asked Parliament to reform Canada's access to medicines regime.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to present two petitions today in the House of Commons. One is from a group of three students I met at Mount Allison University last Friday in Sackville, New Brunswick. Jennifer, John and Jamie have collected hundreds of signatures from students at Mount Allison and the University of Moncton and others who are urging the House to support Bill C-398 to do more to ensure that people in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, have access to life-saving medications. I found them to be impressive young people and I would urge the government to listen carefully to what these petitioners are saying.

## CANADA POST

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, finally, I have a petition signed by a number of residents of Bass River, New Brunswick, in Kent County. They are very concerned about the future of their post office. Their postmaster is retiring and there seems to be some confusion about whether this rural post office will remain open. They are urging the government to ensure that postal service remains for these residents of Kent County.

*Routine Proceedings*

## DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to present two sets of petitions. The first one is on financial support for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. The hundreds of folks from my great riding of Sudbury who have signed the petition call on Parliament to adopt the following policy goals: to demonstrate international responsibility by recommitting Canada to contribute 0.7% of GDP to official development assistance; to prioritize responsive funding to those NGOs that Canadians support and that have seen their funding cut by CIDA; and in the spirit of global solidarity, these constituents have signed the petition to ensure that CIDA provides in full the funding of \$49.2 million requested by Development and Peace over the next five years.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting today calls on the House of Commons and Parliament to strengthen the Criminal Code provisions to prevent animal cruelty. The hundreds of folks from my riding who have signed the petition are calling on the Minister of Justice to present legislation on behalf of the Government of Canada to increase penalties for animal cruelty under a new section of the Criminal Code.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition on behalf of my constituents calling for the establishment of a royal commission on the environment and health, mandated to examine and make recommendations respecting the deleterious environmental and health consequences of industrial processes, including the use of cancer-causing chemicals in such industrial activity.

Petitioners call on the government to implement a precautionary principle in its approach to environmental regulations in this regard, to place the burden of proof on those who would take action with respect to impacting on the environment to prove that such actions are indeed safe when there is a suspicion of harm.

• (1520)

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of several residents of Prince Edward Island to present a petition for the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development against proposed changes to the Employment Insurance Act.

These citizens are concerned that the government did not consult with those who would be hurt by the irresponsible and unfair changes to the act, and that forcing people to drive an unreasonable distance is an economic burden and a risk to their personal safety. They also express concerns over the new regime with respect to appeal and with respect to the provisions with regard to working while on claim.

These residents ask that the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development cancel the proposed changes. I would also point out that both the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservative Party in Prince Edward Island are of the same mind.

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Question No. 987 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 987—**Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to the Department of Finance's recent changes to mortgage rules in Canada, and in anticipating future changes to the mortgage rules for homeowners in Canada, has the government considered: (a) allowing Canadian homeowners to consolidate their credit debts outside of their mortgages, but at the same prime interest rate that mortgages are at; and (b) allowing secured lines of credit to remain at 80% of the value of the home, rather than the current 65%, instead of making Canadians borrow an unsecured line of credit at 7% or more, or a credit card at 18%?

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), under longstanding Canadian law, mortgages provided by federally regulated financial institutions with a down payment of less than 20 per cent of the purchase price, also called high loan-to-value mortgages, must be insured. This insurance is provided either by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, a crown corporation owned by the government, or by private mortgage insurers, which are supported in large part by the government to ensure that they can compete effectively against CMHC. Recent changes announced by the government are with regard to the rules for these government-backed insured mortgages.

As a result of this market structure, Canadian taxpayers, even if they are not themselves homeowners, have a very significant interest in the long-term stability of the housing market. This is an important reason why we have taken repeated action to ensure the safety and soundness of the housing market and the mortgage insurance sector.

Again, these measures apply only to new high loan-to-value government-backed insured mortgages. They do not apply to mortgages with down payments of 20 percent or more, where mortgage insurance is not required. In these cases, the borrower and the lender can agree to different mortgage terms. Similarly, credit card balances are not backed by taxpayers, unlike high loan to value insured mortgages, and their terms are not dictated by government. However, the government has taken significant steps to promote financial literacy and to ensure that Canadians have all the information they need to make the best financial choices for themselves, for instance by requiring summary boxes on all credit card applications.

With regard to (b), under the current rules for taxpayer-backed insured mortgages, a line of credit secured by the borrower's home, such as a home equity line of credit, HELOC, cannot exceed 80 per cent of the value of the home. In addition, for federally regulated financial institutions, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions' guideline B-20 on residential mortgage underwriting practices and procedures limits the non-amortizing HELOC component of a residential mortgage to a maximum authorized loan-to-value ratio of 65 per cent. Additional mortgage credit beyond the 65 per cent limit for HELOCs can be extended to a borrower; however, the loan portion over the 65 per cent limit needs to be amortized.

[*English*]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

### POINTS OF ORDER

#### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wanted to wait through much of our procedural moment because I have a significant point of order to raise today. It is of some duration and I wanted to allow members who have to go on to other business to do so.

This point of order is in reference to Bill C-45, specifically with the work that was done by the committees, the powers that committee have and the power that the House retains as the place that created our committees.

It is often said that committees are the masters of their own domain. It is an important concept and it makes an important point about a committee's autonomy. Perhaps you will agree with me when I say that this concept gets exaggerated from time to time by committees.

It means that each of our standing committees is in charge of its own affairs. When it is formed by order of the House and when work is assigned to it by the House, it is largely up to the committee to decide how and when to tackle it. However, it is not true, as some suggest, that this means committees can do whatever they want, whenever they want and however they want. There are rules set out in procedural text, Standing Orders and precedents of our legislature and committees cannot simply throw these rules out whenever it pleases them. Each committee may be the master of its domain in many respects but there are clear and distinct limits on those domains that committees must respect, even if it does not suit some members of the majority governing body.

In the case of Bill C-45, the second massive omnibus bill introduced by the government, the government has been stretching the limits of what can and should be tolerated from a majority government in this Parliament. Parliamentary procedural rules are clear that, notwithstanding the opposition's right to delay things that are unacceptable to them, the government must have the right to make progress on its legislative agenda in a reasonable manner.

### *Points of Order*

However, the government has already tested, and we would argue, broken, the democratic limits of our legislature by packing a legislative agenda of an entire parliamentary session into one or two bills and then cynically adding the words "budget implementation" to the front cover.

In the previous incarnation of this tactic on Bill C-38, Mr. Speaker, you heard multiple submissions from opposition members who felt that the government had simply gone well beyond the reasonable limits of what might be honestly included in its budget bill. You disagreed with the interventions of the opposition at that time, but I hope you will conclude, after this submission, that the government has simply played too fast and loose with the rules that must govern the passage of all legislation, whatever its form or title and that such action undermines Parliament's essential ability to do its work on behalf of Canadians; namely, to be able to hold government to account.

[*Translation*]

Today, I will not discuss the legitimacy or the value of omnibus bills. It is ironic that this government, in its great wisdom, is single-handedly teaching Canadians words and phrases that they would never have come to know without the Conservatives' help.

A few years ago, the government plucked the word "prorogation" from the pages of procedural texts, making it the topic of discussion around the nation's dinner tables and the impetus behind many demonstrations across the country. Thanks to the Conservatives, Canadians have had to learn a new definition of "ministerial accountability" because, unfortunately, under this Prime Minister, ministers seem to have no accountability. And they have turned the word "omnibus" into a bad word. They have systematically avoided Parliament's oversight by using this legislative tool and abusing the power of their government, which barely won a majority.

● (1525)

[*English*]

During the committee process on its most recent monstrosity of a budget omnibus bill, I believe the government has simply gone too far in its casual relationship with the parliamentary rules that govern this place and Canadian democracy, and that the legislation should be thrown out and made to start over again as a result.

I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, along with this House and the Canadians hoping for better from their Parliament, of what has transpired with respect to Bill C-45, the government's second omnibus budget implementation bill for the 2012-13 year.

On October 18 of this year, following the adoption of the way and means Motion No. 13, the Minister of Foreign Affairs moved, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, that Bill C-45 be read a first time and printed. On October 24, the Minister of Public Safety moved that Bill C-45 be read a second time and referred to committee.

After using time allocation to shut down debate again, second reading of Bill C-45 ended with the passage of the following motion on October 30 of this year:

*Points of Order*

...that Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures be now read a second time and referred to [the Standing Committee on Finance].

As a matter of record, *Hansard* on October 30 specifically quotes the Speaker saying, “I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance”.

The reference of this bill to the committee, as set out in the motion the House adopted, was always to the finance committee and only to the finance committee.

[Translation]

That is an important point. Because the House is master of its own activities, and in order to protect its rights, it must be certain that its orders of reference are complied with. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the legislative process adopted by the House, a bill can only be referred to one committee, and this committee must be the one designated by the House itself.

[English]

Committees derive their existence and authority from the House of Commons. The House creates committees specifically through Standing Order 104, which further regulates how they are constituted and governed under Standing Order 106. The House also sets out the specific mandate of each of the standing committees under Standing Order 108.

An excellent summary of this regime can be found in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, which I will refer to as O'Brien and Bosc, on pages 960 and 962, which says the following about standing committees:

They are empowered to study and report to the House on all matters relating to the mandate, management, organization and operation of the departments assigned to them. More specifically, they can review:

- the statute law relating to the departments assigned to them;
- the program and policy objectives of those departments, and the effectiveness of their implementation thereof;
- the immediate, medium and long-term expenditure plans of those departments and the effectiveness of the implementation thereof;
- and an analysis of the relative success of those departments in meeting their objectives.

In addition to this general mandate, other matters are routinely referred by the House to its standing committees: bills, estimates, Order-in-Council appointments, documents tabled in the House pursuant to statute, and specific matters which the House wishes to have studied. In each case, the House chooses the most appropriate committee on the basis of its mandate.

I make particular note that all abilities cited in this passage flow from the House, not from another committee. It is the House of Commons that authorizes these powers. I emphasize the fact that the reference on Bill C-45 to committee was only ever to the finance committee. The motion passed in the House only referred to that committee.

[Translation]

In other words, this does not prevent other committees from studying the content of different parts of an omnibus bill. The committees always have that right, but this study must be separate from the study carried out pursuant to the order of reference the House gave the committee responsible for the official study of the bill in question.

The only way for other committees to legitimately study parts of an omnibus bill is to divide it into several pieces of legislation and ask the House to issue an order of reference for the new bill or bills to these committees.

The official opposition has been calling all along for this bill to be divided and studied properly by the different committees. Members will recall that the official opposition moved a series of motions in the House to divide this bill, using the same method that was used to divide the budget bill and create and pass Bill C-46 on MPs' pension plan, even though we got Bill C-46 only after the NDP rejected the Liberals' original ill-advised proposal to circumvent the legislative process, not only for the pensions of MPs, but also for the pensions of public sector workers and RCMP members.

● (1530)

[English]

We have done this in that exact circumstance. The House of Commons took Bill C-45 and, by the powers of the House, divided out the section that was related to the pensions of members and senators.

There was a mistake made in the original proposition by the third party, I must say supported somewhat happily by the government, which would have brushed through changes that would have impacted more than 450,000 public employees, RCMP members and their families without a minute of study or debate in the House of Commons or at any committee.

The official opposition was actually paying attention to what the Liberals had proposed, while the Liberals themselves may not have, and were resistant to the idea of throwing 450,000 public servants and RCMP members under the bus for political expediency.

We divided out that section of the bill and made a counter proposal to just deal with the pensions of MPs and senators. The government was fine with that as well because that was what was actually called for by all members of the House, as opposed to what the third party suggested.

Here we arrive at the essential problem with the approach of the Conservatives to Parliament and making law. They think the rules do not apply to them and their majority means they can cook up any scheme they want just to meet the communication goals of the Prime Minister's office.

In the Standing Committee on Finance, in response to intense pressure from the official opposition and Canadians from coast to coast to coast, in order to give the “appearance” of due diligence on Bill C-45 at committee stage, here is what the Conservatives cooked up.

I will read from the minutes and will emphasize the part that is important to the future ruling of the Speaker. On October 31, the Standing Committee on Finance adopted the following. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance moved:

That, in relation to the Order of Reference of Tuesday, October 30, 2012, respecting Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures,

- (a) the Chair of the Standing Committee write, as promptly as possible, to the Chairs of the following Standing Committees inviting those Standing Committees to consider the subject-matter of the following provisions of the said Bill...

A number of the committees are laid out in this relation from the parliamentary secretary: the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food; the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration; the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development; the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans; The Standing Committee on Health; the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities; the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights; the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security; and the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

This also shows how wide a net the government cast in this bill.

Here are the important parts in the instruction coming out of the finance committee.

This is the part that we argue the finance committee never had the power to do because only the House of Commons can do such a thing.

With respect to section (b) it states, "each of the Standing Committees, listed in paragraph (a)", all of those which I just recounted:

be requested to convey recommendations, including any suggested amendments, in both official languages, in relation to the provisions considered by them, in a letter to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, in both official languages not later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday, November 20, 2012;

(c) any amendments suggested by the other Standing Committees, in the recommendations conveyed pursuant to paragraph (b), shall be deemed to be proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-45, provided that the recommendations are received prior to the relevant clauses being considered, and further provided that the members of the Standing Committee...may propose amendments—

Section (d) states:

the Committee shall proceed to clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-45 no later than Wednesday, November 21...provided that the Chair may limit debate on each clause to a maximum of five minutes...

Therefore, this is a further time allocation, now at the committee stage, and a further shutting down of debate. Section (e) states:

amendments to Bill C-45, other than the amendments deemed to be proposed pursuant...be submitted to the Clerk...

As well, there are other instructions in sections (e) and (f).

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

Some important facts immediately stand out. The committee did not present its report on the bill to the House by Thursday, November 22 at the earliest. In fact, it presented the report this afternoon. Why? Because the committee violated its own procedural rules when the government ended up in a new mess as a result of communication issues.

I also note that this study, carried out by committees other than the finance committee, is the tactic the third party used to try to improve parliamentary oversight of this bill, from what I understand.

The Liberals got what they wanted, but only because the government was all set to say it was co-operating, when in fact, the entire process was nothing more than a procedural play

### *Points of Order*

orchestrated by the government and its unwitting allies in the Liberal Party, who forgot the old saying: be careful what you wish for.

[*English*]

On the other end of this procedural spectrum, the legitimate end, the motions that the official opposition proposed to split the bill in a real and legitimate fashion, which were quickly rejected by the government almost out of hand, would have referred the separate policy areas in Bill C-45 to the appropriate committees for an actual study. Then each committee could held hearings, called a variety of witnesses with critical expertise and then having hearing points of view on the bill, could have create reasonable amendments for debate and decision in a clause-by-clause meeting in each of those committee hearings.

Finally, each committee could then have reported its bill back to the House in due course. This would have dramatically improved a flawed bill, corrected the twisting of the rules from the government and reconfirmed our collective commitment to respect taxpayer money and their Parliament. This bill has massive implications not only in what it sets out to do but its implications on this place and the legitimacy that we hold as parliamentarians to hold government to account.

In the sham of a process that the Conservatives then used, various committees were asked by the finance committee, not the House of Commons, to study and propose amendments to a bill for which it had no order of reference at all. Not only was this a procedural disaster, but because of the impossibly short timelines, there was no opportunity for reasoned debate at the other committees regardless. That last point is a matter of some debate I realize, but it further emphasizes that a process set up by the government was a true disregard for our legislative process. Committees were hearing entire sections of the bill with one or two witnesses and no cross-examination ability and moving through clause-by-clause in minutes with no discussion.

We have been left with an illegitimate process that flies in the face of our procedures and practices, the implication of which is summed up best by O'Brien and Bosc's passage on committee reports, at page 985, where it says:

In the past, when a committee has gone beyond its order of reference or addressed issues not included in the order, the Speaker of the House has ruled the report or a specific part of the report to be ruled out of order.

When committees have gone beyond their mandate in the past, the Speaker saw fit to either reject sections of that committee's report or the entire report.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, you yourself referred this bill to a specific committee. I think the Standing Committee on Finance simply did not have the authority to refer sections of Bill C-45 to another standing committee. The committee had the right and duty to examine this bill and report it back to the House, with or without amendments.

*Points of Order**[English]*

Let me review quickly, for those following at home this procedural nightmare that the government has created, a government that seems reluctant or unable to follow the rules that have been set out by this place for many decades, how a committee is supposed to deal with a complex bill referred to it by the House after second reading.

Normally, after passage of a bill at second reading, the committee which received the bill would organize its time, call for a variety of witnesses based on the lists provided by the recognized parties in proportion to their representation at the committee, hear the witnesses, formulate amendments, schedule a clause-by-clause meeting, call each clause, hear the amendments to the clause, vote on the amendments and the clauses and then, finally, vote on the bill. Mr. Speaker, you and I both know this process well. That is not what happened here.

The results of these decisions would then be reported back to the House, where the legitimacy was derived for the committee's studies. This has been a time-honoured practice and, regardless of the bill, the intensity of the debate or the divisions, it has been a process practised by governments of all political stripes.

The House, in its wisdom, has even provided a mechanism to allow for a variation on the normal progress of a bill through committee, which is called a motion of instruction. I will call once again upon the sage guidance of O'Brien and Bosc, this time in the chapter on the legislative process, at page 752, where it states:

Once a bill has been referred to committee, the House may instruct the committee by way of a motion authorizing what would otherwise be beyond its power, such as, for example, examining a portion of a bill and reporting it separately, examining certain items in particular, dividing a bill into more than one bill, consolidating two or more bills into a single bill, or expanding or narrowing the scope or application of a bill. A committee that so wishes may also seek an instruction from the House.

● (1540)

This is the power of the House of Commons. The House of Commons can send this motion of instruction to any committee to divide a bill, to bring a bill together, to study it in its most logical and proper way. That power rests solely with the House of Commons. No committee can take upon any of those actions themselves. They are not the masters of that fate.

If the government were interested in following the rules of this place and wanted to have a variety of committees study the bill, then it could have moved to instruct the committee to do so, what it should have otherwise been powerless to do. In this case, that is to have other committees conduct a review of the portions of the bill that dealt with their policy areas, transportation, Indian affairs, the environment and fisheries and oceans, and to allow amendments to those portions and to report them separately. The committee, if it felt incapable to deal with the sections of the bill that had so little to do with finance and the budget, could equally have asked the House for instruction.

However, the power to authorize this variance in the legislative process rests only with the House of Commons and not with the finance committee.

In your final judgment and assessment on this point of order, Mr. Speaker, one has to not only look at the case in front of us on Bill

C-45, how the process has gone completely off the rails, but project forward that if we allow committees to start to make these types of decisions without any authority whatsoever derived from the House, masters of their own fate takes on a more perverse nature, a more politically inspired nature and one that governments of all political stripes would abhor.

I am going to begin to wrap up in a minute.

*[Translation]*

Because no other committee was given an order of reference by the House to examine Bill C-45 and because the House did not pass a motion of instruction to complement the order of reference, I find it unacceptable that a committee other than the Standing Committee on Finance held votes on the amendments to Bill C-45, which is exactly what the Standing Committee on Finance allowed. Votes therefore took place and, as the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance's motion clearly indicates, the decision of these other committees had a binding effect on the work of the Standing Committee on Finance. Yet, this is a right that only the House lawfully possesses.

*[English]*

To be clear, any committee has the right to initiate a study on the subject matter that applies to their policy area, including on the elements of Bill C-45, that the government should have included in a separate bill. Though, even then, those committees cannot report back to another committee. Mr. Speaker, you know this well. One committee cannot just choose to report their amendments and clauses back to another, but rather back to the House of Commons from which the committee derives its power and to which it is accountable, not to another committee but to this place.

Committees also have the power to meet jointly with other committees, but there again a report from a joint committee can only come back to the House of Commons not to another committee. This point is addressed by O'Brien and Bosc, on page 983, where it is referring to a joint committee. It says the following:

If a report is adopted during a joint meeting, each committee may present to the House a separate report, even though the two reports will be identical.

I will also refer to the same chapter, on pages 984 and 985, where a committee report to the House is covered. It says the following:

In order to carry out their roles effectively, committees must be able to convey their findings to the House. The Standing Orders provide standing committees with the power to report to the House from time to time, which is generally interpreted as being as often as they wish. A standing committee exercises that prerogative when its members agree on the subject and wording of a report and it directs the Chair to report to the House, which the Chair then does.

Like all other powers of standing committees, the power to report is limited to issues that fall within their mandate or that have been specifically assigned to them by the House. Every report must identify the authority under which it is presented. In the past, when a committee has gone beyond its order of reference or addressed issues not included in the order, the Speaker of the House has ruled the report or a specific part of the report to be out of order.

We have rules for committee which show that they receive their authority from the House and which also say the committees report their work back to the House and only to the House.

*Points of Order*

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, the other committees of the House should never have accepted the request of the Standing Committee on Finance, which made them a type of subcontractor to what can only be described as the sloppy work of the Minister of Finance and his parliamentary secretary.

I think that other committees could have easily examined certain parts of Bill C-45.

These committees could have heard from witnesses and reported their findings to the House.

However, because the House referred the issue only to the Standing Committee on Finance and the government minimized the importance of our rules of procedure in order to serve its own communications purposes and appear democratic even while introducing an omnibus bill, I think, Mr. Speaker, that as the guardian of the rules that protect the integrity of this venerable institution, you should reject the committee's report and remove it from the order paper.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to your ruling on this.

On one final note, I realize without a doubt that a ruling in favour of this submission would be a strong indictment of the government. However, after all of the legislative and procedural corners the Conservatives have cut since getting their much-coveted and very slim majority in the last federal election, perhaps this would be a healthy reminder to all concerned that their power is still limited by the rules of our parliamentary democracy. Perhaps they could use this as a wake-up call. They are not the kings that lord over this country, but just servants to its people.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the hon. member's point of order and I have a separate point of order of which I have notified the clerk.

On this point of order, I think NDP members have to acknowledge that, in fact, they served in the House of Commons as the government's handmaiden. They effectively aided and abetted governing members and supported every effort to steamroll over the committee, including the committee chair, to challenge his interpretation of the rules and to overturn the ruling of the chair, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, who is universally respected as a fair and competent committee chair.

It was with the NDP's support that the Conservatives were able to speed up the process to the extent that the NDP finance critic actually agreed to give up one of the votes on the NDP side, as part of this role, to become chair of the committee to make it go faster, to actually help aid and abet the Conservatives in their efforts to move this along.

The reason this has to be raised is that one cannot talk the talk, as the NDP do, about trying to throw a wrench in the spokes of the Conservatives' wheel on this type of legislation and trying to teach them that they have to respect Parliament, but then fail to utilize every tool of Parliament that we have in our capacity to slow down

the process when the Conservatives are so intent on a counter-democratic agenda of running roughshod over Parliament and the committee process.

In fact, the member said that the NDP is against time allocation. I have minutes of the proceedings from meeting 86 of the committee where the question was put on the motion. It was agreed to by a show of hands with nine yeas and one nay, which was yours truly, Mr. Speaker. The NDP actually voted for time allocation and supported the government back on October 31.

The reality is that last week at committee the NDP joined with the Conservatives to form a tyranny of the majority to effectively throw out all the rules of the House of Commons finance committee and make up new ones that suited the Conservatives. I think it is passing strange for NDP members today to pretend that they have been up to the job of official opposition on this piece of legislation when, in fact, through a combination of incompetence and neglect, they aided and abetted the Conservatives in railroading the committee.

When the hon. member referred to the Conservatives using the finance committee, or subcontracting the government's work to the finance committee, I would argue that the NDP were part of that subcontracting effort and were part of that outsourcing. I would agree with much of the member's point of order today, but the reality is that much of his argument is not consistent with what NDP members of the House of Commons finance committee actually did.

I will give the benefit of the doubt to the member as perhaps he has not been fully informed of what actually happened on the finance committee, but I would argue that the NDP members of the House of Commons failed to stand up to the government. They failed to legitimately fight for the rights of Parliament, the committee, the members of Parliament and the people we represent at committee.

• (1550)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the practice that was followed at finance committee, of inviting other committees to study the subject matter and provide input on the work over which the finance committee properly had jurisdiction, is actually an established practice. This is not the first time it has happened. It certainly happened in the past and that alone demonstrates that it is an accepted practice.

Throughout the process the finance committee retained actual jurisdiction at all times. It was clearly the committee charged by the House of Commons to do so, and it did so. However, that should not preclude the committee from inviting input from others, whether that be other committees, members of the public, Canadians, organizations. In fact, that is something that the finance committee does regularly and, again, has done regularly over the years.

The reality is that in this complex world we live in issues can and do cross boundaries. One could talk about, for example, the contributions that musicians make to the country, but they do so not just in a cultural milieu. They also do it in an economic milieu. They are part of the economy. Does that mean we could not have it studied entirely by the heritage committee?

*Points of Order*

Obviously, as happened with the budget, we have issues that encompass the entire Canadian economy. The Canadian economy includes natural resources, manufacturing, industry, our health care sector and our cultural sectors. By the very nature of the work of the finance committee, and we can see this if we look at any consultation it does, for example, the prebudget submissions that it is once again launching, we would find that people from every conceivable sector of society are before the committee on issues that could very well be before other committees. Therefore, it is certainly appropriate to deal with issues in different ways.

The genius of our system is that we find different ways to do this. We have flexibility within and the rules provide for such flexibility. Sometimes we will have formal joint committees established between different committees that join together in Parliament to deal with a matter. Sometimes a special legislative committee may be set up that achieves the same kind of result by bringing together expertise, and sometimes a committee will establish a subcommittee of its own to deal with a particular issue.

When a committee does that, it does not surrender its jurisdiction. It is done without direction from the House of Commons to do so, but it is wholly within its jurisdiction to seek to consult and to have the work dealt with in that fashion if the committee finds it more efficient and more effective as a way of gathering opinions and getting the best possible decisions made. Throughout, the committee that makes the decision to delegate and to seek input elsewhere ultimately retains jurisdiction. The delegation is not inappropriate. It is entirely appropriate because at the end of the day the buck stops at the delegating committee and the jurisdiction stays there. Procedurally, there is nothing wrong with a committee doing what was done by the finance committee. As I say, this is something that is often done at all kinds of levels.

The opposition House leader says that when faced with a situation such as this the only way to deal with the matter is to take the jurisdiction away from the finance committee and to not simply consult with other committees, as the finance committee did, but to give every one of those other committees the same kind of decision-making power. If we were to do what he is inviting us to do, we could very much create a procedural chaos that would make it impossible for the House of Commons, this Parliament and any parliament for future generations to meaningfully deal with things. We do not want to have an American-style situation where we could go years and years without even adopting a budget because of that kind of legislative chaos and gridlock.

By the member's interpretation, not doing this could create a situation that would extend to every other bill, where the finance committee would have to study almost every single bill that ever came before the House because our first nations are part of the economy, our natural resources are part of the economy, and all those bills would have to go to the finance committee as well. I simply reject that premise. Certainly I do not think it would be a wise ruling in any way, procedurally by our history and by our rules, or in practice, to require that to be how bills should be dealt with.

Finally, the member seems to be saying that, when we are consulting, there is a problem with the notion of inviting other committees, as the finance committee did, to provide suggestions on amendments and that it was somehow inappropriate because it was

not a formal delegation but, rather, an invitation to offer suggestions. In this case that is a moot question, because there was actually no amendment that was brought forward from those committees and dealt with by the finance committee.

• (1555)

If there were a problem in proceeding in that fashion, that problem might exist in theory but it does not exist in practice. It reminds me of the way the NDP approaches things. It has an academic bent. It looks at things that work really well in the real world and says that it may work in practice, but the important question is whether it works in theory. That is the NDP approach and we see that approach at work right here in this situation.

In practice and in the real world there were no amendments that came from those other committees. There is no evil here of which the member is complaining that actually needs to be addressed because what he is concerned about did not actually happen. It may be an interesting theoretical question, and I can understand the importance of pursuing those interesting theoretical questions on the part of the NDP. However, in the particular circumstances of Bill C-45, these theoretical questions never actually appeared in practice because no such amendments came forward from the committees.

The finance committee maintained its jurisdiction entirely and wholly throughout, when dealing with amendments and dealing with the bill. It did so properly and in accordance with the rules of the House of Commons and in accordance with what the House of Commons asked the committee to do. The bill was properly reported earlier here today and it should now be the work of the House of Commons to deal with that report.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I am a bit dismayed that my colleague across the way seems to have missed the part that I said for emphasis about the concern that we have around the committee. He suggested in his last point about the moot nature of amendments coming from committees. Some of the committees were given one committee meeting to hear from a couple of witnesses, view all of the clauses of the bill that were proposed, somehow formulate those amendments in the committee, and then vet those amendments and pass them on. Some committees did in fact move amendments.

My point is that in the instruction that came from the finance committee, it says quite explicitly in section (c), "any amendments suggested by the other Standing Committees, in the recommendations conveyed pursuant to paragraph (b)," which was all of the sections before, "shall be deemed to be proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-45". It is a committee instructing a whole set of other committees to move clauses that were then deemed to be accepted as if they were moved at that committee. Committees do not have the power to do this. Only the House of Commons can convey this power upon a committee.

I would argue that this has been a disaster from the start. Initially the government said it would not split any of the bill. Then it split off MP and senators' pensions. Then, by a mistake of the Liberals, it threw 450,000 public pensioners into that submission as well, which was then changed again. We created a whole new Bill C-46, which was then passed on through the Senate for royal recommendation.



*Points of Order*

The finance minister said we were not splitting the bill. Then we get to committee and they have this cockamamie motion that sends all sorts of instructions to other committees and asks them to move amendments to clauses of the bill that they were not given time to study, with a minimal number of witnesses, and then to move those amendments back to the committee as if they had existed there, as if somehow the House of Commons had instructed them to do that.

We gave the Conservatives that option. We gave them the option to move the bill through in a timely fashion. The member talks about some sort of congressional system in the U.S. where budget bills go to the eleventh hour. We gave the government assurance of a timeline. We gave it a section of the bill to be carved out and studied properly because that is the whole function of Parliament, to hold the government to account. The government refused it and said that instead we would have this system in which we endow the finance committee with far more powers than anyone ever imagined.

If this is allowed to go on, in the future we could then say that committees are allowed to take far greater instruction, to break all of the precedents that this place guides itself by and to start instructing amendments to come from different places, instructing committees to study bills whether they want to or not, and then that all comes back to one committee, which somehow has become powerful.

In terms of the last point, that every bill, every consideration of this place has to do with the economy and therefore the finance committee, under some perverse notion by the House leader of the government, would then have to study every bill brought forward. Of course that is not what we are talking about. It is appropriate for Bill S-8 to go to the Indian affairs committee. It is appropriate for bills that have something to do with the environment to go to the environment committee, which was our point from the beginning.

The problem with the omnibus bill is that it crowded together so many various issues, which Conservatives used to say was a bad idea when they were in opposition. Now suddenly they are in government and they think omnibus bills are the best thing and start to create the largest ones in Canadian history and jam everything together. It does not work. It does not allow Parliament to perform its function for the people that we represent.

Clearly, there is a great deal of detail and procedural orientation to this, but if the government House leader chooses to ignore the most fundamental and foundational point of this point of order, then he is choosing to be blind to the fact of what his government and the finance minister created when they made this mess of a monster omnibus bill.

● (1600)

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a separate point of order regarding the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Finance. I will endeavour to be succinct in my remarks.

I do think it is important to make you, Mr. Speaker, and other members of the House aware of serious and grave irregularities that took place during the finance committee's study of Bill C-45.

On October 31, 2012, the committee adopted a motion to limit debate at committee during its clause-by-clause consideration of Bill

C-45, what was effectively a time allocation motion. I would like to draw the Speaker's attention to paragraphs (d), (e) and (f) of that motion, which read:

(d) the Committee shall proceed to clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-45 no later than Wednesday, November 21, 2012, provided that the Chair may limit debate on each clause to a maximum of five minutes per party per clause before the clause is brought to a vote;

(e) amendments to Bill C-45, other than the amendments deemed to be proposed pursuant to paragraph (c), be submitted to the Clerk of the Committee 48 hours prior to clause-by-clause consideration and distributed to members in both official languages; and

(f) if the Committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-45 by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, November 21, 2012, the Chair shall put, forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, each and every question necessary to dispose of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill, to report the Bill to the House, and to order the Chair to report the Bill to the House on or before Thursday, November 22, 2012.

Of particular importance is the phrase “without further debate or amendment”. The chair of the committee, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, correctly interpreted that motion as follows. He said, as indicated in the blues, that “First of all, with respect to the timing in section D of the motion adopted by the committee, it states that 'the Chair may limit debate on each clause to a maximum of five minutes per party, per clause, before the clause is brought to a vote'. So it's five minutes per clause, this is prior to 11:59pm, not for amendments”.

The member for Edmonton—Leduc, the chairman of the finance committee, continued by saying, “The second is with respect to the end of debate; section F of the motion adopted by the committee states: 'if the committee has not completed a clause by clause consideration of Bill C-45 by 11:59pm on Wednesday, November 21st 2012, the Chair put, forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, each and every question necessary to dispose of clause by clause consideration of the Bill'. So at that point I will deal with all of the clauses that are left if we have not completed our work by 11:59pm.”

The chair further emphasized his point by saying, “To explain this so that everyone understands, if we go past 11:59pm, at that point I will just be putting the votes on the clauses. If we have amendments left to deal with, I will not be putting forward votes on those amendments”.

The member for Edmonton—Leduc correctly interpreted the phrase “without further debate or amendment” as meaning that no amendments could be moved after 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, November 21, 2012.

However, the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca disagreed with the chair. He argued that all amendments for which notice had been given should be put to a vote. In effect he argued that “without further...amendment” actually means “with further amendment”.

The chair emphasized his interpretation by stating, “I will say though it is still my view, and it's the view based on advice from our clerks that the section you quote, section F, it says: 'The Chair shall put without further debate or amendment each and every question necessary to dispose of' but it says without further debate or amendment so that is my view...”.

*Points of Order*

•(1605)

Simply put, the interpretation of the motion by the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca was inconsistent not only with any proper understanding of parliamentary procedure but also with any proper understanding of the English language. The phrase “without further...amendment” cannot be interpreted as meaning “with further amendment”. Further, by adopting the motion of October 31, 2012, the committee showed a clear intent to prevent amendments from being moved after 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, November 21, 2012.

The motion adopted by the committee on October 31, 2012 was silent on when amendments proposed pursuant to paragraph (e) would be moved. As such, that would fall to the normal practice of committee.

Under the normal practice of committee, it is a member's choice to move or not move amendments for which proper notice has been given. When a member provides notice for an amendment at committee, it simply preserves the member's right to move that amendment. It does not require the member to move that amendment. Instead, it provides the member with a choice to move or, upon further reflection, not to move that amendment in the end. At committee, it is the member's choice.

If the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca had wanted to change the committee's rules while following due process, perhaps he ought to have tried to amend the motion that was adopted by the committee on October 31, 2012, or perhaps he ought to have moved a new motion to replace the motion that was adopted by the committee on October 31, 2012. However, the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca did neither of these things. Instead, he challenged the ruling of the Chair, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, in order to give the motion a meaning that was entirely inconsistent with its stated intent. As members know, a motion to challenge the Chair at committee is not debatable. As George Orwell noted, the ability to change the meaning of language is a very dangerous power, but that is precisely what the majority of the members of the finance committee did when they challenged the Chair and overturned his decision.

I provided notice for 3,090 amendments to Bill C-45, pursuant to the rules of this House, to committee and, in particular, pursuant to paragraph (e) of the motion that was adopted by the committee on October 31, 2012. By redefining “without further...amendment” to mean “with amendment”, all of the amendments that I had given notice for were retroactively deemed to have been moved without my consent. That choice was taken away from me, and was done so in a manner that falls well outside the rules and traditions of committee.

•(1610)

[*Translation*]

I am extremely troubled by the precedent that was set at the Standing Committee on Finance meeting on November 21, 2012.

[*English*]

I am concerned that the majority of members can now challenge a chair and change the meaning of words without any debate. I am concerned that the tyranny of the majority can be used to give a rule

its opposite intent, effectively leaving individual members without the protection of any rules at committee whatsoever.

[*Translation*]

Under the rules governing the House and its committees, decisions are to be made by the majority of members. However, the rules also protect the right of the minority to take part in and influence the debate.

[*English*]

At the finance committee, the majority of members representing the Conservatives and the New Democratic Party conspired to overturn a fair and legitimate ruling by the Chair, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, in a manner that was entirely inconsistent with a proper understanding of the English language and without any respect for the traditions or rules of the House.

The result was to retroactively deny my rights as a member of the committee, without any proper debate. The result was also to help the government speed through passage at committee. This is entirely consistent with the government's view of how Parliament ought to be handled or mishandled, but what I have difficulty understanding is why the official opposition would act as the handmaiden for the government at committee and effectively support the government and aid and abet the government running roughshod over Parliament at committee.

I will raise a point of order about the acceptability of the motion for concurrence at report stage at the appropriate time but I am thankful for the time today. What happened at committee last week was probably the worst abuse of the committee process that I have seen in 15 years in this place. To see the official opposition being complicit with the Conservatives on this perhaps reflects a misunderstanding of the rules at that time, in which case, the New Democrats should simply say that they did not understand what was going on and that they did not intend to support the government on this. That would be entirely acceptable. In fact, given the confusion at the committee at the time of some of the New Democrats, perhaps that is what happened, but it would better if they simply acknowledged that and then joined with us in opposing the government's continued disrespect for Parliament and committee.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the point of order raised by the member for Kings—Hants.

As I understand his complaint, he is concerned about the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance on Wednesday evening, particularly that all of the amendments he tabled for the committee's consideration were voted on. He says that the greatest abuse he has ever seen in the House of Commons was that the House of Commons actually considered his amendments. That is what he considers the greatest abuse that has ever happened here in his lengthy career in the past 15 years. His point of order flows from a motion adopted by the finance committee on October 31 respecting proceedings on Bill C-45 and the implementation of that motion last week at committee.

*Points of Order*

It is a foundational principle around here that committees are masters of their own proceedings. That is articulated in our procedural literature such as can be found at page 1047 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* second edition, and citation 760(3) of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* sixth edition.

While citation 822 of *Beauchesne's* says, "Procedural difficulties which arise in committees ought to be settled in the committee and not in the House", I do want to give a quick recap of events as I understand them since you, Mr. Speaker, have now been asked to make a ruling, even though I do believe the hon. member is in the wrong place when he asks for a ruling to be made.

The committee's meeting Wednesday was convened with a notice of meeting which said that the committee would give the bill "clause-by-clause consideration".

The October 31 motion, adopted by the committee in a nine to one vote, said that, if clause by clause consideration had not concluded by 11:15 p.m. on November 21, the chair was to put "each and every question necessary to dispose of clause-by-clause consideration" of the bill.

I understand that the chair of finance committee found himself, during the committee's proceedings that day, explaining what would happen to the balance of the 3,072, or so, amendments that were tabled if the clock struck midnight before the committee's work was done. I further understand that he ruled that after midnight no amendments would be voted on by the committee.

Arising from that, I am told that the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca challenged that viewpoint. These were his arguments, as I understand them.

First, that the committee meeting was convened to deal with "clause-by-clause consideration", which nonetheless allowed for amendments to be considered. Yet, apparently at midnight, the words "clause-by-clause consideration" excluded the consideration of amendments, which seemed to be a logical inconsistency.

I will add here a quotation from page 761 of O'Brien and Bosc:

Once the witnesses have been heard, the committee proceeds to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. It is during this phase of the committee's deliberations that members may propose amendments to the bill.

We see similar advice at page 997.

The member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca argued that the words "each and every question" included every one of the amendments that had been duly filed with the committee clerk. This is sensible. These are questions that need to be dealt with for the bill to be dealt with. Then he observed that when the House adopts a time allocation motion, it uses similar phrasing about "every question necessary for the disposal of the stage" being "put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment".

Mr. Speaker, when the time allotted ends on those House proceedings, you, as the Speaker, still put every selected report stage motion to the House. Bill C-38 was offered as an example when 15 motions had been moved at the time report stage debate was interrupted and yet the House voted on all of the selected report stage motions, not just the 15 that had already been dealt with at that point.

The member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca argued that the same logic should apply to committee proceedings. I certainly agree.

In summary, he argued that the committee's motion of October 31 should not be interpreted in a manner more restrictive than how the same words would be interpreted here in the House.

Committees are indeed different than the House but those differences are generally geared in the other direction, toward allowing greater participation in the committee's business not less, and that is the point that the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca argued. For example, motions at committee do not require seconds. The previous question cannot be moved. And, unless a committee orders, there are no limits on the length or number of speeches that one can make.

In any event, I gather that the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca appealed the chair's ruling and by a vote of nine to one, with only the hon. member for Kings—Hants disagreeing, the committee overturned the chair's ruling.

•(1615)

I want to pause briefly here to describe the bizarre turn of events where the Liberal finance critic tabled approximately 3,000 amendments at committee and then sought to create a procedural environment where the vast majority of those amendments might never have been considered at committee. I have heard that the finance committee chair pointed out this perplexing position on Wednesday evening. It is little wonder to me that the Liberals find that Canadians sent them to that corner over there if they pursue cynical political stunts like that. It is indeed Kafkaesque where an injustice is actually having the amendments one has proposed considered. That is the Kafkaesque world of the member for Kings—Hants.

I want to turn to what O'Brien and Bosc has to say about committees' freedom to be masters of their own proceedings. On page 1047 it says:

The concept refers to the freedom committees normally have to organize their work as they see fit and the option they have of defining, on their own, certain rules of procedure that facilitate their proceedings.

That quote actually applies appropriately to the earlier point of order we also argued.

On the next page we see that:

...committees may adopt procedural rules to govern their proceedings, but only to the extent the House does not prescribe anything specific.

I do not believe that the hon. member for Kings—Hants has cited any such order of the House in support of his case. It should also be noted that the member has also failed to present any evidence of procedural impropriety at the committee level.

The finance committee did adopt procedural rules on October 31 when it adopted a comprehensive motion related to proceedings on Bill C-45, including time spent on clause by clause consideration, as well as invitations to 10 other standing committees to study the subject matter of parts of the bill.

Pages 997 and 998 of O'Brien and Bosc speak to this. It says:

### *Points of Order*

The period of time devoted to the consideration of the bill is determined by the committee but it can be circumscribed or restricted by various factors: the obligation to report the bill within a prescribed time, pursuant to a special order of the House or to a time allocation motion, or due to limits the committee has placed upon itself by adopting motions to that effect. In the latter case, it may be a question of limiting the overall time the committee will spend on the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, the time allocated for debate on each clause and amendment, the time allocated for each intervention by members on the matters broached by the committee, or a combination of any of these.

The motion adopted by the committee accords with the scope of what the committee is entirely able to do.

Then, of course, we have the appeal of the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca. Page 1049 of O'Brien and Bosc advises that, "Decisions by the Chair are not debatable. They can, however, be appealed to the full committee". That is worth repeating. Appeals lie with the committee, not with the House. Therefore, I put it to you simply, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Kings—Hants is in the wrong place today asking you to rule on this.

O'Brien and Bosc does go on to add that, "The overturning of a ruling is not considered a matter of confidence in the Chair".

In this case, we have a committee, which by a nine to one majority voted for an interpretation of the October 31 motion, which is perfectly intelligible and sensible, and, I would argue, correct, from the words and the intent of that motion.

Not only was it a perfectly intelligible interpretation but it was the one that expanded democratic participation in committee by allowing every proposal to be brought to a vote, by not preventing matters from being voted upon. Therefore, it makes all the more sense to me that the broader interpretation of the October 31 motion would naturally suit the committee environment.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, you are being asked by the Liberals to tell the committees how to conduct their business. The Liberals are actually asking that you tell those committees to have less democracy in how they carry on their business. On the other hand, there is the long and admirable tradition of leaving committees on their own, with Speakers very rarely intervening.

The nature of the complaint here is that the amendments from the member for Kings—Hants were voted on.

Mr. Speaker, what is the evil that you are being asked to address here? The evil is that the member's amendments got voted on. I can understand that some people might consider that an injustice, a difficult burden to bear, but he is complaining that his amendments got voted on. He says that is the biggest injustice he has seen in a decade and a half in the House of Commons. As I say, perhaps it is something other people can complain of but it is certainly not something that he is in a place to complain of.

• (1620)

He says that his rights have been denied. None of his rights have been denied. His rights have actually been protected by the committee. He has a right to propose an amendment and have it considered by a committee. The committee took steps to ensure all amendments were considered. Regardless of the fact that others might not have liked it, it was certainly what he had asked the committee in writing to do. He had asked it to consider the amendments. He had put them forward, I presume, in good faith.

Though the number of 3,000 makes me wonder about the good faith nature of them, that is what he did. The committee considered the amendments the member asked it to is hardly an evil that the Speaker needs to address.

Reflecting upon these facts and our procedural guidelines and long-standing tradition with respect to the treatment of committee proceedings, I believe this case is clear cut and, in fact, actually kind of funny. The proceedings at the Standing Committee on Finance last week were perfectly in order and its report on Bill C-45 following its meeting was also perfectly in order.

• (1625)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if my hon. friend across the way finds this funny, we need to get him out more. There are some great comedy clubs in Ottawa and some excellent movies in the cinemas right now.

The only thing I would say in relation to this is that I was not at the committee and I do not think the member was either. I was not there at midnight, as riveting as the voting on 3,000 amendments probably was. My friend raised essentially two points. The first is that somehow there was some sort of co-operation arrangement between the New Democrats and the Conservatives to allow the amendments by the member for Kings—Hants to be heard and voted upon. That is a strange thing to accuse us of.

The second is that I can only surmise from my friend's intervention and the number of political accusations he has made that there is a certain amount of smarting in the third party corner over the fact that it royally messed up the notion of MPs' pensions and included 450,000 public servants, many of them supposedly voting for them in the past election who will reconsider in future ones. The Liberal Party was willing, with the contrivance of the Conservative Party, to pass in minutes changes to the Canadian pension program to 450,000 civil servants and RCMP members without any debate in the House. I do not remember the Liberals making that promise in the last election. I do not remember the Conservatives making it either. However, that should not disregard the idea that they messed it up, the New Democrats fixed it, pointed the fact out and the Liberals seemed to have a problem with us correcting their motion to allow MPs' pensions to go through and other pensions to be studied.

In sum, though, what my friend from Kings—Hants is actually asking you to do, Mr. Speaker, is something that rests within the power of committees to do. He is asking you to essentially overrule a chair on powers he has. Thirty minutes ago I made an intervention on powers that the committee chair and committees did not have that can only be derived from the House, which he then argued against.

On both points, I am somewhat confused by my friend, who I like very much and enjoy his company. He has argued against committees taking powers they do not have, then within 30 minutes he has argued to take powers away from the committees that they do in fact have and, finally, that the committee was trying to allow his amendments to be heard and voted upon. That was the effort of the committee. If he did not want them voted upon, he should not have introduced them. They were voted upon. They were not successful, but that is the nature of some of the efforts made in committee.

*Points of Order*

Rest assured, we will always protect committees' rights to perform their duties for the House of Commons and when those rights are extended beyond reason, as argued in my previous point of order, we will defend the House of Commons, which is the place where those rights are enshrined and empowered.

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, for the majority of the governing members of the committee to have the capacity to effectively make up the rules as we go and to change the rules at any given time is unacceptable. For the official opposition to support them in those efforts is more unacceptable and wrong and a failure to do their jobs in opposition.

Beyond that, the preposterous idea of an interpretation of the words “without amendment” meaning with amendment speaks to the farce that was the finance committee last week. The very fair chairman of the finance committee said that in his own words. He said, “I will say though it is still my view, and it's the view based on advice from our clerks that the section you”, the member for Fort McMurray, “quote, section f”, which the government House leader quoted, “it says: “The Chair shall put without further debate or amendment each and every question necessary to dispose of” but it says without further debate or amendment so that is my view”.

It states “without further debate or amendment”, so it is my view that the chair himself, in his interpretation, was entirely inconsistent with the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca's motion, and the ultimate decision by the committee.

Further, the government House leader said that he finds it funny. I do not think that abuse of power, whether at committee or in the House, and a disrespect for Parliament is something that is laughable.

The point is that if any committee chooses to behave in this way as a common practice, it will effectively be rendering the committee process completely useless, disrespectful and would render committees inert in terms of their capacity to do their job.

As well, the reality is that any notice of motion or notice of amendment is simply a notice that one intends to propose an amendment. It does not require one to. Rather, it gives one the capacity to either move or not move. That is fundamental to an individual member's rights on a committee. To say that this is one of the most egregious abuses of committee that I have seen in 15 years, I stand by that. I have not seen such a ludicrous and farcical interpretation of the rules to that extent of the English language.

The member said that it was Kafkaesque and it is perhaps Orwellian to interpret without amendments to somehow mean with amendments. If we are to have any respect or support for the committee process, it is important that you consider this carefully, Mr. Speaker.

It is also important to recognize that the practical reality is that at every committee the Conservatives have the majority. Therefore, if they want to run roughshod over the proceedings of every committee, they have the capacity to do that.

That is where you do have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to protect and defend the sanctity of committees on a broader scale than simply what happened at the finance committee last week. If you do not take some action on this, it sends a terrible message as to what the

Conservatives, who hold the majority on these committees, will do in the future at committees.

I do believe, and can say this for the benefit of the doubt of the New Democrat Party, that what happened in terms of that one vote was an error. I think the New Democrats are just as concerned about what is happening at committee as we are. However, I do not understand why on every vote throughout that process they were there supporting the Conservatives and aiding and abetting the passage of this omnibus bill. If they are opposed to the omnibus legislation of the Conservatives and the railroading of Parliament in the passage of it, it is incumbent upon them to do everything they can to stand up and stop it. That is where I do have concerns.

• (1630)

I like the hon. member from the New Democrats as well, but I do not understand why the New Democrats did not take a more aggressive role last week at committee and stand up to the Conservatives.

**The Speaker:** I thank all hon. members for their contributions on both points raised.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to assist my friend for Kings—Hants. In his intervention and the previous one he continued to use the term “a handmaiden to the government”. This is an offence of an antiquated term. This is actually quite serious. On the first day of the White Ribbon Campaign we talk about things of an oppressive nature, particularly toward women. To continually equate a term that was associated to women with somehow being weak and enfeebled is an unfortunate use of terminology.

I know it does not contravene the boundaries of parliamentary language, but certainly to many women watching, to continually infer that people are weak and then call them a “handmaiden” to somebody else, suddenly equates women and the position of women to having that position. It is actually offensive and I hope my hon. colleague would withdraw the comment.

On consistency in terms of “aiding and abetting the Conservative cause”, the Liberals would know this too well, having supported them on so many consecutive confidence votes time and again, the Afghanistan war and on down the line. The Liberals should hand no lessons to the New Democrats when it comes to standing up to Conservative ideology.

• (1635)

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is offended, or if anyone is offended by the use of the term “handmaiden”, I would certainly withdraw it. Perhaps ardent supporter of the Conservatives' position at committee would be more appropriate. Perhaps enthusiastic supporter of the Conservatives' anti-democratic process at committee. I would refer to the NDP as—

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. member withdrawing the term.

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 Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, National Defence.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***NORTHERN JOBS AND GROWTH ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, An Act to enact the Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act and the Northwest Territories Surface Rights Board Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am continuing on with my comments on Bill C-47.

As I indicated at the outset of my speech, New Democrats support the bill going to committee at second reading for further review.

When I was interrupted, I was referring to the legislative summary that talked about the deputy minister of what was then Indian and Northern Affairs providing reassurances to aboriginal and northern affairs members that although implementation would add to the workload of certain agencies in Nunavut, including the Nunavut Impact Review Board, they would get the resources they needed. However, it was not made clear what funding would be dedicated for this purpose.

I want to go back and refer to testimony that was before the aboriginal affairs committee in May 2010. The Nunavut Impact Review Board, among others, came before the committee to outline some of its concerns generally about the operation of its organization in the north as well as specific reference to what was then Bill C-25.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the other side for the support in continuing to speak.

The review board indicated that the draft legislation would create the one-window approach that is currently lacking. However, this does not eliminate the need for the Nunavut institutions to continue to work together. Rather, it is increasingly important in preparation for the law coming into force.

Additional resources will be required for the boards to participate in this implementation planning and in equipping the organizations to meet new requirements and timelines.

It would be essential for the Nunavut Planning Commission, as a single window into the Nunavut regulatory regime, to access the expertise held within these organizations in order to fully understand the impact assessment and regulatory processes that occur.

I also want to discuss one of the most significant ongoing challenges facing the board, which are the delays in the appointment of board members. This delay can result in a loss of quorum. The boards rely on board members to make the decisions required to fulfill their respective mandates.

Further on, the executive director of the Nunavut Water Board was speaking and indicated that he wanted to speak about the board's funding constraints:

Given the vast territory, the obligation to hold hearings in communities most directly affected, working in three languages, and the limited capacity of people and communities to engage in the regulatory process, the cost of fulfilling the mandate of the boards is high.

Again, he was referencing the challenges with the amount of resources that were provided. He went on to say:

If economic development potential in the north is a key objective of the federal government, it is the board's view that equal measures to promote and support the regulatory regimes are required to effectively and efficiently fulfill the commitments made in the Nunavut land claims agreement.

He went on to talk about how important it is to make increased resources available to the Water Review Board, but also to other organizations as well:

Accordingly, the boards recommend a review of federal and territorial resources available and required to fulfill the NLCA functions and reduce barriers to development in the north.

As I mentioned earlier, there are not any assurances in this piece of legislation that there will be the resources available for Nunavut to actually undertake the implementation of this very important piece, and that is another reason why it is important to get the bill to committee quickly, because of course it was first introduced in 2010, and here we are two years later, and because of an election, the bill was not dealt with. Of course, we have been back here for well over a year and the bill could have been introduced months ago.

One of the reasons the Water Review Board is raising concerns around funding is that it has been the experience, when other pieces of legislation have been passed, when there has not been that commitment to funding, that those pieces of legislation actually languish.

I want to refer to Bill C-34 that was passed by the Parliament of Canada back in December 2006. Bill C-34 was the First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia Act. FNEESC, which has been an advocate, actively involved in implementing that piece of legislation, has recently written a letter to the former minister Jim Prentice, indicating to Mr. Prentice:

However, unilateral action by the Canadian government is now jeopardizing the education jurisdiction initiative in BC, including the legally binding agreements and supporting legislation. Specifically, we have been unable to reach resolution with the Government of Canada regarding reasonable funding for this initiative.

Here we have a piece of legislation that was passed in 2006. Here we are in 2012, and the initiative still is not being appropriately funded.

The Nunavut Impact Review Board is quite correct in raising concerns about the fact that adequate funding has not so far been talked about.

In the last couple of minutes I have left I want to raise some concerns, overall, with the speed of implementation of land claims agreements and some of the subsequent agreements that are so important for their effective functioning.

In the second universal periodic review that was submitted on October 9, 2012, to the United Nations Human Rights Council by the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, they have raised a number of concerns about Canada's foot-dragging on these matters. In this they outline first of all the importance of modern treaties and the fact that these modern treaties represent nation to nation and government to government relationships between aboriginal signatory and the Crown in right of Canada.

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• (1640)

They go on to talk about the importance of this in terms of:

...[improving] social, cultural, political and economic well-being. At the same time, these agreements are intended to provide all signatories with a mutual foundation for the beneficial and sustainable development and use of Aboriginal peoples' traditional lands and resources.

They talk about the fact that:

The treaty rights arising from modern land claims...express the mutual desire of the Crown and Aboriginal peoples to reconcile through sharing the lands, resources and natural wealth of this subcontinent in a manner that is equitable and just, in contrast to the discriminatory and assimilationist approaches that have characterized their historical relations.

They talk about the honour of the Crown, and I will touch on a couple of the recommendations they made. First, they raised the issue of the fact that "...Nunavut, one of the Coalition's founding members..." had to file a claim "against the Government of Canada, concerning a litany of federal implementation failures in respect of the Nunavut Agreement...".

They then state:

In June 2012, Mr. Justice Johnson of the Nunavut Court of Justice ruled in favour of the Inuit, in relation to one aspect of the suit, concerning the failure to develop an ecosystemic and socio-economic monitoring plan.

It goes on to say:

Mr....Johnson ordered the Government of Canada to disgorge the \$14 million it had saved by not implementing the treaty obligation in a timely manner.

Later on in the submission to the Human Rights Council, as I had mentioned, they raised the issue about funding and the fact that funding has not been discussed, at least that we can tell, in Bill C-47.

The Land Claims Coalition has put forward a "Four-Ten Declaration and Model Implementation Policy". In this four-ten declaration, it has indicated:

A federal commitment to achieve the broad objectives of modern treaties, as opposed to mere technical compliance with narrowly defined obligations. This must include, but not be limited to, ensuring adequate funding to achieve these objectives and obligations.

It also indicates:

There must be an independent implementation and review body.

That has often been a sticking point when we come to land claims and treaties.

The document further states:

On March 3, 2009, the Land Claims Agreements Coalition released a model national policy on land claims agreement implementation: "*Honour, Spirit and Intent: A Model Canadian Policy on the Full Implementation of Modern Treaties Between Aboriginal Peoples and the Crown*"....

And in this, under the model, one point specifically related to Bill C-47 is that the model Canadian policy calls for:

Implement[ing] dynamic self-government arrangements and negotiat[ing] stable, predictable and adequate funding arrangements;

Negotiate in good faith with Aboriginal signatories to conclude multi-year implementation plans and fiscal agreements and arrangements;

Provide sufficient and timely funding to fully implement the objectives of modern treaties;

So the issue of funding is very important when we are talking about Bill C-47. It has been raised over a number of years, and we have not seen that firm commitment. The deputy minister said that

although they were considering it, he did not make any kind of commitment when he came before the committee a couple of years ago.

In conclusion, New Democrats are supporting this bill getting to committee. We are looking forward to a thorough review of a very technical, complex piece of legislation. It impacts on Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. I look forward to having that very thorough discussion and getting this piece of legislation moved forward.

• (1645)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is an incredible advocate for first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in this country, and I always appreciate her well-informed and well-researched speeches.

The member raised an important matter, that it is very important to move forward with legislation so that Nunavut can move forward on implementing its self-government and self-administration of its lands. However, as the predecessor to the hon. member as this party's critic for aboriginal affairs and northern development, I received many briefings from first nations and from the Nunavut people, expressing their concerns that the government has failed to deliver on its constitutional obligations to provide the financing necessary to implement the self-government provisions of its land claim and self-government agreements.

Could the member elaborate on that a bit?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, part of the ongoing challenge with land claims agreements and self-government agreements has been the continued lack of long-term funding, or when the windows come up when these agreements need to be reviewed, there is continual foot-dragging. That is one of the reasons that the Land Claims Coalition put forward the model policy that talks on a number of points about the importance of consistent funding.

I talked about the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the B.C. First Nations Education Act, and it is a really good example of something that has now been in place for six years and has not been adequately funded. The Nunavut land claims agreement has been in place for decades and it has taken this long to get this next phase of the agreement implemented through Bill C-47. Even with this, there still has not been that long-term commitment to funding. We simply cannot have the improvement in socio-economic status if we do not have those long-term commitments to funding.

Hopefully we will hear at committee, once we hear from the minister, that the government is committing to that kind of funding to move this next piece of legislation forward.

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's comments across the floor and concerns about the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Nunavut Planning Commission and the difficulty at times maintaining quorum, but as I understand in the bill there are at least three provisions that would look after that.

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If a member's term expires while a project proposal is under review, that could be extended in relation to the project until a review is complete. Second, if a vacancy occurs during the term, a new member could be appointed for a three-year term. Finally, the board has the authority to establish panels of three, five and seven members. I am wondering if the member opposite would agree that these would enhance the ability for the planning commission and the review board to carry out their duties.

• (1650)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, of course I indicated a number of times in my speech that the New Democrats are supporting getting the bill to committee. We are hoping that will happen fairly quickly.

With regard to the issues around quorum and board members, the testimony I was reading was from 2010, and here we are two years later when we finally have a piece of legislation that hopefully would help deal with it, but I must point out that part of the challenge rested with the government in terms of the appointment of those board members.

I would agree it is a good move forward. It is just unfortunate it has taken so long to do it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

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

\* \* \*

**SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR FIRST NATIONS ACT**

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion that Bill S-8, An Act respecting the safety of drinking water on First Nation lands, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** When we last had debate on Bill S-8, the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona had four minutes remaining in her remarks.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to sum up the address I provided on the bill. As I mentioned in my comments last week, there is a lot of support for moving forward on an expedited and complete action to provide safe drinking water to first nation communities, as other Canadians have taken for granted for many decades. We are fully in support of the government finally moving forward and expediting action on this.

The problem is that the bill is in fact hollow. There is no substance whatsoever to Bill S-8. All of the substance will come in the

regulatory agenda that is provided for in the bill. All of that action will proceed presumably in consultation with the first nations but there is no provision in that bill requiring that the government consult directly when developing and implementing those regulations with the more than 600 first nations that will be impacted.

Second and more important, the Auditor General, the expert panel that previous governments appointed to address this outstanding problem, the first nations and the organizations that represent them have been very clear over the past decades that we cannot enact legislation that will transfer liability and responsibility to first nation communities to deliver their own safe drinking water programs, if the appropriate and necessary resources are not transferred at the same time.

I am sad to say that we do not see anything in the current budget or the supplemental dollars that will enable either the necessary consultation with the first nations on developing and implementing the regulations, or the installation, operation and maintenance of the necessary mechanisms to provide the safe drinking water.

As I mentioned, there are a number of additional problems with the legislation, which hopefully can be addressed in committee. Some of those include the fact that there is a failure to establish the regulatory and operational advisory bodies recommended by the expert panel and by the first nation interveners before the Senate. Those include the first nation water tribunal and the first nation water commissions, which would genuinely provide a voice to first nations to work alongside the federal government in actually implementing this legislation, or in implementing their own regime.

That is another error in the legislation pointed out by the head of the Assembly of First Nations. There is no recognition in this legislation that the first nations themselves may already have a regime for safe drinking water or may choose to go down the path, with assistance from the federal government, of implementing their own regime.

There are also problems with the non-derogation clause, which one could shoot a cannon through, a huge exemption. Clause 7 also provides a potential conflict with section 35 of the Constitution, where it would allow federal regulations under Bill S-8 to prevail over first nation laws.

In closing, I would like to share a very strong comment by National Chief Shawn Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations in his submission to the Senate in their review of Bill S-8. After going through a number of these additional concerns, where he welcomes some action finally by the government, he remonstrated with them for these kinds of concerns and also for the failure to consult. He said:

Bill S-8, as part of ongoing process started with Bill S-11 prior to the [Crown-first nations gathering], continues a pattern of unilaterally imposed legislation and does not meet the standards of joint development and clear recognition of First Nation jurisdiction. The engagement of some First Nations and the modest changes made to the Bill do not respond to the commitment to mutual respect and partnership envisioned by the [Crown-first nations gathering].



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As I shared at the outset of my speech last week, even the first nations in Alberta, in Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8, while they expressed gratitude to the minister for finally coming back and consulting them in greater detail, said very clearly that they did not think it was appropriate to move forward until there was the adequate funding and an undertaking to directly engage them in the development of the regulations.

• (1655)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for raising key points here in the House as to why we oppose Bill S-8.

I wonder if she could elaborate on a very disturbing trend we are seeing from the government with regard to first nation legislation and the lack of consultation, not just in the context of Bill S-8 but also when it comes to matrimonial property rights and first nations' accountability. I would like to hear the member's comments on how she views this approach.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her continued advocacy on behalf of the first nations not only within her constituency but across the country.

Indeed, it is a concern that not just the official opposition is raising. New Democrats are raising this concern on behalf of the first nations who have been trying to get the federal government to live up to its commitments under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, by which the government has committed to respect and honour the right of first nations to self-determination and self-governance.

At the Crown-first nations gathering this past January, there again was strong language by the Prime Minister of this country on behalf of the government to strengthen and reset the relationship with the Crown and first nations and to move away from the unilateral imposition of policies and laws. Yet in Bill S-8 we see the same old same old.

Frankly, I am stunned given the constitutional obligation upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada on the federal government's duty for advanced consultation, consideration and accommodation of first nations' rights and interests to the peoples and their lands. It is rather stunning that even the government's own environmental legislation requires that the public be consulted when it is developing an array of environmental laws, yet it did not see fit to impose at least that precondition in the promulgation of regulations under the bill.

Overall, there was some movement, grudgingly, toward consultation on Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8 in Alberta, but that was because first nations remonstrated so strongly that they needed to be consulted.

• (1700)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that my hon. colleague is well known for her work in environmental activism and being a leader in calling for states and obviously Canada to take a lead role in that area.

The question of ensuring safe water systems has an environmental aspect to it. I am wondering if she could comment on how Bill S-8 fails to ensure environmental sustainability.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I am not necessarily convinced that this particular act should be the one to protect source water, but she raises a very important point. It is something that I and many others have researched and spoken out about as the dialogue has proceeded over several decades on how to ensure safe drinking water for first nation communities. The problem is at the federal level. There has been almost no exercise of the mandate to protect source water, which provides the sources for safe drinking water for first nation communities. Why is that a problem? When source water is not protected, the cost of cleaning and making drinking water available is all the more expensive.

The government is, instead, going in the opposite direction. It is going backward and making it more difficult for first nations to intervene in hearings, without providing them the expenses and expertise to intervene when other major energy and resource projects may impact the sources of their safe drinking water.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House to speak to such an important piece of legislation that will have a direct impact on my constituency of Churchill in northern Manitoba.

I have the honour of representing 33 first nations in northern Manitoba. Many of these first nations have tremendous opportunity. They have the youngest population in Canada. The young people on these first nations are looking toward training and education, opportunities in the job market, the ability to have families and the opportunity to contribute to their communities in all sorts of ways. However, along with these opportunities are some significant barriers and none perhaps is more entrenched than the lack of access to safe drinking water, which a number of the first nations that I represent face. It is obviously a barrier that affects their day-to-day lives in a very real way. It is not a question of comfort; it is a question of basic health.

Aboriginal people as a whole in Canada share a lower life expectancy than non-aboriginal people. I think we would all agree that the fact that first nations people live less than everyone else is shameful in a country as wealthy as Canada. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out why that is the case. One of the indicators is the lack of access to basic rights, including the right to safe drinking water and the use of safe water systems. That is very much the case with respect to some of the first nations that I represent. I have seen it first-hand.

I want to share the experience of the Island Lake first nations. It is a group of four first nations located on the east side of Lake Winnipeg close to the Ontario border. The Oji-Cree people live there in the communities of Garden Hill, St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack and Red Sucker Lake. These first nations are isolated in that they do not have a road that they can use year round to access their communities. People must depend on the ice roads to get in and out at an affordable cost. The only other option is flying in and out, which is completely out of the reach of the average resident of these communities. It is often only used at the eleventh hour when people either need to see a doctor or need medevac because of an unfortunate urgent incident.

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These communities face some of the highest levels of water insecurity. I had the opportunity to visit these communities on many occasions. I even drove on winter roads. The lack of access to safe drinking water is one issue that has come up time and time again.

I also had the opportunity to visit St. Theresa Point during the H1N1 outbreak, which impacted the Island Lake first nations disproportionately. Many medical professionals indicated that the number one reason why more people on Island Lake were impacted by H1N1, and by impacted I mean sent to emergency wards in Winnipeg and other communities, is that they did not have access to safe drinking water. What was so disturbing and disgusting at the time was the federal government's slow reaction to the demands for hand sanitizer and a long-term investment in water infrastructure, when it was so clearly linked to the serious health implications that we were seeing.

Shortly after that the federal government made some basic commitments to the Island Lake first nations. I remember being in Garden Hill when one of those commitments came to fruition in the form of large bins to be used as toilets. Everyone in the House and probably everyone across Canada would agree that is not only an inadequate response but an offensive response, when the day-to-day reality on first nations is one that is so far off the average Canadian's. It is quite clear that inadequate sewage and water systems have held people back on these first nations and continue to hold people back.

● (1705)

It is an issue that has been raised by local and regional leadership. We have seen the federal government respond to these demands in a very inadequate way through the continuous use of short-term and, in some cases, even offensive measures through the sending of bins to be used as toilets.

The fact of the matter remains that these are not issues mired in silence. There are international campaigns that have focused on the plight of the Island Lake first nations and other first nations in Canada, pointing to the lack of water security and the need for immediate action by the federal government.

I want to reference a study that was commissioned by the government itself that found that an investment of \$5 billion over 10 years was needed to truly ensure safe water systems for first nations. This also included the need for an immediate investment of \$1.2 billion. That study was commissioned by the government itself, so the numbers are clear, stark and significant. This would be an answer to what is perhaps the clearest indication yet that there are still first peoples of Canada living in third world conditions, which is unacceptable.

Instead, however, the Conservatives have only committed \$330 million over two years. We saw that in 2010 and no commitments were made in 2011. Now we are in 2012. As we know, as these first nations communities grow, the need to access safe drinking water only grows along with them.

What we have here today is again an inadequate and very problematic response to a very serious issue facing first nations.

We as New Democrats are proud to be able to work with first nations' national leadership, but also regional, local leaders and

community band members to say that Bill S-8 is absolutely the wrong way to go.

I want to make another point as well. One wonders how a government could go so far back in time. One only has to look at the kind of legislation the government is bringing forward when it comes to first nations to understand that trend, because Bill S-8 also involves no consultation with first nations. This is not an optional piece. We certainly have learned from our political and societal evolution and the mistakes of the past that if we do not consult with first nations and use a top-down approach, it is the wrong way to go. It simply revives the colonial relationship that Canada for so long imposed on first nations, a relationship that has caused nothing but grief.

We have an opportunity here to break free from that trend and sit down with first nations to not just hear from them or media reports about how bad things are, but also to work to find an adequate solution that works for them. This lack of consultation is extremely disturbing.

The Conservatives have a track record of broken promises. In March 2006 they announced a plan to implement the protocol for safe drinking water for first nations communities. Their piecemeal strategy was not fully implemented and failed to solve the problem. In 2010, the Conservatives introduced Bill S-11 to improve standards for first nations' drinking water quality, focusing on existing provincial regimes, contrary to the preference of its own expert panel and the wishes of the Assembly of First Nations.

Aboriginal groups were also unhappy with the legislation because the government failed to adequately consult them, ignoring first nations' right to self-government and to water and environmental protection. Now the Conservatives are introducing Bill S-8, with only minor changes from previous legislation. Again, I want to reiterate the important point about lack of consultation.

● (1710)

I noted earlier in response to the speech by my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona that we are seeing this disturbing trend in a host of pieces of legislation when it comes to first nations. The same applies to the matrimonial property rights bill and the first nations transparency bill. First nations have caught onto this and so have Canadians. For us to move forward, however, consultation with first nations is absolutely key.

The Prime Minister himself indicated that he was interested in a new relationship and a new chapter when it came to first nations. It was something he spoke of very clearly in his apology to residential school survivors and those who have suffered the intergenerational trauma of residential schools. Evidently, they are just words because when it comes to action, we are seeing bill after bill seeking to impose a framework on first nations without consultation. However, the government goes even further by imposing some real challenges when it comes to respect for aboriginal rights.

The regulations in Bill S-8 would overrule any laws or bylaws made by a first nation. However, interestingly, the bill would limit the liability of the government for certain acts or omissions that occur in the performance of its duties under the regulations.

Therefore, we see a system with two standards. One is for first nations in taking on a liability without, of course, the necessary support for building infrastructure and human resource capacity to deliver safe water systems. On the other hand, the government is able to run away from its own potential liability. If that is not a clear indication of how unfair Bill S-8 is, then I do not know what is. I believe this to be an indication that the government would pull away from its own commitments. I would also note that this is an option that the government is increasingly interested in as it moves forward in reaching out to first nations.

Another key trend that we are seeing, not just in terms of first nations but also in terms of the provinces, is the Conservative government's zeal in downloading services and responsibilities on other jurisdictions.

Let us look at the example of first nations, the most impoverished jurisdiction in the country bar none. They are not like municipalities or provinces that face challenges. We know that the situation first nations face in terms of lack of resources and capacity is the most extreme. However, the government, through Bill S-8, would like to download a critical service, which it ought to be responsible for, onto first nations without giving them the support they need to ensure they have the right infrastructure and capacity.

That is setting them up to fail. It is the federal government absconding on its responsibility and it really speaks to its lack understanding of its fiduciary obligation to first nations. Perhaps, more broadly, it is a complete lack of vision when it comes to building a better Canada. I believe this is the saddest part of what we are debating here and what we often debate in the House.

The Conservative government, with its omnibus budget bills, and with health transfers and support for post-secondary education and the need for stronger infrastructure programs, is like no other in its desire to pull away from what is fundamentally its responsibility.

• (1715)

We saw a similar kind of zeal under the Liberal government in the 1990s. One would have expected the Conservative government to take note of that kind of approach to governing. The government has taken it to the next level at hyper speed, saying that it has nothing to do with fundamental services that ought to be offered to Canadians. That is something that I and many other Canadians we are increasingly opposed to. The federal government has less and less to do with health transfers, with supporting affordable education and with making sure that our roads are of good quality and that there is adequate infrastructure in communities, and with playing a role when it comes to protecting the environment and with supporting people at the margins of society in achieving a better quality of life and, most specifically, in the context of Bill S-8, with making sure that first nations have access to safe drinking water like any other Canadians. It is a sad state of affairs when the leadership of the federal government pulls away from its responsibility and the concept that a better Canada involves a federal government working with other partners, including in consultation with first nations in

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addressing the real gap that exists with the lack of safe drinking water in first nation communities.

I know well the experience of first nations communities in my part of the country in northern Manitoba. However, I also know there are many members across the aisle who also represent first nation communities where similar challenges exist, where they see people getting sick because of the lack of safe drinking water and living in abject poverty without the kinds of services other Canadians take for granted. I would ask them what they are doing for those people and why they are letting go of the responsibility they have to ensure that first nations, Métis, Inuit and all Canadians have access to the kinds of infrastructure we all expect in a country as wealthy as Canada.

I am proud to be part of the New Democratic Party that stands with first nations and opposes legislation that re-enacts the colonial relationship and fails to consult with first nations. I am proud to be part of a party that calls for immediate action so that first nations can live in dignity, the way we all deserve to.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in her speech, my hon. colleague mentioned that, in a country like Canada, we should not have communities living in abject poverty, in third-world living conditions, and we should be taking care of these communities. She also talked about the fact that this has not gone unnoticed by the international community and that our reputation regarding how we treat aboriginal communities is being disparaged around the world.

Several UN reports—particularly concerning the rights of the child, respect for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—have been critical of Canada, saying that Canada is not meeting international standards and that aboriginal communities, and especially children, are living in extremely vulnerable situations.

NDP members are not the only ones who recognize the seriousness of the situation facing our aboriginal communities, for the international community does too. I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised a crucial point.

The truth is that, more and more, the international community is watching how Canada treats its aboriginal people, Canada's first nations peoples. And it is truly shameful.

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Whether a question of access to clean drinking water, violence against aboriginal women or a lack of support for first nations education, the Canadian government's attitude represents a step backwards in terms of the promises made to first nations people. Furthermore, statistics on aboriginal peoples' living conditions in Canada also confirm this. The fact that the international community is talking about this proves how much Canada's reputation has suffered.

It is crucial that the Conservative government improve Canada's reputation by taking action to ensure that aboriginal people in Canada live in dignity, like all other Canadians.

[English]

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Churchill. My goodness, one would think we never invested a dollar in first nations. We have invested over \$3 billion in infrastructure for fresh water and waste water for first nations since 2006. That includes \$330 million over the next two years.

The minister has already indicated that first nations certainly will require additional support to participate in regulatory development and funding will be available. The government will continue to provide funding for improvement of infrastructure and capacity development.

I cannot believe the member across the way has actually said that we have not done anything for first nations. Could that member actually recognize that we in fact have put billions of dollars into first nations fresh water and waste water infrastructure?

• (1725)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I would hope the member across would listen to my speeches perhaps a little more carefully. He might not want to, but certainly the statements he attributed to me are not the case. I would ask him perhaps to read *Hansard* just to clarify that point.

It deserves clarification and it is something that I referenced in my speech. A study commissioned by the government found that an investment of \$5 billion over 10 years was needed, with was immediate investment of \$1.2 billion. Instead, the Conservative government committed only \$330 million over two years in 2010 and nothing in 2011.

Investing \$330 million, and we do not know how much of that money actually went on reserve to fix the systems there, does not mean that everybody gets a bit of good water. It means some people might get it, but there is a whole lot of people who still do not have access to safe drinking water, like the people I represent. I invite him to come to the Island Lake to see first-hand the precarity in which people live in Canada in 2012.

I also note that this legislation does not have any funding attached to it, so I would expect the same vigour that the member used to ask his question might be applied to asking his own colleagues to ensure that legislation to deal with something as serious as unsafe drinking water actually has money attached to it to make a difference, not just words.

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague was very clear in her excellent speech that on any

legislation that needs to be brought forward in the House, the people who will be affected should be consulted. Clearly, that has not been the case with Bill S-8.

In legislation that has come from the government in the last number of weeks in regard to our first nations, about transparency, about land rights, we have seen a downloading of responsibilities to the first nations, but yet there is no investment, there are no resources attached to it.

We have seen the government downloading issues to the provinces, whether it is health care or other responsibilities on which traditionally the federal government has taken a leadership role.

Conservatives talk about investing in our young people. My colleague talked about investing in our aboriginal young people who are the largest young population in our country. Yet we see no investment in housing or in education. Could the member talk about those?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's raising such important points, in terms of Bill S-8, but more generally the extremely problematic trend the Conservatives have been applying when it comes to downloading critical services onto other jurisdictions without the kinds of supports necessary. It is interesting to hear the government take that approach in various different areas.

We have seen from before that downloading often leads to serious problems, a lack of equality of service and in many cases a phasing out of the service entirely. I can speak to the fact that airports and even the Port of Churchill in my riding have been downloaded onto other jurisdictions and also private entities and we have seen the quality of service suffer as a result of that.

When we are talking, though, about something as critical as safe drinking water, there is no room to gamble with this. It is clear that proper consultation needs to take place. The figures have been made clear as to what kind of investments are needed in order for first nations young people to excel in school or go on to employment opportunities when they do not have clean water to drink, when they do not have water to wash their hands, when there are not adequate sewage systems available? That is the kind of fundamental piece we are talking about here, not some pie-in-the-sky luxury but basic safe drinking water.

The fact that we are talking about this in 2012, almost 2013, is absolutely shameful. We on this side demand that the federal government step up to its fiduciary obligations, consult with first nations and make the investments that are needed to ensure that all first nations have access to safe drinking water.

• (1730)

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate today on safe drinking water for first nations.

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As someone who in a previous career had some sense of responsibility for drinking water facilities in a municipality, I find it incredulous that in this day and age we have communities of people across our nation who do not have clean, safe drinking water, running water or waste water facilities that nearly everyone else in the country takes for granted. These are not people who are living in a cabin for two weeks and draw a pail of water from the closest river or lake because they are looking for the great outdoor experience, if one could put it that way. Rather these are folks who live their daily lives without clean, safe drinking water.

My friend across the way from Medicine Hat, who I like immensely, talked about the fact that the government deserves some credit with respect to spending \$3 billion since 2005-06 on safe drinking water for first nations. It did. The difficulty is that there are still 124 first nations communities across this vast nation that still do not have any safe drinking water, not 124 individual homes or individuals. It is not a question of people living in homes inside these communities who in a pinch can go to their neighbours to get some water. They do not have any. That cries out for action.

If it was the case that 124 non-first nations communities across this great land did not have safe drinking water, there would be a heck of a lot of folks not sitting in municipal office for very long since it is the purview of municipalities across the nation, outside of first nations, to govern the safety of the water systems, whether it be for drinking water or waste water.

Clearly this requires some investment. As my colleagues have pointed out, it was reported back to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, which commissioned the report that was done in 2011, that there was a financial commitment needed in infrastructure beyond what had already been done. Therefore, it is all well and good for the Conservatives to say that they have done that, which is fair, because some work has already been done, but it is not finished. Clearly, the report said that an additional \$4.7 billion over the next 10 years was needed to ensure that first nations communities had water and waste water systems that were up to date.

Clearly, the needs with respect to safe drinking water for first nations are not being met, unlike our needs here. Whenever we simply hold up our hand or glass, the tap delivers a glass of clean drinking water, and I am grateful to the tap for bringing that. We have no issue getting clean drinking water. In fact, it is almost instantaneous. Yet when first nations look for clean drinking water, it perhaps another one, five or ten years, or perhaps not in their lifetime, depending how old they are, before they can go to the kitchen, turn on the tap and drink the water.

That is somewhat incomprehensible for most of us because of where we live. The federal government must know how wrong that is since it has a treaty obligation to ensure that first nations actually get safe drinking water and a waste water system that adequately takes care of all of that grey water that needs to be disposed of and handled correctly so it does not end up polluting a river that people draw water from.

• (1735)

It would seem that we need to start thinking about how to correct this injustice, because it truly is an injustice of a magnitude that I

think a lot of us have not turned our minds to. Perhaps that is the problem with this legislation. Perhaps what happened is one did not turn one's mind, when the legislation was drawn, to not just the complexity of it but the magnitude of it, and recognizing that, because of the complexity and the magnitude, it will require funding that is greater than what is offered by the government today.

Ultimately, all of us deserve to have clean potable drinking water and a waste water system that is effective to ensure that our kids are not sick and that our grandparents do not drink bad water because they did not boil it sufficiently. The number of boil water advisories across first nations is another unfathomable statistic.

In my community many years ago, when I was deputy mayor and acting mayor, I received a phone call, which is every mayor's worst nightmare, other than Rob Ford being tossed out by the courts, I suppose. The worst nightmare, other than the death of an employee, clearly, is from the chief engineer of the water system saying that he had just run some tests and it might be necessary to issue a boil water advisory, and that, by the way, as the acting mayor, I would need to go on the radio and make the announcement. If that does not set fear in the heart of an acting mayor, I do not know what else would. Forgetting one's anniversary might be an issue but I leave that to those who have been married for a longer time and who had forgotten an anniversary.

When that happened to me as the acting mayor, I was told that a couple more tests would be run and then I would be called back. I crossed every finger and toe I had, my arms and legs to boot, hoping that the call back from the chief engineer from the water system would be that it was okay, that it was just a bad test, that the testing procedure had failed, that it was a contaminated bottle, that they had retested three times, that everything was good and that we were in the clear.

Fortunately for me, that was the case and I did not have to go on the radio and tell the town to boil water and to boil it for the next couple of weeks until we had cleaned and flushed the entire system. That is what would have had to be done.

We do not have systems here. This is not a question of saying, "Oh, by the way, we will just flush the system out, clean it out and we will go again". It does not exist in these communities. That is why the extent of the infrastructure money required is as high as it is. I am sure the government side is saying that it is a lot of money. The \$4.7 billion investment over the next 10 years is a substantial investment but it is the correct investment. It is a just investment. It is an investment we expect in our communities to the point where we actually have it. We live in communities that expect to have good, safe drinking water.

Here in Ottawa, which provides the drinking water for most of us here, it is safe drinking water, as it is across many of the communities. This is a right we expect and, in fact, take for granted. We turn on the tap, fill up the glass or the kettle to make some tea or coffee and we drink the glass of water or give it to the grandson, son or daughter, mom or whomever, knowing it is perfectly safe, and it is.

*Government Orders*

Now we must think about the first nations people. In the summer, when it is warm and their children are asking for a glass of water, the parents need to think about whether they have boiled any water lately and, if not, will need to boil some now. The children are thinking about whether they really need to do that because they are at an age where they are precocious little things. Instead, they get their own water and now they are ill because we did not do what we needed to do, which was provide a system that provided safe drinking water in the first place.

● (1740)

It is our responsibility for clean water because it is still under the act for us to have those negotiations. That leads me to the second piece of the legislation when first nations are saying to us that we have an obligation to talk to them about how we would implement these systems under treaty rights. It behooves us if that is the case.

I watched intently earlier this year when the first nations came to the Hill. The Prime Minister met with them, as did the minister and the parliamentary secretary. They talked about going forward with a new spirit of co-operation, dialogue, respect and understanding of our two nations. That is admirable but it is only words if that is all it becomes because here is the test. It is a fundamental test of people, not just first nations people but people in general, to expect to have safe drinking water and a waste water system that is effective and keeps them from getting ill.

When we happen to have that jurisdiction, we then have the responsibility to talk to them under treaty rights, ask them how they want to do this and tell them that we will be a funder of it. That is our obligation and responsibility. We should do that. However, we have an obligation to talk to them about it.

One of the things I found as I researched this piece, not being an expert on first nation treaties, is that it says that any abrogation or derogation from those aboriginal and treaty rights, any infringement of those rights, must be justified in accordance with the test for justifiable infringement enunciated by the Supreme Court of Canada. What do they include? They include whether a measure interferes with a preferred means of exercising a right, whether there has been as little infringement as possible in order to effect the desired results, whether in a situation of expropriation fair compensation is available and whether the aboriginal group in question has been consulted with respect to the measures being implemented.

When we look at the regulation part of Bill S-8, rather than being discussed with first nations and coming to agreement with first nations, it defers to provincial regulation. No one is saying those regulations are bad, albeit in Ontario we had to change our regulations after the Mike Harris debacle of Walkerton. I have seen the regulations but they actually have not been implemented in the province yet. For those who have not read them, I could provide members with a link to the website because it will probably take members about a month and a half to read them all. Even those regulations, if implemented, will put about 40% of the water systems in the province of Ontario out of business because there are not enough qualified people to meet the standards under the regulations, let alone if we imposed that on first nations across the country.

What first nations were telling to us was that we came to them with that spirit in the early part of the year but they wanted to know

what happened to the consultation process when it came to the bill. What we know is that there was none.

I am surely not a legal expert, never having been a lawyer. I am not sure being a jury foreperson makes me be a legal expert but I will make a stab at it. In one of the Supreme Court's justifications, it says that whether the aboriginal group in question has been consulted with respect to the measures being implemented would be an allowable piece to let them out from underneath that. We know from the first nations and chiefs across the country that they were not consulted. That being the case, then it would seem that this is not a justifiable exemption in the sense of putting it aside and not talking to them.

● (1745)

It may have been well-intentioned from the minister's side when the legislation was put together to say that since the provinces have good regulations for water we should just use those. The minister should have sat down with the first nations and bargained under the treaty rights. He should have asked them what they thought about the provinces' regulations, which are pretty good and stringent, and that if the federal government provided the essential resources, the money, would they like to use the provincial standards. They may have agreed but we will never know because they were not asked. One should never assume that the answer to a question is yes if one has not asked the question. More important, one needs to discuss the issue because that is an obligation. Unfortunately, we did not do that in this case and that is what the first nations are telling us.

Here we are, at the end of 2012, albeit only a year since the last report was done, where we have 1,880 first nation homes with no water service. There is no such thing as opening the tap, filling a glass and drinking, safe or otherwise, because there is no water in the house. We know there are 1,777 homes that have no waste water. Not to try to be overly colourful, but that really means they have to bucket, because when it is -30° outside one uses the bucket. No one goes outside to the outhouse even if one has an outhouse.

The bill needs some real work. It needs to address the issues that first nations have identified. More so, it needs to address the report that the department commissioned. It received the report which outlined for the department where it needed to go and what it needed to do. Therefore, it was not a question of not being sure what to put in it. The department did its homework and found out what was needed but it did not provide a solution. The solution was outlined in the report but it chose to ignore its own report that showed the path to fix the issue that has been here for a long time. If we go back to the nineties we see that 25% of the homes in first nations the drinking water issue was quite reprehensible. By 2001-02, it was 75% homes. It had actually become worse.

The present government was not in power then. It has made a stab at making it better but it could have fixed it if it had followed the report. The report outlined how to do that but the government chose not to. That is what this side takes great umbrage with. It is not the official opposition saying that the government should spend the money. We are simply saying that this is what the report said is the fix. However, first and foremost, it said to speak to the first nation leaders and ask them if this is the fix that they require and want so that in the end they will say how we can fix this issue together.

*Government Orders*

Would that not be a wonderful result if, at the end of the day, the government could say a few years from now that it fixed this issue? Finally, a Canadian government that said it would fix it and you could stand up and take the congratulations along with first nation leaders for accomplishing it together. That would have been a great feather in your cap but, unfortunately, you let it slide away.

• (1750)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before I go to questions and comments, I want to remind all hon. members to address their comments to the Chair rather than to their colleagues individually or collectively.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite spoke of the results of the national assessment and the need for action. Following the release of the national assessment results, the Government of Canada committed to taking concrete action to support first nation communities in improving access to safe, clean, reliable drinking water. On-reserve water and wastewater issues have been identified as a priority.

The work being done in response to the national assessment has focused on three pillars in order to reduce the overall risks to first nations: enhanced capacity building and operator training, enforceable standards and protocols, and infrastructure investment. Over the last 12 months the federal government delivered in each of these areas. We agree that much more work needs to be done, which is why we are moving forward with this bill.

Why is the member opposite standing in the way?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, New Democrats would never stand in the way if the government actually proposed how it intended to fix the system. It has found a leaky pipe and is trying to put a band-aid over the leak hoping that will fix it instead of cutting that section of pipe out and putting a new piece in place. One of the things I learned at the municipal level is that if we keep patching an old road, eventually someone will go down a sinkhole.

Yes, the government is going to spend \$330 million over the next couple of years. The report asked it to spend \$470 million per year over the next 10 years. I will do the arithmetic: \$330 million over two years is \$165 million a year. The report asked for \$470 million per year. The government is off by \$305 million a year and has a ways to go to make it up. We should ask the other side if someone else wants to find the additional money to actually fix the system as we go forward in the 21st century, when we still have people who do not have safe drinking water, running water or wastewater systems in their homes. That is reprehensible and what needs to be fixed.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Welland for outlining some of the serious flaws in this bill and the serious inaction on the part of the government. We are talking about a very serious issue, drinking water in first nation communities. It is an extremely serious issue. Everyone should be entitled to good potable water.

Like him, I also maintain that the government has a Walkerton mentality. It does not listen and does not notice the warning signs. There are four ministers sitting on the front bench who were

involved in the Walkerton tragedy: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, the President of the Treasury Board and the House leader. One would think that after these many years, they would recognize the warning signs, listen and take action.

I ask the member for Welland if he sees this as a concern, that it is the same old crew that is not recognizing the warning signs and that what the government is really all about is sending a message to the rest of the country that it is doing something when it is really doing as little as possible just to get by and not dealing with the real problem.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, one thing I have learned in life is that if one does not learn from past mistakes, one is bound to repeat them in the future.

Indeed, there are members of the Conservative government who were in the Ontario government during the 1990s when we had that great tragedy in Walkerton, Ontario, which many of us remember so well. Lessons were learned in the province of Ontario about that tragedy and we went forward from that. One would have thought we would look at those particular solutions and decide to make them part of this. Walkerton's municipal water system failed, under folks who people thought knew what they were doing. One would hope we would look at this whole piece and say let us not let it happen again, and this is how we should remediate it.

There was a review that went on for a number of years and we finally came up with more regulations. At the end of the day, many of them have been implemented, but some have not yet been.

Clearly, not only does that history lesson have to be learned by the government side that has some experience around it, but the government should have a road map in place. It asked for it be drawn, it was drawn, and now it simply has to put itself on the road map and follow it. It is no more difficult than that.

The government then has another party it has to talk to, which can sometimes be more difficult than the implementation. Unfortunately, in this case, not only did the government not meet its obligation to talk to the other party, the first nations, but it did not actually follow the road map when it came to resources. The government cheated out on this aspect.

The government needed to follow the road map and then bargain a relationship with first nations, because that is what it said it would do. The government said it would do that in the spring. It said it would turn its mind to a different way of talking to first nations. The government said it would be inclusive, progressive, consultative and respectful of treaty rights with first nations. However, with its first opportunity, the government failed, which is unbelievable.

• (1755)

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in 2005 in my great riding of Sudbury, the Canadian Red Cross, the City of Greater Sudbury and the administration all rallied around to support the community of Kashechewan. Residents were evacuated from their community and taken throughout the north. Many of those individuals ended up in Sudbury.

*Government Orders*

At the time, I was the executive director of the United Way, and we were called upon to provide some support where we could. Other charitable organizations were doing the same.

When I got to meet some of the families who were staying at one of the hotels, it was very interesting to watch some of the teenagers and even the adults turning the water on and off, grabbing a glass of water and being able to drink that glass of water. This is something that we all take for granted. We can walk outside of this House to the water fountain and grab a quick sip of water. They cannot do that in Kashechewan.

To look at some of the facts and figures, in April 2011, the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs released the national assessment on first nations water and waste water systems; the national roll-up report. The results show that 1,880 first nation homes are reported to have no water service and 1,777 homes are reported to have no waste water service.

In this day and age in a country like Canada, which is so wealthy, it is shameful that we still have to say this statistic. Have we not learned anything from what happened years ago and what is happening on a daily basis?

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Sudbury for highlighting what happened with the Kashechewan First Nation when it was split up across the entire province of Ontario. Not only was the community broken up but families were broken up.

The member for Sudbury gave an apt description of the amazement of young adults and youngsters alike turning a tap on and off for the first time. They were amazed that water came out of a tap. They had not experienced this in their own homes because they did not have any running water. They were amazed that they could fill up a tumbler with water from a tap and drink it safely, something we do every day of our lives without a second thought. This was something they did not get to do until a great tragedy beset their own community so that they had to go south to places such as Sudbury to find out that there is such a thing as safe drinking water inside a house.

That was a wake-up call for all of us. It needs to change, so let us change it. Let us amend the bill and fix it. Let us go forward and let no first nation ever again have unsafe drinking water, let alone no water at all.

• (1800)

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the hon. member for Surrey North.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill S-8, an act respecting the safety of drinking water on first nation lands. Specifically, Bill S-8 would provide for federal regulations to govern drinking water, water quality standards and the disposal of waste water in first nation communities. These regulations would set out new criteria regarding provisions including: the training and certification of operators of drinking and waste water systems; source water protection; the location, design, construction, modification, maintenance, operation and decommissioning of drinking water systems and waste water systems; drinking water distribution

by truck; the collection and treatment of waste water; the monitoring, sampling and testing of waste water and the reporting of test results; and the handling, use and disposal of products of waste water treatment.

As an elected representative from northern Ontario, I recognize the importance of ensuring that first nation communities have access to clean drinking water. I am certain that there is not a member of the House who would oppose the goal of ensuring this basic right.

I spoke about it earlier to my colleague from Welland. We all remember the crisis in Kashechewan First Nation in 2005, when the community was forced to evacuate due to a contaminated water crisis that left some community members extremely sick and stranded others in communities such as Sudbury for an extended period of time.

I talked about my previous role as the executive director of the United Way and there were many great organizations in Sudbury that provided support to the first nations people from Kashechewan. I had the opportunity to meet some of the families who were staying in a hotel in Lively. The amazement of teenagers, children and even the adults who were there, turning the water taps on and off, is something that has burned into my brain because they had never had that opportunity before. To see them sit there and drink a glass of water out of the taps, it made me think how we take our drinking water for granted. However, in a country like Canada, we need to ensure that our first nations have those same standards.

Unfortunately, although it is one of the most egregious examples of the contaminated drinking water, the case of Kashechewan First Nation is not an isolated incident. Rather, it is part of a systemic problem that affects first nation communities right across Canada. In fact, Health Canada has reported that as of October 31, 2011 there were 124 first nation communities across Canada under a drinking water advisory. These are often issued in remote or isolated northern communities. From my perspective, this is unacceptable in a country with as much wealth as Canada. This is reinforced by the fact that many of these communities are situated in close proximity to resource development projects that net huge gains to mining companies and the government through tax revenues, but often do not provide any assistance to communities living within arm's reach of these projects.

Although ensuring access to clean drinking water for first nation communities is a laudable objective, I am afraid that the legislation would leave much to be desired in terms of the process to achieve the desired outcome. For instance, the regulations put forward under Bill S-8 may incorporate provincial regulations governing drinking and waste water in first nation communities, thereby overriding the regulations set out in the bill. Here, the Expert Panel on Safe Drinking Water for First Nations expressed concern about using provincial regulations since that would result in a patchwork of regulations that would lead to some first nations having more stringent standards than others. Obviously, this would be inherently problematic.



*Government Orders*

If the intent would be to ensure equitable access to clean drinking water, then implementing a patchwork system, which would have different thresholds for provinces, runs counter to what the legislation would try to achieve. Put simply, a provincial regime of regulation does not do enough to protect first nation communities and appears to be a derogation of the federal government's responsibility to provide basic services to first nation communities.

• (1805)

The derogation of responsibility is underscored by the component of Bill S-8 limiting the liability of the government for certain acts or omissions that occur in the performance of their duties under the regulations. As the federal government is meant to be the primary provider of services to first nation communities, it seems odd that the legislation is attempting to limit the liability of the federal government in situations where it has failed to properly address its constitutional mandate. If the government actually believed that the regulations provided for in the legislation alone would ensure equitable access to safe drinking water in first nation communities, then why is there a need to limit the government's liability when there is a failure in this regard?

This brings us to the most problematic aspect of the paternalistic approach that the Conservatives continue to take when providing services to first nation communities. The crux of the problem with the legislation is that the government thinks that regulation alone will solve the water crisis in first nation communities, yet we know this is not true. In addition to a regulatory overhaul, these communities require crucial investments in human resources and physical infrastructure, including drinking water and sewage systems, and adequate housing.

Supporting this call for increased funding is Dr. Harry Swain, chair of the Expert Panel on Safe Drinking Water for First Nations. Dr. Swain told the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, in 2007:

This is not, in other words, one of those problems in Aboriginal Canada that will persist for ever and ever and ever. This is one that can be solved and it can be solved with the application of a good chunk of money for a limited period of time.

Further, in 2011, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada commissioned an independent assessment on first nation water and waste water systems. The report clearly states that a significant financial commitment to infrastructure development will be necessary, and that it will cost \$4.7 billion over 10 years to ensure the needs of first nation communities regarding water and waste water systems are met. Yet, while the department has called for substantive investments to improve water and waste water systems in first nation communities, the Conservative government has only contributed to these improvements by committing \$330 million over two years in 2010 and nothing in 2011.

I would challenge my Conservative colleagues on this shortfall, and although I do expect the inevitable finger-wagging and shouts, I would like to point out that a proactive approach with more substantive upfront investments in clean drinking water would likely be more cost effective than taking a reactive approach in which the government is forced to respond to an urgent public health crisis resulting from the failure to make these investments.

As is most often the case, the Conservative government continues to take a penny-wise and pound foolish approach, which fails to take the cost savings of pursuing a proactive approach into account when making the always difficult choices about what to prioritize in terms of government spending.

In summation, New Democrats agree that the poor standards of water systems in first nation communities are hampering people's health and well-being. It is also causing economic hardships for people living in these communities. This is not a difficult problem to solve. It just requires the political will and necessary investments to get us where we need to be.

• (1810)

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the commitment of \$330.8 million over two years was through the economic action plan. This was to help sustain progress that was made to build and renovate water infrastructure on reserves. Between 2006 and 2014, the Government of Canada has invested approximately \$3 billion to support the delivery of water and waste water services in first nations. This was all done after a comprehensive assessment was done. Independent engineers inspected 1,300 drinking water and waste water systems. This was more than 800 wells and 1,900 septic systems. A more rigorous and comprehensive independent assessment surveyed 97% of drinking water and waste water systems on first nation lands.

I do not see how the member can even suggest that the government has not made a priority of water and waste water on first nations and reserves. I do believe the government has been consistent, while the New Democrats have been very inconsistent in the way they vote. The NDP never demonstrated any will to help these people when it came to voting on the economic action plan investment.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, the minister was spouting a lot of numbers, but here are two very important numbers that maybe the minister should listen to: 1,880 first nation homes have no water service, and 1,777 homes have reported having no wastewater service.

We have talked about the \$4.7 billion needed over the next 10 years to ensure that we address that problem. Unfortunately, the Conservatives are not hearing that, announcing \$330 million in 2010 but making no further announcement in 2011.

While the Conservatives are talking about numbers, first nation families are going without drinking water. That is shameful. The bill does not cut it. Let us send it back, let us fix it, let us do this correctly so that no first nation family has to go without drinking water.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just to pick up on the member's point, it is critically important that families have access to clean running water.

The vast majority of Canadians, 95% plus, as was pointed out, can go to the kitchen and turn on the faucet or go to the washroom, and whether with the toilet or the bathtub, they can turn on the taps and the water will flow.

*Government Orders*

A good percentage of our population would be surprised that there are hundreds, and actually well into the thousands, of people residing here in Canada who do not have that access to clean running water. It is one of the reasons that politicians tend to want to talk about it. We passed the resolution.

The leader of the Liberal Party introduced a motion last November with all-party support, pointing out the specific situation on reserves and calling on the government to work with first nations leaders to resolve the issue, because a good percentage of those who do not have clean running water live on reserve. There was all-party support for that motion, with the government actually supporting it.

When we look at priorities in meeting the suggestions in that motion, does Bill S-8 really do the job that is necessary?

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things my colleague mentioned that really ring true.

I mentioned the Kashechewan First Nation crisis from 2005. My community of Sudbury really stepped up and supported many of the people who were evacuated from that community. In Sudbury we all learned a very valuable lesson that day, that not everyone has access to the drinking water and the wastewater systems we take for granted.

As I mentioned, those young kids and adults turning the tap on and off really burned an image into my mind that we had to stop just talking about this. We need to make the investments in infrastructure to ensure that we are supporting our first nation communities.

I do not believe Bill S-8 would address this in the way that we need to support our first nation communities. We need to fix this. We need to fix it now and I think we have the opportunity to do so, but it is not through Bill S-8.

• (1815)

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North to speak to Bill S-8, An Act respecting the safety of drinking water on First Nation lands.

Before I get into the bill, the title of it would have one believe that the Conservatives are actually going to do something about safe drinking water for first nations. It uses the word “respecting”. To me, respect is listening to the very people that this legislation is going to impact. Respect is to listen to their concerns and implement some resolutions to those concerns as part of the solution for creating a better environment for clean water and waste water systems for first nations. This bill would not do any of that.

We have heard debate in the House on this bill, we have heard testimony in committee and we have heard from experts that the government is not listening to first nations. It has, in fact, failed to consult the very people who are going to be impacted by this particular legislation. The word “respecting” is very misleading, because the government is not respecting the very people who would be impacted by this legislation.

We in the House all agree on the need for clean water and water systems accessible to first nations. A fundamental right of Canadians is to have access to free and clean drinking water. In fact, after Russia and Brazil, we have the third largest supply of clean water in

the world. Yet first nations are having difficulty accessing clean and safe water for their drinking needs, and that is not acceptable to Canadians. In this day and age, we need to provide clean water for first nations. It is doable. We have heard in the House that we can provide safe, clean water, but it needs a commitment from the government to invest in first nations so they have access to clean water.

This issue of clean water has been boiling for the last 10 or 15 years, as far as I know. The Liberals tried to fix it and I know the Conservatives have tried a piecemeal strategy to address the needs of first nations, but over a period of time they have failed again and again because there was no substance in previous bills, or even this one, to help them get clean water. In fact, this particular bill does not provide the investment for first nations to build the infrastructure needed for access to clean water.

Having clean water is a fundamental right. Not only that, but it helps first nations build their economy and improves their health. If they do not have good health, it is going to impact the economy. If the Conservatives are truly worried about building an economy and providing jobs to first nations youth, it is important for government to step up to the plate. It has been saying for many years that there is going to be clean water for first nations, but their words are hollow.

All this legislation would do is provide for a regulations framework. That is all it would do. It would not provide the infrastructure or investment that is needed. All it would do is provide for additional regulations that will be put on first nations. The government did not even consult first nations, the very people who are going to be impacted by this legislation. In order to put a system in place that provides clean water for first nations, it is very important to consult those people. Yet the Conservatives failed to do that.

• (1820)

The Prime Minister talked about building a new relationship with the first nations. What I believe he meant was to consult with first nations. It is our duty to consult first nations when bringing in legislation that would impact them. I believe his words were hollow when he said that we would build a new nation by consulting first nations. Clearly, this legislation would not do that at all.

Not only do we need infrastructure and additional investments in our communities to provide them with clean water, but also for waste water that ends up in our lakes and streams. The government is focused on cutting the very regulations that help protect our lakes, rivers and oceans. Not only is it not providing the infrastructure needed to treat the waste water that would be released into our lakes and rivers, it is gutting the environmental regulations that we have in place to ensure that Canadians across the country have adequate access to clean safe water.

*Government Orders*

Over the years, we have seen the numbers. Hundreds of first nations communities across the country have been under boil water advisories. In Ottawa and back in Surrey, we take it for granted that we can turn on the tap and drink the water. However, hundreds of communities across the country do not have access to clean water and are under a Health Canada boil water advisory. This is happening in the 21st century. We are trying to build that new relationship that the Prime Minister so often talks about but the government is not delivering on its promises of trying to help the first nations.

Over the last couple of weeks, we have seen legislation brought in by the government, whether it is the transparency act or matrimonial land rights, without any consultation with the first nations people. The courts have told us that it is our fiduciary duty to consult with first nations on any legislation brought into the House that concerns them. We need to hear their views. Not only must we consult with first nations, we must also work with them toward addressing the concerns that they have brought forward.

This is a hollow bill that fails to address the very things that need to be addressed. Over and over again, the Conservatives are failing to address the very needs of the first nations. They never talk about housing or education for our young people. They never talk about investing in young people so that the cycle of poverty in our first nations can be broken.

The government talks about spending millions of dollars and investing in first nations but its own report called upon the government to implement a strategy over a period of time wherein additional investments into drinking water for first nations would take place over 10 years. The government has not only failed Canadians but also first nations by not investing and providing the infrastructure that is needed for clean water and waste water management. The bill would not address any of the concerns that the first nations have brought forward, and Canadians are aware of some of those issues as well.

• (1825)

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite mentioned the investments that this government has made. I would like to remind him that the member for Medicine Hat spoke earlier of our government's commitment of \$3 billion so far on the issue of water and wastewater standards on first nations land across this great country.

However, investments themselves do not suffice. That is why our government is moving forward with a three-pronged plan focused on investments, enhanced capacity and legislation to ensure that drinking water and wastewater standards on first nation land are comparable to standards enjoyed by all Canadians.

Could the member opposite speak to that, recognizing that money itself is not the only thing this government is focused on? We are focused on trying to fix the entire problem.

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu:** Mr. Speaker, all the Conservatives have been doing over the last number of years in government is talk. Talk is not going to resolve the very issues that are affecting our first nation communities. Talk is not going to resolve the housing issues in first nation communities. Talk is not going to resolve education issues in

first nation communities. Talk is not going to resolve the problem of creating jobs for young first nations people.

The government's own study pointed to investing in first nation communities so they can have access to clean water and water systems in place to clean waste water. The Conservatives have clearly failed on that. They have a piecemeal strategy in place that has not worked for our first nations. It is shameful that they keep saying that they have invested money and do not need to invest more money.

As Canadians, we can do this. Let us work together in the opposition, the NDP and Liberals, and all parties together and solve this issue of having clean drinking water in first nations.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's last comment on working together. There are significant issues facing our first nation communities and clean drinking water is ranked high up. Many leaders within our first nation communities are very keen in wanting to deal with this issue. In fact, they are open to working with the Government of Canada and provinces and even municipalities to try to fast-forward the work that needs to get done. The government has not recognized how important it is that stakeholders support the strong leadership within our first nations today, which wants to deal with this issue.

Could my colleague comment on how we can assist the first nation leadership in pushing forward with this important issue in a timely fashion?

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu:** Mr. Speaker, we need to start by consulting first nations. We need to bring them to the table and talk to them. We need to look at their needs and address those needs in a collaborative way, with the government and the opposition sitting at the table.

However, this bill would basically unload federal responsibility onto first nations. We have seen this with other legislation in the House, which has off-loaded federal responsibilities onto provinces and then further onto municipalities.

I had a chance to talk to officials of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities last week. They commissioned a study in 2007 showing that municipalities back then had a deficit of \$31 billion in infrastructure for clean water systems.

The Conservative government has not lived up to its responsibilities. If it is going to create regulations via this bill, then it needs to provide resources, whether for first nations or municipalities and cities across this country. We need to provide those resources.

Let us not set up first nations for failure. If there is no funding and no investment to go along with this legislation, then we are setting up first nations for failure. Clearly, the Conservatives do not have a long-term strategy to address the fundamental need for clean water and wastewater systems for first nations.

*Government Orders*

● (1830)

[Translation]

**FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT**

The House resumed from November 23 consideration of Bill C-27, An Act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of First Nations, as reported, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It being 6:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at the report stage of Bill C-27.

Call in the members.

● (1845)

[English]

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Speaker:** The question is on Motion No. 1.

● (1855)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 510)***YEAS**

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Murray
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon

Patry  
Perreault  
Plamondon  
Rafferty  
Regan  
Sandhu  
Scott  
Sgro  
sor)  
Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
St-Denis  
Thibeault  
Turmel

Pécelet  
Pilon  
Quach  
Raynault  
Rousseau  
Scarpaleggia  
Sellah  
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
  
Sitsabaiesan  
Sullivan  
Tremblay  
Valeriote— 116

**NAYS**

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	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
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Nicholson	O'Connor
Obhrai	O'Neill Gordon
Oliver	Paradis
Opitz	Penashue
Payne	Preston
Poilievre	Rajotte
Raitt	Reid
Rathgeber	Richards
Rempel	Ritz
Rickford	Schellenberger
Saxton	Shea
Seeback	Shory
Shipley	Sopuck
Smith	Stanton
Sorenson	Sweet
Strahl	Toet
Tilson	Trottier
Trost	

*Government Orders*

Truppe  
Uppal  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Warawa  
Watson  
Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Williamson  
Woodworth  
Young (Oakville)  
Zimmer— 151

Tweed  
Valcourt  
Van Loan  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to  
Wilks  
Wong  
Yelich  
Young (Vancouver South)

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare Motion No. 1 defeated.

The next question is on Motion No. 2.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find agreement to apply the results of the previous vote to the current vote, with the Conservatives voting no.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP will be voting yes and agrees to applying the vote.

[*English*]

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree to apply the vote, and we are voting yes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bruce Hyer:** Mr. Speaker, I will be voting yes.

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 511)*

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Welland)  
Angus  
Atamanenko  
Ayala  
Benskin  
Blanchette  
Boivin  
Boutin-Sweet  
Brisson  
Caron  
Cash  
Chicoine  
Choquette  
Cleary  
Côté  
Crowder  
Cuzner  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Dewar  
Dionne Labelle  
Doré Lefebvre  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
Easter  
Foote  
Freeman  
Genest  
Giguère

Andrews  
Ashton  
Aubin  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Blanchette-Lamothe  
Boulerice  
Brahmi  
Brosseau  
Casey  
Charlton  
Chisholm  
Christopherson  
Comartin  
Cotler  
Cullen  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
Day  
Dion  
Donnelly  
Dubé  
Dusseau  
Eyking  
Fortin  
Garrison  
Genest-Jourdain  
Godin

Goodale  
Grogulé  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hughes  
Jacob  
Karygiannis  
Lamoureux  
Larose  
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
Leslie  
MacAulay  
Marston  
Masse  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
Nicholls  
Pacetti  
Patry  
Perreault  
Plamondon  
Rafferty  
Regan  
Sandhu  
Scott  
Sgro  
sor)  
Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
St-Denis  
Thibeault  
Turmel

Gravelle  
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
Hassainia  
Hyer  
Julian  
Kellway  
Lapointe  
Laverdière  
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
Liu  
Mai  
Martin  
Mathysen  
Michaud  
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
Murray  
Nunez-Melo  
Papillon  
Péclet  
Pilon  
Quach  
Raynault  
Rousseau  
Scarpaleggia  
Sellah  
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
Sitsabaiesan  
Sullivan  
Tremblay  
Valerioté— 116

## NAYS

## Members

Ablonczy  
Adler  
Albas  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anders  
Armstrong  
Baird  
Benoit  
Bernier  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chisu  
Clement  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dreeshen  
Dykstra  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goodyear  
Grewal  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
James  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Leaf  
Lemieux  
Lizon  
Lukiwski  
MacKenzie  
McColeman  
Menegakis  
Merrifield

Adams  
Aglukkaq  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Aspin  
Bateman  
Bergen  
Bezan  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Clarke  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Galipeau  
Gill  
Goguen  
Gourde  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hayes  
Hillyer  
Holder  
Jean  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Leitch  
Leung  
Lobb  
Lunney  
Mayes  
McLeod  
Menzies  
Miller

*Government Orders*

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poillievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
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— 151	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare Motion No. 2 defeated.

The next question is on Motion No. 3.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, if you seek, it I believe you would find agreement to apply the results from the previous motion to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting no.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP will be voting yes and agrees to applying the vote.

[*English*]

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Speaker, Liberals agree to apply the vote and will be voting yes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois will be voting yes.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bruce Hyer:** Mr. Speaker, Thunder Bay—Superior North will be voting yes.

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

*(Division No. 512)*

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington

Blanchette
Boviv
Boutin-Sweet
Brison
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Regan
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Thibeault
Turmel

Blanchette-Lamothe
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault
Eyking
Fortin
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Raynault
Rousseau
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- Sitsabaiesan Sullivan Tremblay Valeriote— 116

## NAYS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau

*Government Orders**And five or more members having risen:*

● (1905)

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

*(Division No. 513)*

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	
Watson	
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 151	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

● (1900)

**Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC)** moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

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— 151	

## NAYS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brison	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Grogulé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Murray
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Sullivan
Thibeault	Tremblay
Turnel	Valeriote— 116

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

## ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday I asked the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development about the unexpected cut to Kanesatake's national child benefit reinvestment, or NCBR. It was a simple question on a specific program.

The NCBR provides community-based support and services for children in low-income families, and in Kanesatake it funded important initiatives such as the youth centre and a hot lunch program. The answer I got from the minister was vague and completely disconnected. He seems to have at least recognized the importance of investing in children and families, but he refused to acknowledge the negative impact of the cuts in Kanesatake and gave no indication that he had any idea of the situation on the ground.

For the record, the investment, which was cut, meant that children would not go without food all day long and that there would be after-school programs to keep teens off the streets. According to a letter to the minister dated September of this year and sent by the grand band council chief of Kanesatake, Serge Simon, a number of other cuts have been made affecting children in the community, such as to post-secondary education funding and to the residency requirement, meaning that the community is being stretched to provide opportunities for its youth.

In the letter, he says:

When we take into account the statistics regarding native people in this country.... How...can the Canadian government justify such cuts to the neediest of our population?

It is worth noting that the community has put the investment to extremely good use for years. The money was a real way to help the community prevent crime. With a high poverty rate and limited employment opportunities within the community, the hot lunch program and the after-school activities were part of the solution for the children of the band. These cuts have already forced the closure of the youth centre, and the band will very soon run out of money to provide the lunches.

Even five years after UNDRIP, a document that is not just about special rights but about human rights, the government is not respecting the basic needs of first nations peoples. I recommend that the minister and the parliamentary secretary read the report from the Shannen's Dream campaign to the UN committee on the rights of the child called, "Our Dreams Matter Too". It explains that:

There is little evidence to suggest that Canada is making any significant progress in addressing the gap [between on and off reserve education]. Current estimates are that First Nations children on reserves receive \$2,000 to \$3,000 less per student, per year for elementary and secondary education. This shortfall means less funding for teachers, special education, teaching resources such as books, science and music equipment and other essentials that other children in Canada receive.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

First nations children deserve to have the basics that other children receive. Furthermore, they deserve to have it in and provided by their community with culturally appropriate content. The attitude of the minister has been up until now intransigent and difficult to work with for the community, despite their best and honest efforts to effect positive change for the community.

I hope that this time the minister or the parliamentary secretary will be able to answer the specific question. I sincerely hope that they will not use their answer time to pat themselves on the back for their lack of equitable treatment of first nations and their lack of concrete action.

I will ask the minister again. Does he understand that aboriginal communities need programming for children, especially in low-income communities such as Kanesatake?

• (1910)

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that question was put in good faith despite the condescending tone. I will take no lessons from that member given the length of time I have worked on these very important files. Nonetheless, I am pleased to rise to speak to the question by the hon. member.

The welfare of first nation children is a priority for our government. We believe that the best way to address the complex issues surrounding first nation child and family services is through collaboration with first nations, provinces and territories.

In 2007, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada announced the first of several incremental investments for an enhanced prevention focused approach. These investments provided more than \$98.1 million over five years to implement a tripartite accountability framework on a new enhanced prevention approach to child and family services with Alberta first nations.

We are taking a similar course in terms of education and our relationship with communities through tripartite agreements, so that we can offer better education programs and services toward improving education outcomes on reserve. This is a priority of the government and the record is there to show it.

Today, our government continues to invest additional resources in education and child and family services. The funding is designed to provide increased flexibility to service providers and to implement culturally appropriate education and prevention programs and protection services that will help improve outcomes for children, youth and their families in their schools and communities.

Education and child welfare is an area of provincial or territorial jurisdiction wherein the provinces and territories have legislative authority. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada is compelled and happy to continue to move forward with all of its stakeholders toward improving education outcomes on reserve as well as child and family services.

We continue to invest significant resources in federal programs that extend to child care benefits, child tax credits, the Canada child

tax benefit, the disability benefit, maternity and parental benefits and the child care expense deduction, sensitive to the issues of many of the isolated and remote communities in the north.

The issues that affect the quality of life of first nation children are a shared responsibility. While progress has been made, it will take continued efforts of government at all levels and the first nations themselves to achieve long-term progress.

We will continue to work in partnership with provinces and first nation communities on both education and an enhanced prevention focused approach to improve outcomes for first nation children and their families in education and child and family services.

• (1915)

**Ms. Mylène Freeman:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is talking about various success stories in programs but not about Kanesatake. This question is about Kanesatake itself and a specific program, NCBR. He did not answer the question at all.

I understand that last Tuesday maybe the minister did not have the answer prepared despite the fact the community and I had sent letters and tried to work with him. However, I would have expected that by now they would have the answer.

The letter announcing the cuts to the people of Kanesatake indicated that the cuts were because of the “increasing needs for income assistance”. Let me get this straight: the needs increase and the government cuts programs.

Can the member please explain the specific decision and the basis for the cancellation of NCBR funding in Kanesatake?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, our government has and continues to take concrete steps to improve the lives of first nation children on reserve. This government has increased the resources and levels of funding for child and family services and education. We work with our stakeholders to make decisions and identify priorities for program service delivery on reserve. That member would be well served to try to understand just how that dynamic works. We will continue to support their priorities and to walk in lockstep in delivering programs and services in both child and family services and education.

To date, Aboriginal Affairs has reached tripartite agreements to implement things like the enhanced prevention focused approach for first nation children and family services, as well as in education. We made additional commitments in the last budget to ensure that, moving forward, first nation communities have the kind of administrative capacity and support to be able to enhance the programs and services they deliver and prioritize and choose in their communities.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to elaborate on a question I raised in September. At that time, the deadline for residential school survivors to apply for compensation for the abuse they suffered was at hand. The date marked an important point in the process but a number of questions remained unanswered.

At the same time, the government cut core funding to first nation groups that could assist with determining community needs and how best to address them. It was emblematic of the Conservative government's withering commitment to first nations and a clear sign that the ground was shifting under those communities. One only has to look at the content of government and Senate bills aimed at first nations to get a sense of where the Conservatives intend to focus when it comes to this critical relationship.

Bills that abandon responsibilities, devolve power and saddle first nations with INAC mistakes have been accompanied by cuts to core budgets of important groups such as the tribal councils. The duty to consult has been skewed to the point where consultation is minimal and often ignored.

Let me read into the record a letter sent to the minister from Whitefish River First Nation. It says:

The September 4th, 2012 announcement of your department focused changes to Aboriginal Representative Organization and Tribal Council funding structures is troubling as it places great financial challenges on an already stressed funding mechanism.

In your announcement, you indicate that these changes will "...create the conditions for healthier more self-sufficient Aboriginal Communities" and that it will sustain progress. Whitefish River First Nation believes that these cuts will not sustain progress for First Nations. The UCCMM Tribal Council will have financial cuts applied that are in excess of the proposed 10% indicated by your office. These cuts really will bring into question whether the UCCMM can deliver the core services identified in the Tribal Council funding mechanisms designed decades ago.

Equally troubling is that your Ministry made no prior efforts to assess the funding structure changes as a net liability to First Nations that rely on the Tribal Councils for advisory services.

The Auditor General made many recommendations over many years on cutting excessive over-reporting requirements by INAC of First Nations and that the problems have not been about reporting but lack of sustainable resources to meet the needs of First Nations in Canada. These proposed cuts will do nothing to improve the relationship between the Crown...and First Nations across our lands. Unfortunately, the results of further cuts by your department will only impact the most vulnerable of Canadian Society the First Nation people.

We strongly urge you and your Department to seriously reconsider these funding cuts as they have been proposed by the Crown.

They are very disappointed about this.

In many ways, the hope that came out of the historic residential schools apology has faded. For people on the outside looking in, as well as for those still waiting for their claim to be settled, this process is not over. Yet, for the government it would seem it is. At the time of the deadline, many survivors for a multitude of reasons had not yet made claims. In the three months leading up to the cut-off, there was a huge increase in the number of claimants.

The nature of the harassment can be embarrassing. There is no end to the barriers for victims. Even with significant societal support, some victims will never be able to come forward. What is important is that we remain supportive and open to victims. A cut-off to a healing process does not respect the reality of these individual struggles. For a government whose members so often say they

concern themselves with victims' rights, here is an opportunity to get the job done.

When will the government commit to victims' rights and re-establish core funding to organizations such as tribal councils, which can really make a difference for residential school survivors at the community level?

• (1920)

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's kitchen-sink question and hearing her stand in this place and start talking about victims. I appreciate also this important question given today, the day that we celebrated the hope and inspiration of our Indian residential school stained glass window here. As said by the elders, it is about looking forward and moving forward, and we appreciate that opportunity to celebrate today on an otherwise dark chapter in Canada's history.

[*Translation*]

The Conservative government takes the health and self-sufficiency of aboriginal communities in this country very seriously. We have consistently shown our commitment to aboriginal people through significant investments to enable them to participate in and benefit from Canada's prosperity.

On September 4, 2012, the Conservative government announced a new funding model for aboriginal representative organizations, tribal councils and band advisory services. To sustain the progress we have made towards healthier and more self-sufficient aboriginal communities across the country, we are taking steps to ensure that government funding will be more clearly focused on shared priorities.

We are aiming to direct our funding where it matters most: education, economic development, community infrastructure, and other initiatives that promote greater self-sufficiency in aboriginal communities. The new funding model seeks to make funding more equitable among aboriginal organizations across Canada.

While this is a time of transition and change for aboriginal representative organizations, tribal councils and band advisory services, this change takes focus on the shared priorities identified together with first nation leaders. We are taking concrete action on education, housing, child and family services, safe drinking water and other important and pressing issues in first nation communities.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

At the historic Crown-First Nations Gathering, the Government of Canada committed to creating conditions to accelerate economic development opportunities and maximize benefits for all Canadians. These changes are one more way we are making this happen.

This is the first change made to tribal council funding since its launch nearly 30 years ago. For tribal councils, funding will be based on several considerations, including the size of the populations they serve, the number of first nations in their membership, and the range of major programs they deliver. The new approach includes a simplified application and reporting process which will reduce the reporting burden on organizations.

These changes have been put in place to ensure the delivery of essential services and programs where it matters most.

• (1925)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the fact that he mentioned the stained glass window commemorating the legacy of Indian residential schools today, which is by an artist from Espanola, Christi Belcourt, who is from my riding.

When we look at the positive steps we thought the government was taking—the apology, the signing of the UNDRIP, the comments at the Crown-first nations gathering and then today the stained glass—first nations, Métis and Inuit people are correct to continue to question the sincerity of the government. It is clear that the Conservatives are refusing to take rebuilding a constructive relationship with first nations seriously. The minister made ill-considered cuts to first nations organizations across the country and now residential school survivors have to wait while the government processes a backlog.

Let us look at what is in the *Gazette* today about the 100 academics and the comment from National Chief Shawn Atleo, who talks about the 60% cut to core funding to Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. He comments:

There are only two conclusions to draw... Either [the Prime Minister] understands and doesn't care and so is allowing and supporting the behaviour to occur, or maybe he doesn't understand...

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has consistently shown its commitment to aboriginal people through significant investments to enable them to participate in, contribute to and benefit from Canada's prosperity.

With these new funding models, our government will continue to improve the quality of life of aboriginal people. These changes have been put in place to move forward on our commitment to ensure that funding is directed at the delivery of essential programs and services for aboriginal people, to ensure that funding supports the programs and services that matter most to aboriginal communities in Canada. Our realigned funding will continue to improve the lives of aboriginal people by improving their living conditions.

We will continue to deliver tangible and lasting results.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the

Minister of National Defence several questions during the adjournment debate. I have an opportunity to come back to the same issue today because I have not yet received an answer to the question I posed some time ago.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence again talked about the government's seven-point plan. This plan has made no difference whatsoever. In fact, the government is not even following its own plan. It is a smokescreen or the government is treating people like idiots. As you wish. The talking points from the Prime Minister's Office are read over and over because there is not much else they can say to save face.

Last week, the parliamentary secretary suggested that I consult the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat's website, which I did. It says:

—the Secretariat is committed to coordinating timely, open and transparent communications through: regular reporting to Parliament; ongoing briefings with stakeholders; a dedicated website to post and share information; regular updates on the status of implementing the action plan.

With regard to the regular reporting to Parliament, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services announced on June 13 that the secretariat was operational. Yet, over six months later, we still have not received any reports from the secretariat.

With regard to the ongoing briefings with stakeholders, even the Chief of the Air Staff did not seem to be aware of the work the secretariat is doing regarding the fighter jets. With regard to the regular updates on the status of implementing the action plan, there have been no updates aside from the endless talking points during question period. It is important to note that talking points and updates are not the same thing; there is a big difference. Updates give new information on how the work is progressing. Talking points allow the government to buy time in order to figure out how it is going to get out of this mess.

What is more, the website states that the secretariat is exercising the required due diligence, oversight and transparency. However, it also states that a DM-level governance committee is overseeing the secretariat's work. These are the same DMs who, a few months ago, had not demonstrated any of the required due diligence, oversight or transparency.

Lastly, it says this:

Parliament and the Canadian public need to have confidence in the open and transparent acquisition process that will be used to replace the CF-18 fleet.

Why, exactly, do Canadians and Parliament need to have confidence?

As we have just seen, none of the secretariat's promises were kept even though it has been up and running for six months and the Auditor General's report was released nine months ago. The government talks about taking immediate measures, but nothing has changed in the past six months.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We know that this secretariat is made up of the same deputy ministers and that they are using the same numbers and the same data provided by National Defence that the Auditor General deemed inadequate. So why should Canadians have confidence in this secretariat?

• (1930)

[English]

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue. I welcome the fact that she asked for an adjournment debate on this question.

As the member is aware, on April 3, 2012, the Auditor General tabled his spring report. In chapter 2, entitled, “Replacing Canada’s Fighter Jets”, he recommended that the government refine its estimates for the full life cycle costs of the F-35 and make those estimates public.

I am glad to have this opportunity to explain that, by introducing the government’s seven point plan, the government will fulfill and exceed the Auditor General’s recommendation. To be clear, this plan effectively pushed restart on the replacement of the CF-18s. No decision on replacement fighter aircraft will be made until that seven point plan is complete.

As part of the seven point plan, the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat was established and is housed under Public Works and Government Services Canada. The secretariat has the lead coordinating role as the government moves to replace Canada’s CF-18 fleet and will ensure that due diligence, oversight and transparency are applied.

A deputy minister governance committee, which includes two independent members, Mr. Denis Desautels and Dr. Kenneth Norrie, has been established and is meeting regularly. The secretariat is making great progress in implementing the seven point plan. I encourage my parliamentary colleagues to consult the secretariat’s website to learn more about all of the work that is being done.

Again, the evaluation of options to sustain a Canadian Forces fighter capability well into the 21st century is under way and will involve a full evaluation of choices. This detailed evaluation will provide the best available information about the range of choices that could meet the needs of our men and women in uniform.

The secretariat will commission an independent review of the acquisition process. A request for proposal was issued on October 26, 2012, to select a company to conduct this review. The third party will provide us with lessons learned so that we can look to improve the way we conduct similar acquisitions in the future.

I want to be clear on the objectives of the independent acquisition process review. We are not questioning the work of the Auditor General. I will repeat that the government has accepted his findings and recommendations. Rather, this review will allow us to address the Auditor General’s concerns with the acquisition process.

The government’s seven point plan is a comprehensive response to the Auditor General’s recommendation and conclusions in chapter 2 of his spring 2012 report. Progress continues to be made on its implementation. Our objective is to give Canadians and parliamentarians confidence in the open and transparent acquisition process that will be used to replace the CF-18 fleet.

I would like to reiterate that this government has effectively pushed restart on the replacement of the CF-18s. The funding envelope allocated for the acquisition of the F-35 has been frozen and we are looking at all options. All elements of the seven point plan will be completed before this government makes a decision.

We remain committed to ensuring the brave men and women of the Canadian Forces have the right equipment they need to do their job while securing best value for Canadian taxpayers.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Moore:** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the government is bragging about making progress and moving forward on this issue, but it is still leaving parliamentarians and Canadians in the dark.

In March 2012, before the Auditor General’s report came out, the Associate Minister of National Defence said, “We remain committed to the joint strike fighter program along with our partners. We will continue to act responsibly on all of these matters.”

A month later, we learned that that was far from being the case. Today, the government is telling us that the secretariat will ensure that due diligence is applied, but we have yet to see any proof of that.

Will the Auditor General have to produce another report before the government admits that it has not done anything? Why should we believe that the government is doing work and making progress, when it has nothing tangible to show for it?

A website is far from being enough, and I think I have proven that.

• (1935)

[English]

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the additional costs that a carbon tax would have on any supply chain management issue, whether we are talking about fighter jets or the northern nutrition program, anything we want to talk about, I want to take this opportunity to talk about this seven point plan so that the member completely understands that it was introduced by the government defining how due diligence is to be applied as we move forward with replacing Canada’s fighter jet.

On June 13, 2012, the Government of Canada announced that the secretariat was operational within Public Works. The secretariat has the lead coordinating role as the government moves to replace Canada’s CF-18 fleet and is ensuring that due diligence, oversight and transparency are being applied.

The government has effectively pushed restart on the replacement of the CF-18s. I wish the NDP would press restart on its whole notion of a carbon tax. That said, no decision will be made until the seven point plan is complete.

The evaluation of options is under way and will provide the best available information about the range of choices that could meet the needs of our men and women in uniform.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

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(The House adjourned at 7:36 p.m.)



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