



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 12, 2013**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 12, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*English*]

### PETITIONS

#### HEALTH

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to present petitions from residents who are very concerned that the current federal pharmaceutical policies have been a total failure for Canadians. The petitioners point out that a national pharmacare plan would enable all Canadians to enjoy equitable access to medicines, while controlling the growth of drug costs. Therefore, they call on Parliament to follow the recommendations of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' economic case for universal medicare by developing and implementing legislation for a universal public pharmacare program.

#### SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two sets of petitions here that come mostly from residents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. The petitioners call upon the House of Commons and Parliament assembled to condemn discrimination against girls through sex-selective abortions and to do all it can to prevent this from being carried out in Canada.

#### IMMIGRATION

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition, which is calling upon Parliament to offer an unequivocal and sincere public apology to those child migrants who died while being ashamed of their history and deprived of their family; to the living yet elderly child migrants and home children who continue to bear the weight of the past; and to the descendants of child migrants and home children who continue to feel the void passed down through generations while continuing to search out relatives lost as a result of a system that, in many instances, victimized them under the guise of protection.

### CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

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

The first is primarily from residents of the Ottawa area who are calling on the government to provide stable, predictable, long-term funding to this country's national public broadcaster, the CBC.

#### FOREIGN INVESTMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is primarily from residents of Kelowna, British Columbia, calling on the Prime Minister and his cabinet to refuse to ratify the pending Canada-China investment treaty as it will undermine Canadian sovereignty, environmental, labour, health and other regulations and protections.

[*Translation*]

#### PENSIONS

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to present a petition signed by many people who are calling on the government to maintain the age of eligibility for old age security at 65 because raising it will hurt seniors, particularly the most disadvantaged. This is unacceptable in a country like Canada.

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. member for Vancouver East is rising for a second petition. Does she have the unanimous consent of the House to present another petition?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

#### HEALTH

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this petition is calling for support for the sodium reduction strategy for Canada act, and wants to establish the Government of Canada as the leader in monitoring and ensuring progress is made by food companies to achieve sodium reduction goals. The petitioners ask that we have swift passage of private members' bill, Bill C-460, an act respecting the implementation of the sodium reduction strategy for Canada.

*Government Orders***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government House leader I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*Translation*]

**ENHANCING ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE  
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT**

The House resumed from February 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

I rise here today to speak to Bill C-42, a piece of legislation that, unfortunately, does not meet the expectations of Canadians, because it does not live up to the hopes fuelled by the Conservatives' announcement about their desire to modernize the RCMP.

Like all of my NDP colleagues, I was delighted to learn that the House would finally be tackling some of the problems that have been undermining the RCMP's ability to function. And now I rise here today with no choice but to oppose Bill C-42. I oppose this piece of legislation not because I do not believe that reform is needed; on the contrary, I think it is crucial that we address the dysfunction that exists within the RCMP.

Nor is my opposition to this bill part of any systematic, blind opposition agenda, as the Conservatives like to suggest. Proof of this is the fact that the NDP supported this bill at second reading, so that it would be studied in committee. The fact is that, unfortunately, the Conservatives would not listen to any of the constructive proposals that could have strengthened this bill. They chose to reject every one of the amendments proposed and to ignore the recommendations made by the witnesses in committee.

What it comes down to is that I am deeply disappointed in the bill before us today. It is merely a half-baked reform that does not adequately respond to the challenges that the RCMP is currently facing. This is particularly true with regard to two rather crucial aspects, namely, the issue of the transparency and independence of investigations and the issue of problems related to harassment within the RCMP.

When they began working on a bill to improve and modernize the RCMP, the Conservatives said that they wanted to create the conditions necessary for truly independent investigations to be conducted, which would have made it possible to prevent situations of police investigating police. It is just common sense. We all want a measure that would eliminate the risk of collusion and do away with the lack of transparency.

Today, we are extremely disappointed. Under Bill C-42, the commission that will be responsible for investigating complaints against the RCMP will not have the means necessary to conduct effective investigations and restore Canadians' confidence in the RCMP.

Rather than following the recommendations that were made and creating a completely independent commission that could conduct in-depth investigations whose results would be binding on authorities, the Conservatives simply introduced a bill that has all the same weaknesses that were criticized before. In so doing, the Conservative government has completely missed the mark and failed in its mission to improve transparency.

The second point to which I would like draw the House's attention pertains to the challenges related to eliminating harassment within the RCMP, challenges that the Conservatives have basically ignored, despite the amendments we proposed.

Over 200 women have come forward in a class action lawsuit regarding sexual harassment within the RCMP. That is not a small number. That is how many women have made the courageous choice to speak out. This number, which is certainly large enough to get our attention, does not even begin to give us an exact idea of the magnitude of this phenomenon. These 200 women were brave enough to speak out about the harassment they experienced, but presumably there are many others who have still not come forward.

An internal RCMP report suggests that, quite often, employees who are victims of sexual harassment prefer to remain silent. They are worried that their career will suffer, or they do not have faith in the current complaints processing system and, what is more, they do not believe that the accused officers will ever be punished.

● (1010)

And it is because of the silence surrounding these incidents that they are so common. If no one talks about the issue, people may turn a blind eye or trivialize the unacceptable comments, attitudes and actions that no woman should have to endure.

And so, we would have expected a bill meant to respond to the numerous complaints about this type of behaviour to identify, condemn and specifically denounce sexual harassment as a real problem, as a practice that must be systematically denounced and dealt with. That would have given victims a clear document that could be used as an effective legal tool. But, unfortunately, that is not the case. The term "sexual harassment" is not even in the bill, and that gives the impression that this issue is not serious enough to be targeted specifically.

*Government Orders*

But the exact opposite is true. We cannot talk about modernizing the Royal Canadian Mounted Police without considering what women in the organization are facing. We cannot ignore the fact that there is still prejudice and chauvinistic behaviour in our federal police force. Nor can we overlook the fact that this supposedly manly culture creates fertile ground for harassment to be perpetrated and trivialized. And these acts can have serious consequences for the victims, as many witnesses testified in committee.

The NDP proposed a clear, simple measure that would have provided an effective tool to combat harassment. The NDP's suggestion to require harassment training for RCMP members was simply a common-sense amendment. This training for all staff would no doubt help break the silence surrounding the harassment problem and would also show people the line between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. In addition, time set aside for education and communication would have given women, who may be victims of this type of harassment, information on their rights and potential recourse.

But the Conservatives decided to vote against this amendment yet again. This simple, clear provision could have decreased the incidence of sexual harassment within the RCMP, and the Conservatives are preventing it from being added. It is most unfortunate that we are seeing a disconnect between the Conservatives' claims of wanting change and the reality of a bill that only glosses over some crucial issues.

The Conservatives proposed improving the oversight mechanisms for the RCMP, but the organization responsible for conducting investigations is not fully independent and is not authorized to conduct thorough investigations. Furthermore, they claimed to want to combat internal operational problems at the RCMP, but they have introduced a bill that does not even mention sexual harassment and does not offer any new measures to combat the problem.

In conclusion, I am disappointed in Bill C-42 in its current state.

The Conservatives said they wanted to make changes for the better. They even said they wanted to work together on a bill that was perfectly suited to collaboration by both sides of the House. But at the end of the day, they ignored and even disdained our comments and suggestions and ended up introducing a botched, incomplete bill.

For these reasons, I will vote against this bill, and I condemn the fact that the Conservatives missed an opportunity to make fundamental reforms that would have been in the best interests of Canadians and members of the RCMP.

•(1015)

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. I have a question for him.

He mentioned the recommendations that the NDP made with regard to Bill C-42. I would like him to say a few words about these recommendations, which, on closer inspection, could help us address the problems at the RCMP over the past few years regarding sexual harassment and other practices.

Could he elaborate on one of these NDP recommendations?

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

Obviously the problem is serious when 200 women file sexual harassment complaints against the RCMP. This has to be dealt with.

What we proposed was reasonable. We simply wanted information sessions to be held in order to open a dialogue on this issue because silence is a problem when it comes to sexual harassment and violence within the RCMP. It has to be okay to talk about this. People who bottle up things like this become stressed out and that is not good for anyone. There is a lack of communication.

We proposed something very simple and that was to hold information sessions for all members of the RCMP so that they could at least discuss the problem. The problem cannot be fixed if no one talks about it.

I do not understand why the members opposite rejected this amendment. I am very disappointed today to see that there is still no solution to such a serious problem.

•(1020)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I agree with all the points he raised. We really do need more transparency in the RCMP, especially in light of what Mr. Kennedy, the former RCMP public complaints commissioner, had to say.

Can my colleague tell us why the Conservatives oppose these very important and wise amendments, which were even supported by experts?

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands raises an excellent point.

We proposed reasonable amendments. We were elected to the House in 2011 to work together. That is what we promised Canadians.

When the committee heard the evidence of experts on a number of incidents involving the RCMP, such as the Robert Dziekanski case and sexual harassment incidents, it was clear that the RCMP should have dealt with the problem internally because there was the opportunity to do so.

In response to my colleague's question, I would say that the Conservatives did not listen to our reasonable suggestions, which were supported by the experts. They did not want to improve their own bill simply because they are afraid of being weak and being seen as weak if they accept our suggestions.

Canadians want all MPs to work together to come up with bills that make sense, solve problems and move our country forward, rather than playing politics at committees and not accepting suggested amendments.

I do not know why the Conservatives are so opposed to the opposition's reasonable suggestions.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Éloise Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I rise today to speak to Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts. This bill is the Conservatives' response to the many complaints of sexual harassment in the RCMP and to recent scandals, following disciplinary measures that were too lenient for officers accused of serious misconduct.

Unfortunately, as my colleague for Vaudreuil-Soulanges clearly explained, the government has come up with a very weak response to serious issues and problems for RCMP members and Canadians.

Bill C-42 is almost identical to Bill C-38, which was presented during the 40th Parliament. It proposes three major changes to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act. If the bill is passed in its present form, it will give increased powers to the RCMP commissioner in the area of labour relations. Among other things, it will allow him to appoint or fire members at his discretion, which is a rather major discretionary power. The bill also seeks to change the process governing disciplinary measures, complaints and human resources management for RCMP members. It provides for the establishment of a new civilian complaints commission to replace the RCMP Public Complaints Commission.

From the outset, the NDP has supported the intent of Bill C-42. We felt that this legislation would modernize the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and bring solutions to issues such as sexual harassment in the organization. However, it is now obvious that this good intention—the intention perceived behind the bill—did not translate into a true legislative measure that would provide concrete results for women in the RCMP, and for other members of that police force.

As it stands now, the bill has some major flaws. It does not go far enough and it does not really improve oversight of the RCMP. Worse yet, it does not even deal directly with sexual harassment in the RCMP, which is a central concern for women across the country—whether they are members of that police force or not—and for all Canadians. Every day, Canadians learn about new cases in the media. They hear about this problem, they see what is going on in that police force and, in the process, their trust in the RCMP erodes. Yet, the men and women of that police force are very invested and they make sacrifices to protect the public. Some action should be taken immediately to restore this trust. However, that is not what Bill C-42 proposes.

The Conservatives only looked at the issues relating to discipline and sexual harassment in the RCMP, after being questioned on many occasions in the House and in committee. They never adopted a leadership role when it came to proposing solutions to the problems identified in the RCMP.

Now they are bringing in a bill, when they are on the defensive. This did not come about because of the Conservative Party's concerns, but rather because of the pressure of public opinion and NDP colleagues who have done an impressive amount of work to try to make the government aware of the major problems that exist in the RCMP.

For all of these reasons, the NDP will not support Bill C-42 at third reading. We moved a number of amendments at committee stage in order to ensure that Bill C-42 was truly a response to the challenges facing the RCMP. Among other things, we wanted to make it mandatory for all RCMP members to take harassment training. We also wanted to set up an independent civilian body to investigate complaints against the RCMP. In addition, we proposed adding a provision to set up an independent national civilian investigative body to make sure that the police are not investigating themselves, something that seems very logical to me. Finally, we also proposed removing some of the new draconian powers that the government was planning to grant to the RCMP commissioner, with a view to establishing more balanced human resources policies for the RCMP.

All of these amendments were based on recommendations from numerous witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

• (1025)

These witnesses came straight from the policing community. They are therefore knowledgeable about the context and the constraints, and they know what they are talking about. The recommendations they made to us were based on their experiences and on what they had seen, and they deserved to be taken a little more seriously than the Conservative government has done.

All of these witnesses share the NDP's concerns that Bill C-42 will never be enough to change the climate and the culture in the RCMP workplace, the two elements that allow the abuses that are routinely alleged to occur. Sexual harassment in word and deed continues to occur, but in many cases, the perpetrators are never punished.

This bill is likely to create more problems than it solves, especially since new powers are being granted to the commissioner. Unfortunately, the Conservatives turned down every one of the amendments that we put forward in committee without even wanting to discuss them. This is unfortunately not surprising. It seems to be typical of this government's attitude in committee. If the experience of my opposition colleagues on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security is anything like what I experience regularly on the Standing Committee on Official Languages, the process was probably very arduous and quite frustrating for anyone who tried to work co-operatively.

This is what the NDP has been proposing from the outset. We have always been prepared to co-operate with our colleagues from all parties in order to make proposals that are beneficial to all Canadians. In this case, our proposals would have been beneficial to the women and men of the RCMP, as well as the Canadian public, but they were rejected out of hand. Unfortunately, the Conservatives on this committee were just as inflexible and closed-minded as those on many other parliamentary committees. They refused to co-operate to make Bill C-42 a piece of legislation that genuinely responds to the needs of the RCMP.

As members of Parliament, we are responsible for acting in a way that strengthens public trust in the RCMP, but the Conservatives refuse to take the steps needed to modernize the organization. For months now, the NDP has been urging the Minister of Public Safety to make sexual harassment in the RCMP a priority, but the issue is barely mentioned in Bill C-42. In fact, the word “harassment” appears once, and it is not even in a context that aims at resolving the issue of sexual harassment.

Although the bill gives the RCMP commissioner room to create a more effective process for responding to sexual harassment complaints, it contains no proactive measure to try to combat this systemic problem, and there is no provision on adopting a clear policy to prevent sexual harassment within the RCMP.

Bill C-42 does not go far enough in addressing the very real concerns of female members of this organization, who have been waiting far too long for the government to do something tangible to ensure that they have a safer, more open work environment. Another problem we must address is the fact that these same women do not have access to the same positions and promotions as quickly and in the same way as the men do.

Currently more than 200 women who work or have worked for the RCMP have launched a class action suit against the organization for allegations of sexual harassment. There are other individual suits under way, and there are undoubtedly incidents that will never be reported, because these are difficult situations. When wrongdoers get off the hook rather easily and no real disciplinary measures are taken, there is no real incentive for anyone to report these problems.

The women in the RCMP make the same sacrifices for their country as the men, but the women are abandoned by the system every day. They deserve better than this and, as elected representatives, we have a responsibility to act swiftly. That is why the NDP will oppose Bill C-42 at third reading. We proposed solutions and the Conservatives did not want to implement them. These solutions did not come just from the opposition, but also from people who are directly involved, who know what they are talking about and who care about the well-being of RCMP members.

This is very disappointing. I think it is a real shame to have to vote against this bill.

• (1030)

I would also like to see a substantive reform of this organization, but that is not going to happen with Bill C-42.

[English]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for articulating so well the problems we have with the bill. As she pointed out, the NDP tried to move a number of amendments at committee that were very constructive in improving the bill and providing good support for members of the RCMP. One of them was adding mandatory harassment training for RCMP officers, specifically in the RCMP act. Surprisingly, this was one of the amendments that was turned down.

I think all of us know it is the employer's responsibility to do harassment training. I wonder if she could comment, because it seems to me this gets to the heart of the matter, that we are yet again

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failing in terms of a public responsibility to ensure workplaces are free of discrimination and harassment, and that mandatory harassment training is something that is very important within the RCMP.

• (1035)

[Translation]

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her excellent question.

I completely agree with her. We are not fulfilling our responsibility as elected members if we do not take direct measures to address the issue of sexual harassment in the RCMP. The suggested training is a proactive and effective way of reducing the incidence of sexual harassment.

We also need to realize that we can use this information to help people become more conscious of the fact that certain actions or words that they believe to be innocent can be perceived in a negative way. This awareness needs to be honed because it does not always come naturally, depending on a person's education or work environment. These kinds of situations arise for many reasons.

We can inform people and describe in detail the types of situations that can be perceived as sexual harassment and the solutions and measures that can be put in place to keep it from happening. The fact that the government does not want to take those steps is truly disappointing and almost incomprehensible, because it is so easy to do.

All members would take this training when they join the RCMP or at some point. This type of training happens all the time in the Canadian Forces and it even exists in the RCMP. So why not now?

[English]

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was talked about a fair bit yesterday, the increasing of the power and authority of the commissioner of the RCMP. That has to be done with some balance, certainly. Yes, the commissioner needs more authority to deal with the bad apples, as some have said. However, that power could be abused in the office of the commissioner as well.

I am not a member of the committee, and quite a number of us here are not, but I was told yesterday there were a number of amendments to try to redress that imbalance. I do not mind admitting that I have a concern when opposition parties propose amendments and the government rejects them out of hand even though they make sense.

Is this what happened in this committee? Are we to the point that anything the representatives of the people on this side of the House propose, which would improve legislation, is opposed by the government because it is almighty and all powerful? That is not the way this place is supposed to work. My question for the member is: Were there amendments put forward to try to balance the power of the commissioner of the RCMP in a positive way, and what happened to them if there were?

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Some people may point out that I do not sit on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Nevertheless, I should be able to answer the question.

Yes, my NDP colleagues proposed amendments, which the government flatly rejected, as it always does.

As a new MP, I am very disappointed. I was a parliamentary guide for a while before starting my career as an MP. I used to take great pleasure in telling visitors that the work needed to advance Canadian issues really happened in committee, where all the parties worked in collaboration.

Now that I have become a member of the House, my speech would be totally different, were I to give another parliamentary tour. Openness is non-existent, and meetings are very often held in camera. In that context, keeping our constituents informed of what is happening is a major challenge. On top of that, we have to deal with this government's amazing arrogance and intransigence.

I touched briefly on my experience on the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Being part of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security must have been extremely similar, as the orders all come from the same source: the Prime Minister's Office. People can imagine for themselves how this government deals with opposition members in committee. The government keeps Parliament from doing the real work it should be doing.

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to inform you that I will share my speaking time with the member for Sudbury.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-42, which would strengthen discipline in the RCMP following numerous cases of harassment, intimidation and serious misconduct.

The NDP supports the principle of this bill. That is why we supported it at second reading.

During the parliamentary committee's proceedings, however, we heard from witnesses and experts who confirmed our first impression that Bill C-42 has some serious deficiencies and would not improve oversight of the RCMP.

The Canadian public's trust in the RCMP has been put to the test in recent decades, given the many scandals in which the force has been involved.

Consider, for example, the Maher Arar affair. That Canadian citizen was deported to the United States and then tortured by the Syrian government based on false information conveyed by the RCMP.

Consider as well the RCMP's bungling of the Air India affair, a pathetic case of incompetence and negligence. In addition to failing to co-operate with CSIS, the RCMP was unable to prevent the incident, even though it was warned of a direct attack on flight 182 three weeks before it occurred.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the Airbus affair. The RCMP's incompetence in that matter forced taxpayers to pay Brian Mulroney \$2 million in damages.

There are also the many criminal and political cases in which charges were never laid. Consider the sponsorship scandal, for example, and the disappearance of hundreds of thousands of dollars from the transitional jobs fund.

There was also the major fraud involving the RCMP pension and insurance plans. The Auditor General of Canada uncovered numerous cases of cronyism and reported that RCMP operating expenses had been charged to the employee pension and insurance plans.

Many cases of psychological and sexual harassment have been made public over the years, but authorities have not taken steps to address them. For example, Victoria Cliffe and three other female RCMP officers in Alberta accused Sgt. Robert Blundell of sexually assaulting them during undercover operations.

Ms. Cliffe stated that the RCMP commissioner was the person responsible for making the final decision on all internal investigations, every investigation conducted within the police force and every disciplinary problem. She added that all matters were referred to the top, to the big boss.

Remember that, following that disclosure, Victoria Cliffe lost her position as a negotiator and Sgt. Blundell lost only one day's leave.

We could also talk about all the police blunders that might suggest there were shortcomings in RCMP officers' training and supervision. Much of the problem stems from the fact that the RCMP enjoys special status, untouchable status, within the government.

For example, the RCMP is not subject to the Access to Information Act or covered by the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

Members will recall that when the Conservatives introduced the government accountability bill in 2006, they maintained most of the exemptions for the RCMP. Furthermore, unlike officers in other police forces, RCMP officers still have no right to unionize, which would put them in a better bargaining position that would facilitate the disclosure of wrongdoing.

In short, the RCMP is out of control. In 2007, the president of the Canadian Police Association even said he thought all parliamentarians should be concerned about the fact that an organization of the RCMP's size and power had little or no accountability.

Shirley Heafey, the former chair of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, spoke out on several occasions about the organization's cover-ups and lack of transparency:

[The commissioner of the RCMP] does not understand the accountability system, he does not understand the complaints system. It was very difficult for him to accept that he was accountable to a civilian agency.

She added that there was no way to make the RCMP accountable.



*Government Orders*

•(1040)

She also said that she believed it was going to explode at some point. She said that they could not continue covering up and downplaying the problems forever. Every time something serious happened, it was often impossible to obtain the documentation. Finally, she mentioned that she found it difficult because she was constantly spending a lot of energy trying to do her job.

Despite these shocking comments, the Conservative government continues to drag its feet. Bill C-42 will not really make much of a difference to the RCMP because the proposed measures do not go far enough. Nevertheless, the NDP has worked hard to improve the bill. We proposed a series of amendments to make Bill C-42 respond to the challenges that the RCMP currently faces.

The NDP amendments include requiring all members of the RCMP to receive harassment training in accordance with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act, establishing an independent body to examine complaints against the RCMP, adding a provision to create an independent national civilian investigative body in order to prevent police from investigating police, creating more balanced human resources policies by eliminating some of the new draconian powers of the RCMP commissioner, and strengthening the RCMP external review committee in cases where dismissal is being considered.

As is often the case, the Conservatives rejected all the NDP amendments. However, most of them met with the approval of many of the witnesses who appeared before the committee.

I would now like to deal more specifically with two major problems with the bill. As my colleagues have already mentioned, there is no proactive measure against sexual harassment. For a long time, the NDP has been asking the government to make dealing with harassment at the RCMP a priority. Bill C-42 does not directly attack this scourge, which has become a systemic problem.

Although the bill gives the RCMP commissioner the ability to create a more effective process for dealing with sexual harassment complaints, we believe that a more proactive training course should be included in order to address the issue of harassment, particularly sexual harassment, within the RCMP. The Conservatives refused to take this approach.

I read Bill C-42, and I noticed that the word “harassment” does not even appear in it.

We had also hoped that a clear policy on harassment within the RCMP would be adopted that would contain specific standards of conduct and criteria for assessing the performance of all employees. Such a policy would serve as a basis for a fair disciplinary process.

In short, the bill does not go far enough and does not address the concerns of the women working for the RCMP, who are calling for immediate action in order to create a safer and more open work environment.

What is more, the bill was introduced before the findings of the internal audit on gender equality within the RCMP were submitted.

In our opinion, it is essential that the RCMP be subject to civilian oversight. However, the new civilian complaints commission

introduced in Bill C-42 has the same problem as the RCMP Public Complaints Commission because it would report to the Minister of Public Safety, rather than to the Canadian public through Parliament.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the new commission would not be completely free to undertake investigations and would not have any binding authority. The new commission will not have the power to investigate accidents resulting in serious bodily harm or death. These investigations will mainly be assigned to municipal or provincial police forces or will continue to be carried out by the RCMP itself.

In conclusion, the Conservative government will not subject the RCMP to an independent investigative body that would report directly to Parliament. Until the Conservatives implement a strong mechanism for eliminating harassment, I cannot believe that the government is committed to modernizing the RCMP.

•(1045)

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech given by my hon. colleague.

She talked about the fact that the Conservatives systematically ignore the recommendations made in committee. This is true not only within the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, but also within all other committees. That is what my NDP colleagues have said.

Consider the example of some shocking testimony heard during committee study of Bill C-42. Mr. Creasser, a member of the Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada, had this to say:

Bill C-42, rather than mitigating these issues, will only make them exponentially worse.

...

If Bill C-42 is passed in its current form,...our Parliament would be promoting the bad behaviour....

Does my colleague have any explanation for the Conservative Party's failure to take action, even after hearing such compelling testimony from witnesses?

•(1050)

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague pointed out, this is a problem within all parliamentary committees.

Under this majority government, virtually no amendments are ever accepted at committee, which seriously undermines our democracy, of course, as well as civil society's ability to influence the legislative process.

Regarding Bill C-42, the NDP proposed 18 amendments, the Liberals proposed none and the Conservatives proposed 23. If I am not mistaken, no amendments were adopted at committee stage. The Conservatives opposed every amendment proposed by the NDP without any debate. These amendments were often initiated by witnesses from civil society or experts who appeared before the parliamentary committee.

We see this as a very serious problem and believe that it undermines the democratic process.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for her very enlightening presentation.

*Government Orders*

One of the amendments our party suggested dealt specifically with the independence of the complaints process in an organization such as the RCMP. The public should never have to doubt such an organization's credibility. That recommendation came not only from our party, but also from a few witnesses who appeared before the committee.

Could our colleague elaborate further on this?

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP believes that we need to address the problem of harassment in the RCMP.

That is why we suggested integrating mandatory harassment training for all RCMP members into the RCMP Act. We know that there are serious problems in the organization, and that women working in the RCMP have made many sacrifices. As parliamentarians, we must work together to create a safe and healthy workplace, where they can work safely.

Sadly, the Conservative government rejected our amendments with no explanations. The government needs to explain why it does not want to find solutions to the harassment issue.

[*English*]

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-42, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

To begin, I think it is important to note that New Democrats supported the intentions of Bill C-42 to modernize the RCMP and address issues such as sexual harassment and post-traumatic stress disorder in the force, and we voted for the bill to be sent to committee at second reading. However, at the committee stage, it became apparent, after hearing expert witness testimony, that in its current state Bill C-42 remains deeply flawed and will not meet the laudable objectives that New Democrats support in principle, namely to resolve the long-standing issues related to the oversight of the RCMP.

Canadians' confidence in the RCMP has been tested over the past few years as the RCMP has struggled with numerous public scandals. Whether it is the multiple cases of sexual harassment, which have become part of the public discourse surrounding Canada's Mounties, or other issues related to the lack of disciplinary oversight that the force has over its members, Canadians are universal in their support for the need to modernize the oversight provisions that the Commissioner of the RCMP has at his or her disposal.

Bill C-42 purports to streamline the current burdensome process of dealing with conduct and workplace problems, including abuse of authority, intimidation and harassment, by giving the commissioner final authority in deciding what sanctions to impose.

Currently RCMP managers faced with harassment issues have two different processes they must follow. One under Treasury Board policy and one under the RCMP Act. These processes do not always align, which often leads to confusion about rights, responsibilities and available approaches. Under Bill C-42, the commissioner would be granted the authority to establish a single comprehensive system for investigating and resolving harassment concerns.

While Bill C-42 does give more power to the commissioner over discipline and the power to establish a more effective process for dealing with harassment complaints, it remains unclear whether legislation alone can provide the RCMP with the overall culture change that is needed to respond specifically to allegations of widespread sexual harassment. In fact, Commissioner Paulson has publicly stated as much, noting that legislation alone is not enough to keep public trust in the RCMP.

To emphasize the point that legislation alone will not lead to the transformative changes that are truly required to reform the ongoing systemic sexual harassment at the RCMP, I would point to a recent study on sexual harassment within the RCMP in British Columbia, which indicates that problems are significantly under-reported because members are too afraid of reprisal to come forward.

From my perspective, Bill C-42 will not lead to the necessary culture change needed to destigmatize the issue of sexual harassment and ensure that victims of such harassment feel comfortable bringing their issues forward. Simply, the bill does not go far enough in directly addressing the concerns of women serving in the RCMP, who are calling for urgent action to foster a more inclusive and safe environment for women in the force. The word "harassment" still does not appear in Bill C-42 despite NDP attempts to do so.

While the bill has been introduced without the benefit of the findings of the internal general audit of the RCMP ordered by the commissioner, which is currently under way but sadly not yet completed, and while failing to specifically address these obvious concerns, the Conservatives are undertaking an approach that does not make women in the RCMP a priority. That is just wrong, particularly given the ongoing systemic instances of sexual harassment, which are being actively observed on an ongoing basis.

Even more worrisome than neglecting to reference and define harassment in the legislation is the failure to create an oversight body with any teeth, since primary investigations into incidents of death or serious bodily harm would largely be contracted out to provincial or municipal police forces, even though some have no civilian investigation body, or they would still be conducted by the RCMP.

• (1055)

Surely if the government was serious about modernizing the RCMP, it would take the next steps and allow binding recommendations from oversight bodies and a full civilian investigation of the RCMP through a truly independent watchdog agency that would report directly to Parliament.

*Government Orders*

The NDP tried to amend the bill, based on witness testimony, to address these issues, but the Conservatives refused to directly address the issue of sexual harassment and did little to actually modernize the RCMP as it is still hierarchical in nature with no independent civilian oversight. Although this is an approach that the Conservatives have favoured for other areas of public policy, ensuring that complaints are addressed by an impartial third party should be at the heart of any attempt to modernize the complaint procedures for Canada's national police service.

The NDP believes that we can go further to ensure that there is a clear anti-harassment policy in the RCMP, one which would contain specific standards for behaviour and specific criteria for evaluating the performance of all such employees. Such a policy is needed to serve as a basis for a fair discipline process.

I conclude by highlighting the fact that New Democrats made a genuine effort to improve the legislation before us during the committee stage. However, these attempts were rebuffed at every step of the process. New Democrats introduced 18 amendments at committee all designed to ensure heightened transparency to address the specific issues I have mentioned, namely the issue of sexual harassment and the lack of an effective oversight mechanism.

Specifically, NDP members on the public safety committee proposed the following: adding mandatory harassment training for RCMP members specifically to the RCMP Act; ensuring a fully independent civilian review body to investigate complaints against the RCMP; adding a provision to create a national civilian investigative body that would avoid police investigating police, which was ruled inadmissible for some reason; and creating a more balanced human resource policy by removing some of the more stringent powers proposed for the RCMP commissioner and by strengthening the external review committee in cases involving possible dismissal from the force.

However, as has become standard operating procedure, the government side once again took an unreasonable approach to the NDP's proposals, rejecting all 18 amendments, even though they were supported by witness testimony and were a genuine attempt to improve the legislation before us.

New Democrats recognize the deficiency in the approach taken by the Conservative government and its outright rejection of our practical proposals to improve the legislation. We will therefore be unable to support the legislation at this time in the way that it is being presented.

• (1100)

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Sudbury for his great comments and his overview of the bill and why those of us in the NDP have so many problems and concerns about it. We did work very hard at committee, as the member outlined, to bring improvements to the bill and to be very constructive. Unfortunately, they were turned down.

One of the issues that concerns me is that we brought forward amendments to ensure that there would be a fully independent civilian review body to investigate complaints. To me, this is a core issue for the public interest. We do know of very serious situations

where people have had complaints about the RCMP but there was no independent civilian review body.

I wonder if the member would comment in terms of the importance of having an independent civilian review body to investigate complaints.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Vancouver East for the question because it truly is something that is very important and that we wanted to see addressed in the bill.

Ending the practice of police investigating police needs to be a priority. If we think about what we have seen in other instances, in other legislation, the Conservatives have allowed for independent civilian investigative bodies. However, for some reason, they are not allowing that to move forward in this legislation.

There are many things on which we would ask why the Conservatives are doing this. Why are they not allowing a civilian body to be the oversight of the RCMP, when it is done in many other instances?

• (1105)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I asked questions on this earlier, and as I said in my own remarks yesterday, I have concerns about the balance of power given to the Commissioner of the RCMP. I have been there as solicitor general, so I am well aware of that position.

I am even more concerned about what I have heard in this discussion about amendments proposed at committee, and I am not a member of the committee, all being rejected out of hand by the government. This is happening in committee after committee. I really think we need a serious discussion, not just on this legislation but on all of it, about the way this place is working.

Today, in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, there is a story that states that the Auditor General's information was actually edited out of the final version of a parliamentary investigation on the F-35s. That is a serious issue. Evidence is evidence. Just because government members do not like the evidence, they should not be able to edit it out. That did not happen in this place years ago. I think it is becoming the custom around here for the department and the PMO to be running what Conservative members are allowed to do in committee.

The rules are that parliamentary reports, committee reports, are not supposed to be seen by a minister. They are not supposed to be seen by the PMO. Those are the rules.

Conservative members have been run by ministries and the PMO. That is affecting how this place is working. It is affecting why amendments are not even really being discussed. They are being rejected out of hand. That is a damper on our democracy.

I wonder if the member has anything to say.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, of course, we have seen, in committee after committee, amendments proposed to try to make the legislation better for all Canadians.

*Government Orders*

We all understand when there is a “what”. We know what the issue is. We all know that the “how” is what we do differently in the House.

We are coming up with some good amendments. Let me tell members some of the amendments that were rejected at this committee: adding mandatory harassment training for RCMP members, specifically, to the RCMP Act; ensuring a fully independent civilian review body to investigate complaints against the RCMP; adding a provision to create a national civilian investigative body that would avoid police investigating police. This was deemed inadmissible.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, about the importance of these, but I know that I do not have much time.

More than 200 women have come forward on the class action lawsuit on sexual harassment in the RCMP. How would the bill address that? It would not. Those amendments would have.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to speak to the bill. By way of preamble, I would like to concur with both the NDP member and my hon. colleague from Malpeque. It is important that the government begin to change its attitude in committees, because we are seeing this more and more. We are seeing it at the public safety committee. A bill comes to the committee for study, and all members approach it with good will. Some members propose amendments, yet the government seems not to be open to any kind of amendment. It is true that some are ruled out of order, and that is really a technical issue, but on other issues, the government members of the committee are united in closing down the possibility of amendment.

I would like to turn to the broader issue of the RCMP, the RCMP culture, and the demands on the RCMP.

Presently, at the public safety committee, we are doing a study of policing in Canada. We have had members of the RCMP appear before us on a couple of occasions. What is becoming abundantly clear is that policing in Canada, including within the RCMP, is becoming increasingly complex. That means having complex organizations, and I am sure that in some cases, it may mean increased bureaucratization. Within this context, it is very important that organizations do not become so complex that they are unmanageable and that the person responsible for leading the organization finds his or her hands tied at every turn.

The purpose of the bill is to provide some leeway to the commissioner to exercise some leadership. I would like to refer to the committee's current study on policing costs and policing in general. I would like to share with the House the fact that in England, some major reforms of policing have been undertaken. To counter the inevitable inertia that takes hold in any kind of organization over time, police crime commissioners in different regions have been appointed and have been given new powers to make appointments and so on to appoint the local police commissioner and so on.

There seems to be a shared understanding across the Atlantic that there is a need to make policing structures more efficient. In that regard, I would like to quote Dr. Alok Mukherjee, president of the Canadian Association of Police Boards. When he came to the committee, he said the following about a Federation of Canadian

Municipalities 2009 report on RCMP municipal contract policing: “A number of characteristics are generally accepted as essential to good governance; these include being accountable”, of course, and that is what this bill is hoping to achieve, “transparent, responsive, effective and efficient”—I would like to emphasize the word “efficient”—“equitable and inclusive”.

Efficiency is a concern, and that concern was echoed by Dr. Alok Mukherjee, President of the Canadian Association of Police Boards. Again, to quote Dr. Mukherjee when he appeared before the committee: “We”, meaning the Canadian Association of Police Boards, “believe that Bill C-42 is a good step forward in enhancing accountability, modernizing the force's human resources practices, and strengthening civilian oversight”.

It is not me saying that the bill strengthens civilian oversight. It is Dr. Alok Mukherjee, who is an extremely well-respected individual. He mentions further in his testimony: “The current oversight mechanism, the CPC”, which stands for the Commission for Public Complaints, “as has been noted by several witnesses appearing before you, is woefully inadequate. I believe that the provisions in Bill-C-42 will go a long way in filling this gap”.

• (1110)

He continues that “We are heartened by the fact that the proposed CRCC”, which stands for the civilian review and complaints commission that is being instituted by Bill C-42, “will have the power to undertake reviews of the RCMP's policies and procedures, have access to more documents than is the case at present, be able to compel evidence”, which is an important improvement to the current process, “and deal more expeditiously with public complaints”.

The bill does bring some improvements. I do not think it is correct to say that nothing good will come of the bill. Maybe it is not perfect. As I say, maybe the government should have been more open with respect to the amendments presented at committee. However, respected individuals, such as Dr. Alok Mukherjee, have admitted that the bill is an important improvement.

The new commission, the CRCC, which is replacing the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, would be given the power to summon witnesses, to compel them to produce documents or exhibits, in the same manner and to the same extent as a superior court of record, to examine any records and to make inquiries it considers necessary. These are important new powers.

Elsewhere I have read that if there is a disagreement between the commission and the commissioner about what kinds of documents should be released, essentially it is the commission that would rule. This is an important principle.

What is also important is that if the new bill is to be effective, resources will have to be provided to the new civilian review and complaints commission. The problem of resources has been an endemic one for many years. In fact, in 1997, the Auditor General did a review of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP and found that the process was quite slow. The report states at paragraph 34.3:

The Commission's handling of complaint reviews and public hearings is slow. It needs to improve the way it works by streamlining the review process and providing appropriate training to Commission members who are responsible for conducting public hearings.

*Government Orders*

That takes resources.

Paragraph 34.4 of the Auditor General's report from 1997 states, "The Commission also needs to improve its performance measures".

Bill C-42 attempts to bring in standards of service. In other words, it really wants to introduce some accountability and set some time limits on the review process. It is very important that the commissioner be able to exercise some leadership, because at the end of the day, it is leadership that creates cultural change within an organization. To confirm that we just have to look at Canadian Pacific, which has brought in a new president, Hunter Harrison, who is changing the corporate culture. He is obviously a strong-willed individual with vision who is bringing about change. It is not committees that bring about that kind of change at that point.

On behalf of our caucus, I feel that the bill is worth supporting. It is not perfect, and there are some concerns, some of which were raised at committee. Again, I concur with my colleagues and the NDP that the government should be much more open to accepting amendments and perhaps to even amending amendments. It should exhibit a spirit of openness toward the opposition and understand that no one in the House has a monopoly on good ideas or insight. It is by listening to each other that we will have better legislation.

• (1115)

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments as well as his contribution at committee. We really do work very well, and although we disagree many times, we get a lot accomplished.

The member was talking about the NDP amendments, but as I recall, one of the challenges with them was that they came in very late. We had to work to get them in, which can sometimes be a problem to do at committee. If we have an idea beforehand what the amendments are, it gives us greater ability to see what we have in common and where we can work together. Without that, practically speaking, it can become a problem. Furthermore, some of the New Democrats' amendments were ruled out of order. Again, that just goes to experience on the part of their committee members, who do an excellent job on behalf of their party. However, amendments need to be brought forward in a timely way and be deemed in order. It really is not the Conservatives' fault when the New Democrats do not have the organization in place to do that.

I noticed that the Liberals did not put any amendments forward at committee stage and have clearly indicated that they will be supporting this legislation. Would my hon. colleague encourage the NDP in that same spirit to support the legislation because of the good work it will do? It may not be perfect, but it goes much further than doing nothing at all.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, yes, I would encourage the NDP to support this legislation. Indeed, the legislation is not perfect, but as some eminent individuals have said, including Dr. Mukherjee, it is a major step forward. If we do not move on this issue, it is only going to fester and get worse and it is only going to slow the pace of cultural change within the organization. Therefore, it is important to get moving on this.

No doubt there will be issues in the future and we know that the RCMP commissioner in particular operates in a media fishbowl. It is not a secretive organization; if things are not going well, the press and the House will be right on his heels. He or she, whoever the next commissioner will be, will have some explaining to do and might have to give in to some suggestions for more change.

That said, we have to get going on this; we have to get started.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is something I do not understand.

The Conservatives acknowledge that this bill is not perfect. The Liberals just acknowledged that this bill is not perfect.

The problems within the RCMP came up five or ten years ago.

Why do we not take a few more weeks to come up with a better bill? Everyone agrees that this bill could be improved, so why do we not do it?

That is why the NDP cannot support this bill. As it stands, it misses the mark. Let us fix it once and for all. Let us create a better bill that at least meets the expectations of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard that we do not live in a perfect world; there are some problems to be fixed.

I cannot explain why the government voted against every one of the NDP's amendments that was in order, but the fact is that we must take a step forward if we want to change the culture within the RCMP. We cannot drag our feet on this, and that is very important. Cases of sexual harassment are making headlines. We must take action and make this bill a priority.

We can always come back to it in due time to make amendments, perhaps with a private member's bill.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to pick up on that very point, we do recognize that this is a positive bill in principle and that there will be a great deal of benefit from passing it. We recognize that it is not perfect and that some amendments could be brought forward, but it is important that we move forward and pass the bill.

Does the member believe that the principle of the bill, even if it passes without amendment, is worthy of support? That said, we would be discouraged if the government did not respond to any sensible suggestions, whether an NDP or Liberal amendment. Maybe some things could have been done at committee to strengthen the bill.

The bill will pass with our support of it in principle, but it could have been a better bill had the government been more sensitive to the need for changes.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, it is true that improvements could always be made, but we want to show support for the men and women of the RCMP. We want to show support for the commissioner, who has a difficult job to do. He is a new commissioner, and we would like to give him the benefit of the doubt at this point and show him that he not only has the government on his side in fulfilling his mandate but also some members of the opposition. One way of doing that would be to support the main principle of the bill.

While it is not perfect, some eminent individuals, like Dr. Mukherjee, have said that it is a very important bill and achieves some very important things.

We will see how it works out. If a good sexual harassment policy does not come forward quickly, I am sure there will be pressure to bring the commissioner back to the public safety committee to tell us why he has not acted faster.

• (1125)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I tried to put forward amendments at report stage, hoping that we could improve the bill. It needs improvement.

As much as I accept and have great respect for my colleague, I am skeptical of the idea that the media glare on the RCMP is adequate to deal with transgressions. We never got an answer from former Commissioner Zaccardelli about the outrageous intervention in the election campaign of 2005-2006. He refused the request of the commissioner at the time, Paul Kennedy, to give evidence, and the commissioner had no ability to compel him to give evidence.

We have seen far too many individual episodes, including Ian Bell being shot while in RCMP custody in British Columbia. We do not have adequate measures, and while the vast majority of RCMP officers are superb and dedicated men and women of great integrity, when one or two people behave as they have done, particularly when it is the commissioner himself in the case of Zaccardelli, this country needs adequate abilities to review and call to account RCMP behaviour when it falls below the standards of a free and democratic society with respect for human rights and individual liberties.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, the question of Commissioner Zaccardelli and the way he acted during that election campaign is obviously a sore point with our caucus.

However, the powers of the commission have been enhanced. It will have the power to examine RCMP policies and pretty much anything it would want, beyond just a simple case of one complaint. It will be able to ask for information and to compel witnesses.

If there is a commissioner down the road who just does not want to co-operate, at the end of the day, that commissioner will not be re-appointed. Unfortunately, that is the ultimate sanction available regarding any officer or employee of any organization, including any officer of Parliament or head of an agency.

Yes, I concur that the Zaccardelli incident was not a pleasant one.  
[Translation]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to further clarify the official opposition's position on Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian

Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.

I want the House to know that we will be voting against this bill. I have discussed the proposed legislation with various stakeholders on a number of occasions, and I have even studied it as a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. I was very disappointed to realize in committee that even though the Minister of Public Safety had said that he would be open to amendments, regardless of which party proposed them, the Conservatives did an about-face and limited debate in committee to seven meetings, rejecting every single amendment put forward by the opposition.

The aim of these amendments was to ensure that Bill C-42 addressed the challenges that are currently facing the RCMP. Among other things, they called for adding mandatory harassment training for all RCMP members specifically in the RCMP Act; establishing a fully independent civilian review body to investigate complaints against the RCMP; adding a provision to create an independent national civilian investigative body to avoid having police investigating police, an amendment that unfortunately was deemed out of order by the committee; and creating more balanced human resource policies by removing some of the new draconian powers proposed for the RCMP commissioner and strengthening the RCMP external review committee in cases involving possible dismissal from the force.

Had these amendments been accepted, this bill could have truly remedied the situation, but instead of enhancing the bill, the government merely introduced some minor amendments, primarily to address translation and grammar problems, not to improve the content. Quite frankly I was very disappointed in the government.

The reality is that this bill represents the Conservative government's response to long-standing complaints of sexual harassment within the RCMP and the recent scandals that made the headlines involving the overly lenient disciplinary action taken against officers charged with serious misconduct. The reality is that it also fails to deal directly with the problem of harassment within the RCMP and several other issues that were the focus of the NDP amendments I alluded to earlier.

*Government Orders*

The bill itself cannot bring about the change in the RCMP corporate culture that is necessary to specifically address the allegations of rampant sexual harassment. It does not directly deal with the systemic problems entrenched in the RCMP culture. Frankly, this bill leaves the impression that the Conservative government is afraid to tackle the serious harassment problems in the RCMP. That is why we proposed an amendment requiring all RCMP members to receive harassment training. That amendment was proposed following the testimony of a witness before the committee, Yvonne Séguin, who is the founder and executive director of the Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail. This support group has been in existence for 32 years. Its main objective is to break down the isolation and the wall of silence to which are subjected those who suffer or have suffered from sexual or psychological harassment in the workplace, and to raise awareness about this issue.

This support group pursues several objectives, as stated in its charter. They include: educating the public regarding this issue; advising women on the measures to be taken; helping women overcome the problems they have faced or still face; writing, publishing and releasing documents and manuals, and specifically documents on harassment in the workplace; and raising money through donations and organizing cultural activities for its members.

I had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Séguin while preparing for the discussion that we were going to have in committee on Bill C-42. I wanted to get more details to better understand what her organization stands for. I was deeply touched by everything she told me about sexual harassment in the workplace, about situations which I have been lucky not to experience. I was shocked and this influenced my approach to Bill C-42.

• (1130)

I was particularly moved by one of their campaigns. Unfortunately, I am not currently wearing the lapel pin that she gave me. It says, "It's not part of the job". I am 100% behind that idea. It really is not part of the job, and it must be condemned. I believe that Ms. Séguin's message says it all.

She also mentioned a training session that her organization had given to a group of firefighters who needed to change their workplace culture, as is the case with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I quote:

We had to raise awareness and educate people a lot about the fact that workplace culture can change. It has to change. The change is difficult for everyone, but once it's done, it's crystal clear. In the 1980s, CN made changes to discrimination and sexual harassment policies. This institution was the first to say it feared being flooded with complaints after the decision. However, on the contrary, it received fewer, because things were straightforward.

It is clear that she worked hard with groups that needed to change their workplace culture when it came to harassment. And the changes were positive. This real-life example proves that training and educating a group can have a tangible impact on a workplace.

The minister has not used this bill, or any other method, to mandate a clear policy on sexual harassment in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with specific standards of conduct and criteria for assessing the performance of all employees. Such a policy is necessary to provide a basis for a fair disciplinary process.

It was an important step in the changing role of women in the Canadian workplace when, in 1974, the RCMP began hiring female officers. I should point out that in the 1970s, there were even fewer women than there are today in occupations traditionally open only to men. And yes, that is still the case in many situations today, and that mentality still exists.

The RCMP finally changed its policies in response to recommendations that came out of the Bird commission in 1970. This commission wanted to see changes in the role of women in federal government workplaces.

On September 16, 1974, our federal police force hired 32 women from across the country. One week later, these women started their training at the RCMP School in Regina. In March of the following year, 30 women graduated. They were the first female cohort in the history of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It was a big step forward in terms of the rights of women and their place in the labour force and our federal institutions. Today, it is very important to take the time to commemorate this.

It is sad, however, to note that only few years later, the RCMP is facing numerous scandals concerning, among other things, harassment of many female police officers.

On July 30, in Vancouver, 200 women made headlines by expressing their interest in being part of a class action to expose the harassment they have been subject to in our federal police force. Women such as Officer Janet Merlo, Corporal Catherine Galliford and Constable Karen Katz were courageous enough to report the sexual harassment they endured for years in their workplace. For these women, every day at work was a challenge.

Today, as the deputy critic for public safety, I want to salute their determination. Reporting harassment takes a lot of courage, and these women have my full admiration. Women who work at the RCMP dedicate themselves body and soul to making sure that Canadians are safe. Sexual harassment cases are always distressing, no matter the workplace. These women risk their lives every day in an effort to protect us, and they deserve a lot better.

• (1135)

On September 19, it was reported in the media that, according to a document obtained under the Access to Information Act, a poll was taken of 426 female police officers in British Columbia following media reports of sexual harassment and the RCMP.

This internal RCMP report suggested that a number of employees were reluctant to blow the whistle on acts of sexual harassment because they do not trust the current complaints process, and they believe that the accused officers will, ultimately, go unpunished.

*Government Orders*

The report states that there was a pervasive perception within the RCMP that harassment was uncommon. Female police officers are reluctant to report cases of sexual harassment because they have observed that there are no consequences for the harasser other than having to transfer or be promoted.

I would like to digress for a moment. It is quite something to see in this day and age—and there have been number of instances in recent years—that in a case concerning a sexual harassment charge within the RCMP, the person at fault was not dealt with directly and punished; he was transferred elsewhere and given a promotion. In a world in which we tell ourselves that men and women have equal rights, I cannot get over it. It is completely inconceivable for someone who has sexually harassed a colleague to be given a promotion. It is completely beyond me.

I will return now to the report, which says that because women have the impression that there will be no real consequences, they do not believe that it is worth filing a complaint. The women who participated mainly reported that they felt the consequences of filing a harassment complaint outweighed the complaint itself.

They mentioned many problems, including aggressive supervisors, the assignment of women to lowly tasks, the little attention paid to them at meetings, the use of sexual innuendo, as well as touching and exhibitionism. No one should have to deal with this kind of behaviour at work, and these women should feel at ease in condemning this sort of completely unacceptable attitude.

The participants also reported that when they tried to complain, they were often punished. They were also afraid that their career would suffer, that they would be assigned new duties or that they would be posted to another detachment.

One participant even said that she would never make a harassment complaint because she had seen what had happened to those who had done so. Senior employees had made their lives a living hell and used their position of authority to intimidate them.

Clearly, it is urgent that we do something to deal with these obviously indefensible and intolerable situations within our federal police force. And it is not just within the RCMP that these things are happening; they are happening at workplaces across Canada. We have before us a striking example that gives us the opportunity to condemn the unthinkable. We need to stand up and do something about it.

Unfortunately, we New Democrats do not believe that Bill C-42 will be able to deal appropriately with this problem. There is nothing tangible in Bill C-42 that directly addresses sexual harassment, even though the Conservative government promised to address it in this bill. Absolutely nothing. I challenge my colleagues to try and find something in this bill that directly addresses sexual harassment, as the Minister of Public Safety promised. There is nothing in there.

The minister says that he wants more women in the RCMP, and I fully agree with him. The more women there are in environments that have been traditionally dominated by men, the better. However, it will be essential to ensure that they feel at ease in their working environment. Yes, more women are needed, but not under conditions like that.

Last November, we learned that RCMP Commissioner Paulson had given the Minister of Public Safety a document showing that the number of women at the RCMP training centres had dropped by 52% since 2008-09, despite the great need for female personnel.

● (1140)

Among other things, the letter called for action to reduce the number of harassment and workplace bullying complaints at the RCMP. We believe that our amendment providing for mandatory harassment training under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act would have been a step in the right direction. I do hope the government will follow up on this and look for real ways to change the internal culture at the RCMP.

I agree with the Minister of Public Safety when he says Canadians' trust in the RCMP has been shaken. In light of the allegations that have been made and the information that has surfaced on the inner workings of the organization, Canadians find it difficult to trust their own national police force. We must restore confidence by changing the culture within the RCMP. That will take a great deal of work. We must work together with all parties involved so that our national police force will have the tools it needs to deal with the problem.

Clearly the bill does not go far enough. It does not address the concerns of the organization's female employees. These women want immediate action to foster a more open and safe work environment for themselves and their colleagues. This bill does not achieve that goal.

Frankly, the government has failed to show initiative on this file. It has been in power since 2006, and despite several reports and recommendations—particularly Justice O'Connor's and David Brown's reports from 2006 and 2007 on possible changes to the RCMP—it waited six years to deal with the issue and even now refuses to take it seriously.

With respect to the cases that came up this summer in the RCMP, Ms. Séguin said, when you find that people have been sexually harassed for two decades, then you know there is a problem. When you hear that 150 female Mounties have gone through the process of pressing charges in a civil suit, it is screaming out loud that the system does not work. She also said she was aware that for a long time it was popular to try to group all the harassment charges together and call it maybe “violence at work”. But she believes that as long as there is sexual harassment in the workplace, as long as there is not the necessary education in place, we should be very specific.



*Government Orders*

Aside from the fact that this bill does not address the real problem of sexual harassment, we think that, if the Conservative government really wanted to modernize the RCMP, it would agree to move on to the next phase, applying the recommendations made by the oversight organizations and proceeding with an audit of the RCMP by an independent group of investigators who would report directly to Parliament. We believe that something must be done to strengthen the body that reviews and deals with complaints in the RCMP. The Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP has been very useful, but we have concerns about its independence and its ability to supervise independent inquiries.

Paul Kennedy, the former chair of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, made recommendations, first, in 2009, concerning investigations into serious incidents, and later, when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice. At that time, Mr. Kennedy proposed some solutions to improve the independence of the position he occupied. He appeared during the committee's study of Bill C-42 and stated that the bill did not meet the standards of review set out by Justice O'Connor and did not meet the needs of the RCMP or the Canadian public.

The New Democratic Party tried to amend this bill so that it would take the problems that witnesses have raised into account, but the Conservatives refuse to take direct action against harassment. That is not unlike the hierarchical nature of the RCMP and the force's complete lack of independent oversight. It is obvious that, in short, the Conservatives have not done enough to modernize the RCMP.

I would like to thank all the former and current members of the RCMP who made the effort to help us try to amend this bill. The amendments were not dreamed up out in the middle of nowhere. We sat around a table with the people who really worked in the RCMP and the people who were working to end sexual harassment.

• (1145)

We worked with every possible player we could imagine, and I sincerely thank them all. It is for all those men and women that I will be voting against Bill C-42 today. We absolutely must establish a fair, clear and transparent system that will help restore the trust of the general public and the women who work for the RCMP in the national police force.

We on this side of the House will continue to advocate bringing in policies and legislation to protect the right of RCMP members to carry on their honourable work in a climate of trust and respect.

[English]

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague. I appreciate her comments regarding sexual harassment, as well as articulating what many women go through and how difficult it is for them.

We have a bill before us that would provide a very strong framework to address a multitude of negative behaviours that sometimes have been and could be displayed within the RCMP. These have poisoned the culture, certainly harassment and sexual harassment being two of them, as well as bullying, intimidation and racism. Unfortunately, I could go on and on about a number of

behaviours that we want changed within the RCMP. Some are more prevalent than others.

Is the member and her party so narrow-minded and small-minded, and I do not believe she is, that they would not support the bill because it is not actually naming the negative behaviour of harassment within the bill? The bill would provide a strong framework to modernize the RCMP and would give management the ability to not only deal with harassment, but bullying, intimidation, violence, racism, sexism, a multitude of negative behaviours that she has, unfortunately, put under the heading of harassment, choosing not to support very important legislation. Is she that small-minded? I do not believe she is.

• (1150)

[Translation]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for her question. It will give me an opportunity to discuss this matter in greater detail.

The answer is no, not at all. This important bill is supposed to address a lot of problems. Many people who work at the RCMP or in workplaces where there is harassment—and I am talking about all forms of harassment—came to the committee to tell us that this bill does not address this problem at all but rather a different matter altogether.

What did the Conservative government do? It did not listen to them. We had seven meetings to examine a bill hundreds of pages in length that quite simply transforms the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

Let me give an example: the last time the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act was amended, the committee conducted a very important and very long study. It thoroughly examined the matter. It took 10 years or so to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act, and the changes were much more minor than these ones.

I believe the Conservatives are not taking the problem seriously. They did not listen to the witnesses in committee. They did not conduct consultations before introducing this bill. The people concerned saw it after the fact. No one was consulted in the preparation of this legislation, and they are trying to tell us they are doing the right thing.

I rather doubt that.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to be very clear, when we look at the bill before us, it is of such a nature that, ultimately, it is a step forward. Do we want some changes? Could there have been more done to improve issues such as harassment in the workforce and so forth? Absolutely, let there be no doubt about that.

It appears as if the New Democrats' feelings are a little hurt. They are upset because their amendments did not pass. There have been many amendments before the committee and it is unfortunate the government does not recognize the importance of accepting those. One can be very critical of the government for that.

*Government Orders*

The issue before us today is the principle of the bill and whether the bill should be allowed to proceed. My question to the member is very specific. Forgetting about the NDP amendments for a moment, what specific clauses of the bill do the New Democrats oppose, to the degree to which they would vote against the bill passing third reading?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** It would have been a good idea for my colleague from Winnipeg North to come and see the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security and the study that was made of this bill. I do not even know whether he would have had the time to go through the whole bill as it stands.

It is also sad to see that the Liberals did not introduce any amendments to it either. They say this is an imperfect bill. Why did they not try to correct it? I have a bit of a problem when they try to attack on that point.

No, this is not a step forward, not at all. If my colleague had taken the time to look at Bill C-42 in detail, he would have seen that most of the measures it contains absolutely do not address or resolve the issue of harassment in the workplace or give powers to the right people, or anything. No, Bill C-42 is a direct attack on the fundamental rights of workers.

Members may know this perhaps, but the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is one of the only police forces that is not unionized. It is therefore extremely difficult for workers to assert their rights if they have a problem with their employer. And Bill C-42 really contains a lot of clauses that directly attack workers' rights.

We could go through the bill. Perhaps my colleague and I could go for coffee and I could point out all the clauses that show why this bill makes no sense and does not address the right issue.

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the past, we have been told that victims of sexual assault are being encouraged more and more to report the abuse they suffer. We have also noted the many cases of missing women in aboriginal communities. These women are never found.

So, how can a police force that refuses to deal with the issue of sexual harassment within its own organization possibly deal with those kinds of problems in the future?

• (1155)

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** I thank my hon. colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin. He raised some very important points in relation to sexual harassment. Here, it is obvious. The problem with sexual harassment is that many women are too afraid to report incidents.

My partner and I are expecting a baby girl in April. She will grow up and of course I hope nothing bad ever happens to her. If anything ever does happen to her, frankly, you can be sure that I will be the first one screaming very loudly. However, if something does happen, I hope she will have the tools she needs. I do not want this little person to come into the world without being properly equipped to deal with any of the problems that can happen to anyone.

My colleague mentioned the first nations women who have disappeared from reserves. Here we have a serious problem of sexual

harassment in the workplace, and that organization does not have the tools needed to tackle the issue. Why not give these women the tools they need to tackle these problems? That is my question here today.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I get quite frustrated when I listen to the opposition talk about narrowing it down to harassment. Being a retired member of the RCMP, I was trained by a female. I have trained female members. They have all turned out to be excellent members.

We are talking about a few select members in the RCMP who do some bad things and who should be kicked out. What Bill C-42 would do is give the power to the commissioner to kick them out.

What the member is insinuating is that if we do not have that, this is exactly what would happen. They would be transferred because that is what we would do. We transfer them out of an area so they are not a problem.

Does the member agree that Bill C-42 would give the power to the commissioner to fire someone if he or she were found guilty of a criminal offence similar to harassment or any other charge? Does she think that would be the right response?

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan has 40 seconds to respond.

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** Mr. Speaker, I will begin by thanking my colleague for his question.

He is right when he says that there are only a few people responsible for workplace harassment within the RCMP. However, this is not the right way to deal with the problem.

Concentrating all the power at the top, in the hands of the commissioner or the deputy commissioners, does not really solve the problem. Had my colleague been at the committee meetings, he would have heard that much of the harassment occurs at senior levels. People in more senior positions harass those below them. This is not the right way to go about dealing with the problem. We must deal with it. My colleague is quite right to make that point. However, we are not going about it the right way.

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my speaking time with the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Historically, the tradition was that the Mounties always get their man. Is that still true? We might wonder about that. We in the NDP want a police force that is the best in the world. We want its reputation for excellence to be restored.

As New Democrats, we want a modern state protected by a modern police force. We therefore do not want to diminish the effectiveness of our police; on the contrary, we want to enhance it. That calls for some serious thought at present. On the question of harassment, we are told we are making too specific a point of it, as compared to other kinds of police misconduct. Allow me to quote Justice Bertha Wilson of the Supreme Court of Canada, who stated in a self-defence case that a man will never find himself in the situation of a battered woman.

*Government Orders*

That is a fact. A man will never go through the sexual harassment experienced by a woman. That is very important. It is why we are making a specific point of it. That does not mean we are denying there are other problems; we are not, but that is one that stands out. We cannot solve that problem the same way as all the others.

At the outset, the NDP wanted to tackle the problem of the RCMP and various dysfunctions. We supported Bill C-42 at second reading. We said it was important to take remedial action so that our police force would be more effective, and we voted for the bill, which was in fact sent to committee.

Unfortunately, during consideration of Bill C-42, the representatives made it plain that they were going to shuffle the cards and change people's titles, but fundamentally, the corporate culture that had led to major errors would not be rectified. That is problematic.

In this regard, when we look at the past, we learn that other societies have had the same problems. In France in the early 1900s, the French police were facing organized crime and anarchist movements like the Bonnot gang. The then minister of the interior, Georges Clemenceau, said that a modern police force called for modern solutions. He created flying squads, nicknamed the "Tiger Brigades". That was an effective response to a modern problem.

Later, France had to think about who was going to investigate its police. To police the police, it created the IGS, the Inspection générale des services, which is not accountable to a police chain of command that it is investigating. It is a totally independent police force that investigates certain kinds of wrongdoing by police and recommends remedial action and sometimes, when it is necessary, punishment.

We hoped that our amendments would be taken seriously in committee and would be discussed and accepted.

Requiring members of the RCMP to take harassment training under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act is not a luxury, it is a necessity. I do not understand why the Conservative caucus, so many of whom have been members of the police, would not consider the wisdom of this motion in amendment. It was necessary and they did not do it.

It is sad to say, but the Conservatives claim to have all the answers, like Louis XIV, who said, "l'État, c'est moi". He was never wrong.

● (1200)

In short, there is nothing more to be said. We even wonder whether there might not have been some further evolution. Now, the Conservative government is God. God is always right. We should simply shut up. But I will not. There is a major problem here.

The police hierarchy has been given the power once again to fire members for a variety of administrative, non-disciplinary reasons. Examples include illness, too much parental leave or post-traumatic shock, which is not taken seriously. There is even talk of punishing investigators who conduct investigations that displease the political masters.

It amounts to quasi-discretionary power over which we would not have any authority. And God knows that this police force needs help

and that we are prepared to give it. That is why the establishment of a completely independent investigative body was requested. By giving a commissioner the ultimate power to decide on what disciplinary action to take, Bill C-42 would give him the power to establish a single comprehensive framework for investigating and dealing with harassment problems.

This was precisely what we did not want. Worse still, it creates the same problems that arose in the case of an individual involved in an investigation into terrorism that directly affected national security. They fingered a completely innocent person. They deported him to Syria and he was tortured. But the problem does not end with the Arar case. Not only was a special commission of inquiry required to determine what had happened, but it took a parliamentary committee to eventually discover the truth. The truth was very simple: elements within the RCMP fabricated a terrorist threat simply to impress a foreign police force. It was unacceptable. These are the kinds of blunders that must not be repeated in the future.

There is also the risk that if the problem is not solved and there is no internal framework to deal with issues of this kind, people are going to find other ways of dealing with them and there are going to be leaks to the press. Rather than going through the usual chain of command, people will leak information to journalists. The best example of this was "Deep Throat", who was a senior FBI officer in the 1970s. When, during the Watergate scandal, he realized that presidential power was so influential that no investigation would be possible, he decided on his own, for the protection of the United States of America and in the interests of justice, to leak the relevant information to the *Washington Post*. Is this what is going to happen in the RCMP in the future? Will people be forced to leak information to the media?

The broad range of groups and experts who appeared and reported on the extent of the problems faced by the RCMP shows that serious action is required. It would seem impossible to refuse to listen to these many groups, with all their expertise, from so many different backgrounds. Unfortunately, however, the government is still not listening.

Some serious soul-searching is required to determine whether we really want an effective police force in a democratic state. The Minister of Public Safety said that Canadians' trust in the RCMP had been shaken. How could this bill possibly restore this trust? Clearly, it cannot. Perhaps the comments of the Minister of Justice could best be described by Madame de Pompadour's most famous words: "Après moi le déluge". In whatever he does, provided that he pleases his Prime Minister, nothing else is of any importance with respect to future consequences.

● (1205)

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, who always shares thoughtful remarks.

*Government Orders*

We all agree on the need to modernize the RCMP as an institution. We also agree we need to address the problem of sexual harassment in the RCMP, which has been going on for quite some time. This is a key part of this debate. Our party also proposed establishing an independent civilian body that would examine complaints against the RCMP. As my colleague pointed out, with the RCMP being one of our country's fundamental institutions, it must remain credible in the eyes of the public. I would like him to comment further on this.

• (1210)

**Mr. Alain Giguère:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Yes, credibility is at stake. When someone acts as judge and jury in a case where his own brother is the accused, one may wonder whether justice can be served. There needs to be an authority that is totally independent of the offender. The current legislation does not provide for such a change. Everything happens in a vacuum. This is the darker side of esprit de corps. That is why other countries mandate independent organizations to handle these investigations. In France, the work is done by an agency tasked with doing general service inspections. In England, they use the Special Branch. There are major differences. In Canada, it was decided that only the police commissioner would have the authority to impose sanctions. Sadly, in the past, sanctions imposed for serious misconduct have not reflected the seriousness of the crimes.

**Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as usual, my colleague made quite a heartfelt speech. Could he give us a general idea of the suggestions that were made in committee?

Members spoke of adding mandatory training, ensuring an independent body and creating a civilian investigative body in order to avoid situations where the police investigate the police. There was also talk of creating a more balanced police force, from a human resources perspective.

I would like my colleague to comment on these amendments brought forward in committee.

**Mr. Alain Giguère:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP did not come up with all the amendments that it brought forward. We listened to the most compelling witnesses, such as former senior RCMP officers, criminologists with a spotless past and generally people with a great deal of knowledge in the area. We got them together. We listened to them and brought forward amendments reflecting their suggestions on ways to improve our police force and restore its credibility. The NDP was able to bring forward amendments because it listened to the witnesses.

We listened to them; they had many things to say. Not all of them criticized the RCMP. Many witnesses appeared. For the most part, they were supportive of the RCMP. They were former officers, former members, former victims, people who have seen crime evolve. Those are the people we listened to and respected. They had our full attention. That is why we are very proud of our amendments.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comment. We truly listened to the witnesses; it really needs to be said. As parliamentarians, when we are in committee, one of our most crucial jobs is to welcome witnesses and hear what they have to say, in order to make our legislation better.

[English]

My grandfather, George Harris, was a member of the RCMP and had the privilege of being a member of the musical ride. I mention this just to bring into context my personal association.

I begin my remarks today by paying tribute to the women and men of the RCMP who work every day to help our communities stay safe. The essential service they provide, often in the face of great danger and ignoring many of the individual challenges that surround their work in order to fulfill their duties, deserves to be acknowledged and they deserve the best-quality legislation possible.

That is where our problems with Bill C-42 begin. I have been listening to today's debate and am moved by how passionately Conservatives have defended this bill today and by the fact that no government members have risen to explain why they refused reasoned amendments and recommendations by witnesses. Members of both the Liberal and Conservative parties admit that this bill is not perfect, but neither party is willing to take the time to get it right. New Democrats prefer to get it right the first time. That is what Canadians send us here to do: to pass the best evidence-based laws we can.

The New Democrats supported the intention of Bill C-42, to modernize the RCMP and address issues such as sexual harassment in the force, and voted in favour at second reading so that the bill would move to committee and hopefully be improved. However, after witnesses and experts testified at committee, it became clear that this bill has some deep and serious flaws that would not fix oversight at the RCMP without further amendment. It also needs to be pointed out that Bill C-42 would fail to act on any of the recommendations set out by Justice O'Connor in the Maher Arar inquiry that aim to improve standards of review of the RCMP to meet the needs of Canadians. This is very disappointing.

The Conservatives presented Bill C-42 as the solution to a dysfunctional RCMP, but clearly we are not there yet. The bill would not only fall short on addressing sexual harassment within the force, but it would also fall short in a number of other areas. The New Democrats, as mentioned, tried to address these shortcomings in committee by putting forward a package of amendments meant to ensure Bill C-42 would effectively meet the challenges the RCMP faces.

Those amendments included adding mandatory harassment training for RCMP members. I cannot imagine why the government side would oppose this. It makes no sense. We have clear problems in the RCMP with respect to harassment, and why we would not seek to have our officers receive the best quality training possible to prevent these issues from happening in the future is beyond me.

*Government Orders*

Ensuring a fully independent civilian review body to investigate complaints against the RCMP was another recommendation. This is something that Canadians, with municipal, provincial and federal police forces, have called for at all levels where such a body does not exist. We have had these kinds of bodies in the past and why we are still not moving toward that at the federal level is a shock.

We called for adding a provision to create a national civilian investigative body that would avoid having police investigating police. All across in the legislation we have numerous instances where self-regulation oftentimes does not work or creates new problems. Recently, with the biggest recall of meat in Canadian history, we have seen where self-regulation has gone with the inspection of foods. There are currently issues before the courts with respect to airline safety and self-regulation. Only 30% of Canada's fleet of airplanes has been inspected by Transport Canada in the last two years. Self-regulation causes more problems than it fixes. So we wanted to see a national civilian investigative body put forward.

We would like to see the creation of more-balanced human resource policies by removing some of the more draconian powers proposed for the RCMP commissioner and by strengthening the RCMP external review committee in cases involving possible dismissal from the force. On the other side, members want to put all the power in the minister's and the commissioner's hands. That is not how we would achieve a transparent and accountable government or national police force.

• (1215)

The Conservatives voted down every single NDP amendment at committee. They even ignored many very good recommendations made by expert witnesses at the committee. The Conservative government is standing by its argument that putting more power in the hands of the RCMP commissioner to fire individual officers will curb the issue of harassment in the RCMP, and that the RCMP commissioner should have final say on all dismissals, ignoring calls for more independence. Witness after witness explained that legislation alone will not help foster a more open and respectful workplace. We need to see an ongoing effort from the RCMP and the government to modernize the RCMP. This bill lacks the transparency and accountability necessary to bring about those changes.

We on this side supported the bill at second reading because we all acknowledge that despite its proud history and its ongoing exemplary service, the RCMP faces some serious challenges. What we are all hearing in our constituencies and have heard in testimony before the public safety committee is that there are at least three major challenges facing the force.

First, and one of the biggest challenges facing the RCMP, is the potential loss of public confidence. For many years the RCMP has been an icon in our society, and trust levels remain high still to this day, as they should. However, any time our national police force begins to lose public confidence we must be concerned as parliamentarians and we must address the causes of that loss of confidence.

The causes centre around a number of unfortunate and high-profile incidents involving the force, which have resulted in death or serious injury to the public. Whenever there are these serious incidents, some of this loss of confidence is to be expected because

the RCMP is charged with the use of force. RCMP members are bound to face challenging situations. Some of that loss of confidence is as a direct result of public concern about the structures by which we hold the RCMP accountable. In particular, members of the public are concerned about the police investigating themselves. It is interesting to note that it is not only the public that has lost confidence in these accountability measures, but there is also a loss of confidence among serving RCMP members, who have every bit if not more of an interest in independent investigations.

We also have serious evidence before us of a second challenge, a flaw in the culture of the RCMP. The RCMP has become a workplace with a culture that all too often has tolerated harassment in the workplace and specifically sexual harassment. When we have more than 200 women who have served or are currently serving in the RCMP seeking to join a class action lawsuit alleging they have faced sexual harassment on the job, that is an important issue for Parliament and for the minister to address. The magnitude of that problem cannot be denied.

Finally, it has become clear that there is a problem in the management of human resources and labour relations within the RCMP. This is a flaw that many have acknowledged is responsible for failures to deal with these other challenges in an effective manner. It cannot be denied that procedures are long, complicated, time-consuming and fail to bring about the changes needed to address both individual behaviour and more systemic problems. Therefore, it is again a challenge that we must address.

The NDP has pushed the minister for months to prioritize the issue of sexual harassment in the RCMP. Bill C-42 does not directly address systemic issues in the culture of the RCMP. We want to be clear that the bill, by itself, will not change the current climate in the RCMP. The bill does indirectly give the RCMP commissioner the ability to create a more effective process for dealing with sexual harassment complaints, however, the word "harassment" only appears in the bill once, in a disciplinary context to deal with harassment after it has occurred. We want to see it prevented, to not happen in the first place.

This is opposed to what the NDP proposed, which was to put language in the bill that was more proactive in curbing the systemic issue of harassment and particularly sexual harassment among RCMP members, which the Conservatives sadly refused to do. We agree with Commissioner Paulson in saying that legislation alone is not enough to keep the public trust and that profound reforms to change deep underlying culture problems within the RCMP are needed to foster a more open, co-operative and respectful workplace for all.

I see that my time is rapidly expiring, so I will wrap up my remarks by saying, once again, how sad we are with the state of the committees in the House of Commons, as we see them go, time and time again, behind closed doors and prevent reasoned arguments and amendments from being put into bills before the House.

*Government Orders*

• (1220)

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, many RCMP members are concerned about Bill C-42. They are afraid that in the provisions for whistleblowers they will not be protected under the auspices of the bill and they are worried about their job security.

Could the member address the concern that the bill does not address these concerns?

**Mr. Dan Harris:** Mr. Speaker, this touches on the fact that all the power is going to be put into the hands of the minister and the commissioner. How are people going to feel comfortable bringing issues forward when it is their direct bosses who are going to be responsible for hearing them? This is why we need to have independent civilian oversight for the RCMP in order to make sure that people feel comfortable bringing these issues forward.

We definitely need stronger whistleblower legislation for the RCMP and in other areas of the federal government to ensure that when problems occur public servants and police officers can come forward and not risk losing their jobs.

• (1225)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his very convincing presentation.

I would like him to tell us, in his own words, why we need both an independent complaints commission and increased accountability from RCMP senior officials if we want to ensure that the police force does not end up investigating itself.

[English]

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in my speech I mentioned other places where self-regulation is taking place and it is not working very well. In Ontario in the 1990s, we had another government, the Mike Harris government, which sought to remove civilian oversight from police forces in Ontario. I would note that three of the primary cabinet members of the current Conservative government were also in that government, so we see perhaps where some of those directions are coming from.

In that instance there was a tremendous loss of public confidence in the police forces because they were regulating themselves. There were no transparent processes put in place and there was no accountability. Above all else, we have to ensure through civilian oversight that we have accountability within our police forces when bad things happen.

[Translation]

**Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Saint-Jean.

A report from the International Labour Office contains data based on a 1996 survey of 15 European Union countries that included 15,800 interviews. It listed 6 million cases of physical violence, which means 4% of workers; 3 million cases of sexual harassment, or 2% of workers, and 12 million cases of intimidation, or 8% of workers. In 2009 here in Canada, over 20,000 cases of harassment have been reported, and the phenomenon is on the rise.

Violence and the workplace have always gone hand in hand, but although work was once a source of physical violence that could go as far as legal power over the life and death of a slave, today it is increasingly associated with psychological violence. This finds its origin largely in the new forms of work organization, and in management methods that emerged some thirty years ago and have led to deteriorating social relations, job insecurity and unemployment.

When referring to cases of violence, we must be sure to call them by their rightful name, so that everyone understands what we are talking about. According to the social and professional communities, one difficulty has to be taken into account: levels of tolerance for violence vary. Some forms of work organization and some situations are conducive to manifestations of violence.

The Conservatives introduced this bill in the House for first reading on June 21, 2012, and second reading on September 17, 18 and 19, 2012. Moreover, at second reading it was referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which held seven meetings in October 2012, and a further sitting in November, so that a report could be adopted in mid-December. Today we are at third reading, and there really does not seem to have been any development in this bill.

The purpose of the bill was to restore public trust in the RCMP, and provide for clear and transparent accountability. Distancing itself from Canadian values with respect to law and order, however, the government seems to be forgetting that the best way of restoring public trust is to ensure transparency and remove any appearance of a conflict of interest.

Yet how is the public to be rid completely of its cynicism if the RCMP can investigate its own members, or in other words, if the police oversee investigations of their own actions?

I wonder about the fact that of the 14,000 words or so in the bill, the word “harassment” appears but once. As my colleague from Churchill pointed out, “harassment” is not even defined in the bill.

How is it that the committee considering these issues did not meet with a single representative of the RCMP who had filed a complaint of sexual harassment? Were these people not invited to attend the committee’s meetings? We would like to know why the victims were not heard from.

This is probably why Robin Kers, the union’s national representative, pointed out recently in an article in the February 4 issue of the *Hill Times* that the changes proposed by the government with respect to harassment within the police force were worthless, that they would not change so much as a comma in the RCMP code of conduct, and that the government had missed an opportunity to send a clear signal about accountability for harassment within the police.

Is this really surprising?

A clear and measurable policy to achieve parity between men and women in the forces would be the most constructive, structural approach to the problem of harassment. Representation of women in the forces currently stands at 20%.

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•(1230)

On November 20, the assistant commissioner and human resources director, Sharon Woodburn, said that no concrete plan had been put forward to achieve the ratio of 30% to 35%, mentioned last April before a parliamentary committee by RCMP commissioner Bob Paulson.

I am concerned by the constant stream of harassment complaints received by the RCMP. My concern seems confirmed not by the constant number of complaints over the past decade, but by the reaction of the Minister of Public Safety last November, when he reprimanded the RCMP commissioner for discussing the gender analysis, in the interests of transparency. This did not reflect the will expressed in the bill's preamble about transparency.

On another note, the government seems to be acting in a contradictory way. On the one hand, it proposes to protect victims, something with which we agree, and it introduces a bill to increase the safety of witnesses. We talked about it yesterday. On the other hand—and after the NDP proposed amendments to deal with the concerns over human resources policies, in an attempt to rebalance them and, ultimately, reduce violence within organizations—the Conservative rejected all proposals to protect job security for members, particularly when harassment is reported. In addition to being harassed, members will be afraid to lose their job if they report someone. We seem to have here a government with a double standard.

Finally, I would like to quote Paul Kennedy, who held the job of RCMP public complaints commissioner for four years. He feels that the RCMP requires closer government oversight than what is provided under Bill C-42. The extended and repetitive situation that exists in the RCMP confirms the existence of a structural problem. Therefore, more radical solutions targeting the structure itself are required.

This is a worrisome problem that seems to exist everywhere and to be growing rapidly. The legislative approaches vary, as I am going to show.

The 2004 report entitled “L'État social de la France” and prepared by the ODIS proposes an analytical grid to evaluate the reality of moral harassment and specify its nature.

In Quebec, the Commission des normes du travail defines harassment as follows:

Harassment...at work is vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures: that are hostile or unwanted; that affect the employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity; that make the work environment harmful.

The definition of harassment in the Act respecting Labour Standards in Quebec includes sexual harassment in the workplace and harassment based on one of the grounds mentioned in the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

To establish that a case actually involves psychological harassment, it is necessary to prove the presence of all the elements of the definition: vexatious behaviour; repetitive in nature; verbal comments, gestures or behaviours that are hostile or unwanted, that affect the person's dignity or integrity, and that make the environment harmful.

While we agree that the police does not have a monopoly on violence in society, it is critical that the RCMP become a place exempt from harassment. The integrity of our police is at stake. That is why the state, as employer, must ensure that RCMP members work in a healthy workplace and are protected from the situations that I described.

•(1235)

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Honoré-Mercier, in eastern Montreal, for her speech.

Her speech raised an important point. The parliamentary committee heard from witnesses from all walks of life: expert witnesses, former RCMP officers, former RCMP complaints auditors, judges, lawyers and harassment experts. These people have all kinds of different backgrounds. They are not opposed to having a modern police force. On the contrary, these people want Canada's police force to be one of the best in the world. Why is it that all of these witnesses were heard, but they were all ignored? They were not respected. Their suggestions were not taken into consideration.

Could my distinguished colleague explain why?

**Ms. Paulina Ayala:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague just touched on a very sensitive point, namely the value of democracy. In a democracy, we must listen to one another, set aside our differences and work together.

When the Conservatives boss us around, they undermine democracy. They do that instead of improving a bill that would benefit everyone. The government's position is dangerous. We are here to represent people and provide them with a better quality of life. We are not the boss of anything and we do not have a monopoly on the truth.

By listening to professionals in the field, we could improve our legislation and truly make life easier for our constituents. In my opinion, our democracy is starting to suffer. The members opposite seem to be going deaf. They are not listening.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the questions and the debate today. As a police officer who is on a leave of absence, I am ashamed to hear such rhetoric coming from one side of the House. We, in fact, have 13 police officers on the government side and we take this matter very seriously.

When the member hears members of her caucus talk about listening to the experts, has she read the transcripts that show the majority of the people who appeared in committee supported the government's position and decried the position put forth by her party? I would also like to know the cost that has been put forward by the NDP's proposal because, surely, it would not put a proposal forward to create a new bureaucracy without having costed it.

These are very clear questions. Has she read the transcripts? Why is she denouncing the experts? What is the cost for the bureaucracy the NDP wants to create?

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[Translation]

**Ms. Paulina Ayala:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

On the contrary, experts have said that those who investigate cases involving the RCMP truly have to be independent parties who do not come from within the organization. If there is a problem within a family, it will not be resolved within the family. Help needs to come from elsewhere for it to be objective and transparent. Victims need to feel like they are being listened to. That is how to get results when it comes to whistle-blowing. The Conservatives did not listen to everyone in committee. That is clear in the transcript.

• (1240)

[English]

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the member for Saint Boniface just said, witness after witness agreed with our amendments, except of course for the Conservative members.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Name them.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, will the member for Saint Boniface let me speak?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. I would ask all hon. members to cede to whoever has the floor. I would also ask the member for Nickel Belt to move to his question quickly.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, I would gladly move to the question, if the Conservatives would only listen.

Expert after expert said that our amendments were good amendments, except for the Conservatives. Could the member tell me why the Conservatives are against the good amendments supported by witnesses?

[Translation]

**Ms. Paulina Ayala:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for my colleague, it is up to the Conservatives to answer that question and to explain why they did not accept these recommendations when they claim to be working for the well-being of people, when they say they want to improve working conditions and to prevent harassment. I cannot answer for them.

**Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will begin my speech by responding to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. She has asked for examples of witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security and contradicted her remarks.

One of those witnesses was Mr. Rob Creasser, from the Professional Association of the Canadian Mounted Police, who spoke to us about the imbalance of power in the organization: “Bill C-42, rather than mitigating these issues, will only make them exponentially worse”.

I do not know what made the parliamentary secretary say that no witnesses contradicted the government. Even though Mr. Creasser does not have a doctorate in mathematics, I think that he knows what “exponentially” means. He went on to say:

If Bill C-42 is passed in its current form...our Parliament would be promoting the bad behaviour and cronyism by legitimizing this type of behaviour.

I hope that addresses the concerns of the member for Saint-Boniface regarding the witnesses who appeared. I did not attend the testimony, but I read the transcription and I came to the conclusion that the parliamentary secretary is mistaken when she says that no witness contradicted the government.

One of the things that initially shocked me about Bill C-42, An Act to Increase Accountability of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, was the huge discrepancy between the number of complaints made against police and the inadequacy of the Conservative government’s response. Having said that, I was especially shocked by the lack of any practical solution to adequately address the problem of sexual harassment, which is serious and ongoing, within the venerable institution that is the RCMP.

One explanation for this discrepancy is probably the fact that the government members did not consult all stakeholders on this issue before drafting this legislation. Bill C-42 has been held up by the government as a solution to the problem of sexual harassment in the RCMP, yet clearly, the bill does not meet that objective because it does not even refer explicitly to sexual harassment. To attack the problem, the bill must name it and come up with specific solutions for sexual harassment.

More generally speaking, the bill does not make an attempt to modernize an institution such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as other countries have done. My colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin put it well earlier when he said that in other countries, particularly in Europe, this very problem has been tackled directly by creating institutions that are independent from the police and whose investigations cannot be hampered by the police force under investigation.

We have to consider whether Canadians’ gradual loss of trust in their police forces, in general, and in the RCMP, specifically, is warranted. Part of the answer can probably be found in the 2010-11 annual report on the management of the RCMP disciplinary process, which is the most recent report available. The list of offences speaks volumes and is instructive. It was developed by police officers who are supposed to police their own conduct.

Here are some things on that list: excessive force; use of computer to play video games; use of computer to access pornographic websites; improper use of government credit card; impaired driving; altercation in public place; sexual assault; reporting for duty while under the influence of alcohol—that is the same person as the sexual assault, so we wonder if it was the same day or not, but we do not have the details; use of controlled substances—that means drugs; theft; false claims of overtime hours; domestic assault; possession of firearm without proper licensing; unauthorized use of satellite television signals—perhaps we need to raise our Mounties’ salaries if they are reduced to pirating TV signals; refusing to provide breath sample; and here is an interesting one—allowing a prostitute actively soliciting sexual activity to enter personal vehicle for sexual activity; and falsification of medical certificates.

• (1245)

That is the list of the offences that police forces, especially the RCMP, are expected to detect, investigate and punish.



Thus, we can understand the public's growing lack of confidence in police forces, particularly the RCMP. Instead of building confidence, it just undermines public confidence in the police.

In Quebec, this reminds us of the sad case of "Officer 728", which has been widely discussed. Although there is no direct link with the RCMP, it is one more element that undermines the confidence of Quebecers and all Canadians in all police forces. That is cause for concern.

The point of third reading of a bill is to make good use of the testimony by witnesses at the committee stage.

I will give as an example the testimony by the president of the Canadian Association of Police Boards. He expressed his concerns about the ability of the chairperson of the civilian review and complaints commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police—they could have found a shorter name for it, but that is its name—to refuse to investigate a complaint, even when the chairperson believes that would be in the public interest. Once again, that is something for the hon. member for Saint-Boniface to consider. This testimony confirms that a number of witnesses expressed serious concerns about the usefulness and the weak intent of Bill C-42.

Let us say more about this civilian review and complaints commission that is going to replace the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP. The first obvious flaw is that the results of these investigations will simply be recommendations and not orders. The recommendations will not be binding on the commissioner or on the Minister of Public Safety.

The second major flaw in this commission is, I think, even more important. That is the fact that it will not be any more independent than the previous one, since it will not report to Parliament, but to the Minister of Public Safety.

This makes me think of a strong trend that we are also seeing within the Standing Committee on National Defence. I am a member of that committee. Just yesterday, we were debating the possibility of adding a link between the Vice Chief of Defence Staff and the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal. This is a typical example of an independent body losing its independence through the addition of a clause to a bill. This means that, once again—and I am using the example of national defence—the Conservatives are limiting the independence of those who should have all the independence they need to investigate any deviations from normal operations that occur within a government department or agency.

• (1250)

For all of the reasons I have outlined, I will not support Bill C-42 at third reading. The main reason for which the bill was drafted is not properly articulated and the bill is not an adequate response to the problem that it is supposed to solve.

[English]

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find it extremely frustrating, as someone who has attended every single committee meeting on the bill and has read and knows it, to hear people speak on the bill who clearly have no idea what it is about, what the testimony reflected nor the amendments to the bill. Therefore, I will just clear up a

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couple of things and ask my hon. colleague if he has actually read the transcript from the committee and read the bill.

First, on the issue of a complaint initiated by the chair, we made an amendment. The commissioner cannot refuse to study that. It has been dealt with.

As far as the police investigating police is concerned, that is exactly one of the reasons we brought the bill forward. There is absolutely a strong mechanism in place whereby non-RCMP investigative bodies will be investigating serious policing incidents, whether the death of civilians or within the RCMP. That has been addressed. Clearly, the opposition members have not read about that.

Third, we made amendments regarding immunity for the chair as well as reservists. I wonder if my hon. colleague could tell the House truthfully, has he read the bill and the witness testimony at committee?

[Translation]

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety by saying that I have read the comments and testimony.

I would like to quote another stakeholder. Mr. Stamatakis, president of the Canadian Police Association, is concerned about the risks associated with the commissioner's ability to delegate disciplinary authority. He said:

Without any additional...independent avenue for appeal, I would suggest there is a possibility that RCMP members could lose faith in the impartiality of a process against them, particularly in situations in which the commissioner has delegated his authority for discipline.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety is claiming that I am not familiar with what was said in committee when I have just read four quotes. The Conservatives are truly acting in bad faith.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we do support the bill and we will be voting in favour of its passing at third reading.

Having said that, to be very clear, there are definitely issues that we are concerned about as a political party and on which we would like to see progress. Whether it is harassment or cultural awareness, there is no doubt the bill could have been improved.

The member is a little sensitive about whether or not we proposed amendments. I can assure the member that on many bills, the NDP does not propose amendments. No doubt the NDP members are a little sensitive on that issue because of the number of amendments rejected. However, this is not about the feelings of the New Democrats but whether or not the bill, even with its shortcomings, should proceed at third reading. The Liberal Party does recognize the value in having the bill pass. The bill does take a step forward.

What parts of the bill do the New Democrats oppose and make them vote against the bill? Is there a clause in the bill that says, in principle, this will take the RCMP backward?

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• (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tarik Brahmī:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for being so concise. That is usually the case when he speaks in the House.

The main reason is that the NDP proposed amendments after hearing the testimony. The amendments are based on what we heard from the witnesses.

The reason why I will not support this bill is that it does not respond to the specific and serious problem of the growing number of cases of sexual harassment within the RCMP. What is more, this causes all police forces to lose credibility. This problem serves only to undermine the public's confidence in Canada's law enforcement agencies. And that is serious.

**Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for LaSalle—Émard.

I am pleased to be taking part in the debate at third reading of Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts. This bill amends the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act. It deals with modernizing discipline within the RCMP, gives RCMP commissioners greater powers and discretion, and changes the procedures for complaints and human resources management. The bill also replaces the civilian complaints commission with the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP.

This bill incorporates numerous provisions of Bill C-38, which was introduced in the 40th parliament and which the NDP strongly criticized at the time. Although we supported the spirit of the bill, which aimed to modernize discipline-related items within an institution that is dear to the hearts of Canadians, we were critical of what it failed to do, since the content of the bill did not adequately reflect the goal.

While the bill that is before the House today incorporates a majority of the provisions of Bill C-38, it does not include the provisions relating to unionization of the RCMP. The RCMP is the only police service in Canada that does not have a collective agreement, which is an essential bargaining tool between employees and employer. Members of the RCMP have to be content with a consultation process, and this is regrettable.

The current government introduced Bill C-42 on June 20, 2012. Canadians' perception of the RCMP, the key police force in our system, has changed in the last few years.

Statistics from the Management of the RCMP Disciplinary Process 2010-2011 Annual Report unfortunately highlight the fact that this institution has a problem when it comes to discipline.

The statistics on formal discipline hearings held from 1994 to 2011 show that 750 formal discipline hearings were held across Canada. In this same period, 206 regular and civilian members resigned from the RCMP and 20 of those members resigned in reporting period 2005-06. From 2008 through to 2011, there were 145 formal discipline hearings held. In this same time span, a combination of 40 regular and civilian members resigned from the organization.

On the annual number of formal discipline hearings, from 2000 to 2011 there were 915 new formal discipline cases, which averaged out to 83.18 new cases a year. The anticipated number of new formal discipline cases for 2011-2012 was 83. There were 123 cases carried over on April 1, 2011, from the previous reporting period. The estimated number of formal discipline cases to be dealt with in 2011-12 was 206 cases.

On the sexual harassment complaints, over 200 women who work or have worked in the RCMP have joined Const. Janet Merlo to launch a class action against the RCMP on the ground of sexual harassment. The first court hearing took place on August 2, 2012, but the class action application has not yet been approved. Other individual actions against the RCMP are under way, including the actions by Cpl. Catherine Galliford and Const. Karen Katz.

When we read these figures and consider the various testimony heard by the committee, it is apparent that changing the organizational culture should be central to any comprehensive examination undertaken by the Minister of Public Safety.

• (1300)

Of course, legislation means that outdated procedures that were seen as too much of an administrative burden will now have a framework and will be updated. From the legislative point of view, there must be an in-depth analysis of the RCMP's corporate culture, so that changes can be made.

According to Robert Paulson, the RCMP commissioner, it is a central issue. He came to testify at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on April 23, 2012, when the committee was studying the role of female employees in the RCMP and the challenges they face. He said, and I quote:

It's the culture of the organization that has not kept pace.... We haven't been able to change our practices and our policies, or provide systems that would permit women to thrive in the organization and contribute to policing, which they must do... I've said it publicly, and I'll say it again. I think the problem is bigger than simply the sexual harassment. It is the idea of harassment. The idea that we have a hierarchical organization overseeing men and women who have extraordinary powers in relation to their fellow citizens, which requires a fair degree of discipline.

The term "harassment" appears in the bill's summary and in paragraph 20.2(1)(i), which states that the RCMP commissioner may "establish procedures to investigate and resolve disputes relating to alleged harassment by a member".

Even though harassment, and more specifically sexual harassment, is at the heart of the debates on the culture within this police force, the legislator failed to address this issue in the bill. The official opposition, which voted to send this bill to committee to be examined thoroughly and amended, is opposed to the bill at third reading.

The 18 amendments proposed in committee were either rejected or deemed out of order. The NDP's amendments had to do with substantive changes to the text of the bill, unlike the Conservatives' amendments, which had to do with grammar-related corrections in French. This shows once again that a government bill was botched before it was even introduced in the House.

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One of the amendments had to do with amending the Canadian Mounted Police Act to add mandatory harassment training for all RCMP members. This is a simple, concrete measure that meets the expectations of many witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. This measure would have helped provoke the necessary corporate culture changes in order to change the perception certain RCMP members have of the concept of harassment.

In closing, the Conservatives have yet again shown their lack of openness and co-operation with other parties by rejecting the official opposition's amendments and not considering expert advice in order to restore the RCMP's increasingly tarnished image in Canada.

If, as the Minister of Public Safety claims, this institution is synonymous with "professionalism, honesty, integrity and compassion", this bill is misguided and the RCMP may no longer live up to those adjectives in the long-run.

•(1305)

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague for his speech. As I said earlier, it is extremely important that we address this subject in the House. My colleague dedicated a great deal of time to evaluating the contents of the bill. I also heard him mention that the opposition's amendments were unfortunately not accepted and were rejected in committee.

Bill C-42 focuses a lot more on workers' rights than it does on the fundamental problem of harassment within the RCMP. The bill does not solve the problem or address the right issues. This seems to happen frequently with this government.

Does my colleague think it is right that this Conservative government bill focuses so much on workers' rights and so little on women's right to work in a safe environment? What are my colleague's thoughts on this?

**Mr. Pierre Jacob:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We can say that this bill does not do enough as far as women are concerned. In fact, female employees of the RCMP want real action as well as a more open, safer work environment. They are tired of being harassed.

Unfortunately, and as is usually the case, the Conservative approach does not make the needs of female RCMP employees a priority.

Bringing in a union could lessen members' job security. A number of witnesses expressed this concern to the committee, focusing specifically on workers who file harassment complaints.

Members must have a clear anti-harassment policy that defines specific standards of conduct and establishes evaluation and performance criteria for all employees.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, I hear a lot of numbers from the NDP, but I do not hear a lot of solutions.

In my 20 years in the RCMP, I knew that 99% of the members were good members, with 1% being the problem.

However, my issue is with the member saying that he is against giving the powers to the commissioner of the RCMP to fire people who should not be in the job. Presently, the commissioner has no authority to fire anyone. Is the member against the commissioner of the RCMP having the authority to fire members who should be fired?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Jacob:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP wants problems to be solved, especially those that affect women and involve harassment. We want the issue to be dealt with fairly.

We also want people to feel at ease when they file a complaint, and we do not want job security to be compromised because someone reports a case of harassment. We want a clear policy that includes specific standards of conduct and evaluation and performance criteria for all employees.

Above all, we do not want police investigating police. We want independence.

•(1310)

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate today on Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.

I already spoke to this bill at second reading and will not hide the fact that I supported it at that stage. I wanted to make sure the subject matter of Bill C-42 was debated. The issue is close to my heart. I may have voted in favour of the bill at second reading but I regretfully will not be able to do so at third reading.

I would first like to echo the comments made by my colleague. I will not go over every specific issue or speak of the flaws of a handful of agents or the mistakes they made. I think every member will agree that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is an institution we wish to keep. As my colleague has stated, 99% of agents, perhaps more, are exceptional people who serve their country and their community. I want that to be crystal clear. I am not here to put down the people who work at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

That said, every member will also agree that the organization currently faces many challenges. People are looking to us, to Parliament, to give the institution the tools it needs to meet those challenges. Obviously, Parliament cannot solve every problem, but there are things that we can do. These challenges were mentioned a little earlier. One of them is sexual harassment.

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Before my colleague accuses me of not sitting on the committee that studied the bill, I would like to say that is true: I did not sit on that committee. However, I do not want to echo my colleague's highly demagogic arguments. I want to point out to Canadians, who may not be experts in parliamentary procedure, that, while we may not sit on a particular committee, we have outstanding colleagues, such as the member for Alfred-Pellan, who do. They tell us what goes on there, the measures that are taken and their opinions on these bills.

As my Conservative colleague is of course entirely aware, it is possible to read the bills and to consult the discussions and testimony of the people who have appeared before the committee. In short, it is not because we do not sit on the committee that we are not aware of what goes on there and do not have an opinion to offer, whether it be that of our fellow citizens, our colleagues, people in our families, people whom we know or experts on the subject who want us to express certain concerns.

The NDP therefore introduced several amendments and proposed some changes to Bill C-42. From what I was told, those proposals unfortunately did not fall on sympathetic ears. In fact, we can see that none of those amendments is before us in this debate today.

Some of those amendments sought to add mandatory harassment training to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to establish a completely independent civilian organization responsible for examining complaints filed against the RCMP. Our amendments also sought to add a provision to create an independent national civilian investigation body to prevent the police from investigating the police. Lastly, we wanted to introduce more balanced human resource policies by withdrawing some of the new draconian powers proposed for the RCMP commissioner and by reinforcing the RCMP external review committee.

These proposed amendments introduced by the NDP did not spring out of thin air. They come from various sources, including testimony heard before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

I would like to name some of the experts and witnesses who were invited to appear before the committee and who expressed their concerns.

● (1315)

Since the beginning of the debate, we have been accused left and right of making up the fact that people supported the NDP's position, and we are told that practically everyone was in favour of what the Conservatives were proposing. I would like to set a few things straight and provide some names in order to show that is not some fabrication by a handful of NDP members.

The problems we are dealing with today are not new. In 2006, Justice O'Connor's report on the inquiry into the Maher Arar affair, entitled, "A New Review Mechanism for the RCMP's National Security Activities", urged Parliament to create an RCMP oversight body that would be entitled to audit all the RCMP'S files and activities and could demand to see related documents and subpoena witnesses from every federal, provincial or municipal body, or from the private sector. I would like to read an excerpt from the report:

I agree that the CPC is deficient in this regard and does not have review powers to ensure systematically that the RCMP's national security activities are conducted in accordance with the law and with respect for rights and freedoms.

In 2007, another report, that of David Brown, entitled, "Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP", recommended that the paramilitary hierarchy of the organization be replaced by a more modern system of oversight and transparency including a board of directors.

I have other quotes from former chairs of the RCMP Public Complaints Commission. According to Shirley Heafey, the RCMP Public Complaints Commission should report directly to Parliament instead of the minister or the commissioner of the RCMP.

As for RCMP Commissioner Paulson, he expressed concerns about the cultural change needed at the RCMP. In his April 23, 2012, testimony given at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, he said:

I've said it publicly, and I'll say it again. I think the problem is bigger than simply the sexual harassment. It is the idea of harassment. The idea that we have a hierarchical organization overseeing men and women who have extraordinary powers in relation to their fellow citizens, which requires a fair degree of discipline.

A number of witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security spoke out against the fact that the RCMP commissioner would be granted more powers and criticized the lack of independent oversight of the RCMP. I would like to quote a few of them. Mr. Creasser, British Columbia media liaison for the Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada, testified on October 29, 2012. He said:

One major problem that exists in the RCMP is the tremendous power imbalances within the organization. Bill C-42, rather than mitigating these issues, will only make them exponentially worse.

Here is another quote, this one from Tom Stamatakis, president of the Canadian Police Association, who also testified before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on October 29, 2012. He said:

Bill C-42 provides the commissioner with extraordinary powers in this regard, powers that go beyond what one might find in other police services across Canada....

Without any additional, and most importantly, independent avenue for appeal, I would suggest there is a possibility that RCMP members could lose faith in the impartiality of a process against them, particularly in situations in which the commissioner has delegated his authority for discipline.

Other witnesses also gave similar testimony, but I will not quote them all. However, I would like to express my disappointment. The Conservatives deny hearing this testimony and refuse to listen to it.

Why have the Conservative members not risen today in the House to explain the main reasons why they did not support the amendments proposed by the NDP?

Why did the Conservatives not rise during the debate today in the House to say why they were not responding to concerns raised by the witnesses who appeared before the committee?

Instead, the Conservatives rose to present unfounded demagogic arguments and to make accusations against the opposition. What we want to hear are arguments that would raise the level of debate.

● (1320)

Why were these amendments not accepted? Why should specific concerns formulated by experts have been set aside?

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That is how people work in committee and how serious work is done on important issues.

[English]

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a bill before us that will do a lot to modernize the RCMP. It will address the concerns about police investigating police and will address concerns about civilian and accountable investigation regarding complaints from the public. It is a solid piece of legislation. It has the support of the Liberals. It will, among other things, help stop harassment and sexual harassment within the RCMP.

Why will the NDP not support it? Would the member personally support it? Why is it that so many on the NDP side have groupthink going on. The members do not seem to think for themselves. They never vote against their party line. They never speak out against anything. Do they actually have some independent thought? This is a good bill that would help stop sexual harassment and other forms of negative behaviour in the RCMP.

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Mr. Speaker, it is highly amusing to see my colleague stand up and say, “If you do not support the Conservatives’ bills, then you surely do not have the ability to think for yourselves”. This is very typical of Conservative demagoguery.

However, I would like to point out something that my colleague herself said a short while ago. She said that the bill was not perfect. The Liberals said the same thing when their public safety critic said that the bill was not perfect. This is a typical tactic by the Liberals and the Conservatives. They claim to be not as bad as the others and ask people to vote for them. The NDP does not do that sort of thing. This is not a new problem. What are they waiting for before they are willing sit down and do some serious work on the matter?

We will not get involved in half measures. We can do more. We can do better. Claiming to be imperfect but not as bad as the others does not work for the NDP.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to many of the comments from New Democrats at third reading. I want to add to them.

Yes, we are very much concerned about sexual harassment, but it goes beyond that, from our perspective, in terms of the importance of cultural awareness of, as an example, bullying in the workplace.

The member makes reference to this being an imperfect bill. We too believe that the bill is imperfect. Whether it is New Democratic governments in provincial jurisdictions, such as the province I currently represent, many imperfect bills pass. It can be very frustrating when the government does not support amendments when members are trying to make amendments to make legislation better.

What makes us different from the NDP is that we believe that the principle of the bill, even though it is not perfect, does take us a small step forward. Yes, it would be nice to have more amendments.

What specific aspect of the bill does the member oppose, in principle, that would prevent her from voting in favour of the bill at third reading?

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that it was frustrating to him to see this imperfect bill that does not deal adequately with the problem. It is frustrating to have Liberal colleagues who agree that the bill is imperfect but who do nothing to improve it. That is frustrating for me.

[Translation]

This is not the first time we have seen this. There was the pooled registered pension plans bill. That bill will not accomplish much, but because it was innocuous, they allowed it to pass. I have said it before and I will keep saying it for as long as I have to. This is not the way the NDP works and this is not the NDP vision.

• (1325)

[English]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her great responses in the House today.

The bill contains the word “harassment” only once. One of our big concerns is that there is nothing in the bill that deals with the systemic issue of harassment. That is a core underlying issue in what has been facing the RCMP in all of the harassment cases we have seen. I wonder if the member would respond to that.

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Mr. Speaker, I will give a very brief response. Notice to all Canadians listening to us today: the titles of the Conservative bills are frequently misleading about their content. Here, we want to address a problem. And yet, upon reading Bill C-42, the problem is not mentioned and it is not even clear that the government has understood it.

There are many other bills like this. For example, the bill to combat elder abuse does not provide any preventive or intervention measures to deal with the abuse. I could give all kinds of examples of misleading titles of Conservative bills.

I will stop now, but I hope that things will change in 2013.

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to lend my voice to the debate on Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts. I would especially like to focus my comments on one of the issues raised in conjunction with the debate on this bill, namely women’s place in Canadian society in 2013.

A few years ago, several commissions were struck and some reports were released here in Canada and elsewhere around the world. The goal was to give women a bigger role in society. Four principles were embraced: providing equal opportunities, removing the barriers preventing women from entering the labour force, ensuring that the costs associated with having a family are shared by society as a whole, and taking concrete steps to facilitate and achieve the goal of equality.

*Government Orders*

It is interesting to note that in Canadian society in 2013, we are still talking about equality for women. It is a shame. In point of fact, over the last decade or so, women have actually lost ground in terms of achieving equality with men. We take this equality for granted today. We tell ourselves that there is no problem, that everyone is equal.

Yet, statistics show that today, women still earn on average less than half of what men earn. Furthermore, they are losing ground in various parts of Canada, especially if we look at the jobs in certain industries that are not easily accessible to women, the reason being that barriers to equal access to employment are still in place. Conditions in the workforce are such that women are penalized or forced into uncomfortable or unhealthy situations that are distressing.

In many industries, very few women have access to the jobs that are available, whether it be the natural resources sector or some other industry. Jobs in these sectors are well-paid, but conditions are such that women do not feel safe and able to thrive and be a productive member of society and, above all, to earn a wage comparable to that of men who work alongside them.

For years now, there have been serious problems within the RCMP, one of Canada's most important symbols. Women who opt to work for the force cannot thrive and feel safe there and, if problems do arise, they do not have access to mechanisms that would help make their workplace acceptable.

• (1330)

We can all agree that this is not just for women, and that this bill addresses other forms of abuse that occur in the workplace.

There have recently been serious cases of sexual harassment. Women in the RCMP have spoken out. Standing up and reporting sexual harassment takes tremendous courage. The individuals who come forward and report the situation become the voices of other co-workers who did not feel they were able to do it.

The situation is quite serious. But there are ways to remedy the situation. There have been studies of this done for a very long time. Bill C-38 was introduced in the 40th parliament, but it died on the order paper, as we know. And now we have Bill C-42.

When a bill is introduced in the House, we have an opportunity to debate it, when a time limit is not imposed, obviously. We have an opportunity to exchange ideas and see how we could improve it and how we would go about doing that.

We have another truly excellent tool that the Canadian public is not very familiar with: committees. In a committee, we can again explore bills and improve them even more.

When I arrived in the House of Commons, I found committee work very interesting. It also takes us outside the House of Commons and gives us a chance to work together to improve bills.

What is even more valuable is the fact that we have a chance to invite witnesses from outside the House. These people are non-partisan and are simply there for the cause, to improve a bill, to explore a question that has been raised, to participate in a study, and so on.

After hearing testimony, the various members of the committee will put forward amendments, recommendations and ways of improving the bill.

In the case of Bill C-42, it is unfortunate that in spite of the work done by my colleague, the critic and member for Alfred-Pellan, who is the deputy critic, none of the amendments were accepted, even though they were supported by witnesses and experts. That is troubling.

In Parliament, we have mechanisms that enable us to fine-tune bills. They are not based solely on ideology. We have a chance to debate bills and make improvements to them.

When we heard the testimony of experts and witnesses in committee, it was obvious that the bill was flawed.

• (1335)

This can happen when people are in a hurry to do the right thing. Nevertheless, there was Bill C-38 and there was C-42. One would have thought that the government could have corrected these shortcomings. There was a realization, however, that there were shortcomings, and that the bill would not achieve the stated purpose: better machinery within the RCMP, so that a healthy work environment could be established whereby all members of the force, regardless of rank or responsibility, could express their grievances and obtain a hearing.

For example, some amendments targeted prevention. There was a desire to inform people about sexual harassment, and the ways in which it manifests itself, in order to create an environment in which respect would inform the values of RCMP members and their behaviour towards each other, with no issues arising between women and men, or among colleagues. In that sense, training seemed to me to make perfect sense.

In any workplace, it is always important to have access to an independent mechanism outside the organization, particularly when serious problems arise. It was proposed to put in place such a mechanism so that people from outside could hear the grievances of individual members, and make recommendations accordingly.

It is rather like what I was saying just now about committee work. Members are deeply involved in their work. Here on Parliament Hill, we often feel like we are in a bubble. I have to say that in committee work, what is always very interesting is to hear people from outside testify and let us have their point of view on a given situation. This independent committee will have to include people who have experience in this type of assessment.

Other recommendations and amendments were designed to produce more balanced human resources policies by withdrawing some of the draconian new powers proposed for the RCMP commissioner, and strengthening the RCMP External Review Committee in cases in which discharge from the force is possible. It is always important to have a division of powers. If too many powers are placed in the hands of one person, there is a risk of abuse.

The situation within the RCMP concerns me, but I am also concerned to see that in other workplaces, women do not have an opportunity to contribute fully to society, particularly in some areas of activity.

*Government Orders*

I would like to offer a thought as we discuss Bill C-42. As a society, we will have to remember these commitments to equality between men and women. We must think again about better ways of doing things, specifically in order finally to eliminate barriers so that all women have an opportunity for full access to the workplace, whatever the area of activity may be.

●(1340)

We, as a society, must also recognize our responsibility with respect to the important role women play in building a family, and help them perform the tasks that come with that role. I want to remind the House that there has been a real step backward on this matter over the past decade. In some parts of Canada, women cannot participate fully in the economy, because they do not have access to certain types of employment that would provide them with better economic conditions. They cannot get beyond the barriers that prevent them from getting those jobs.

In the matter before us, I repeat that we must create good working environments, especially in traditional workplaces. I said the RCMP is a symbol of Canada and that it is over 125 years old. Traditionally, the RCMP was almost exclusively a male preserve. I believe women have a considerable contribution to make within the RCMP and in other spheres of activity. In order for them to make this contribution, it is very important for us to rethink the way the RCMP operates and, together, come up with some sustainable solutions.

I am also basing my remarks in this House on the many recommendations and reports that have been presented since 2006. Hon. members will remember that we have been under Conservative rule for quite some time now. Recommendations were made by Justice O'Connor in 2006 and David Brown in 2007. It is now 2013 and the bill before us is not yet perfect, as we have heard. The Liberals admit it, and the government has said so, too. This has been going on too long.

We must make sure we have something that will last and will ensure that RCMP members and employees have access to a fair and equitable process. Even some members of the RCMP are worried that the bill may decrease members' job security, especially in jobs related to the exposure of harassment complaints.

In conclusion, I will say that the NDP believes we can do more to find answers to these questions. We believe that the RCMP needs a clear anti-harassment policy, one that sets out precise standards of conduct and precise criteria for all employee performance assessments. Such a policy is a necessary foundation for a fair disciplinary process.

I would like to add that bills have an important effect on Canadian society, because they demonstrate the government's orientation and commitment toward certain situations that Canadians think are unacceptable.

That is why I am disappointed that the government members did not accept the NDP's offer of co-operation through its amendments, and that they do not want to talk about the status or situation of women in certain workplaces.

●(1345)

I will stop there. I await the House's questions with impatience and some trepidation.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition has brought up a few points in terms of wanting to stop sexual harassment but it is not going to vote for a tool that would allow the commissioner to do just that. The opposition has selected a few key phrases that were critical to highlight in the testimony, but then did not articulate the remainder of the follow-up questions that came from our committee.

Each and every witness who testified before committee acknowledged clearly that the legislation was a good starting point. I will acknowledge that they did raise some concerns. However, it is written right here in the bill. The act is "to establish the responsibilities of members;...to provide for the establishment of a Code of Conduct that emphasizes the importance of maintaining the public trust and reinforces the high standard of conduct expected of members". Each and every witness said the proof will come in the administration, the policy development and the regulatory development, not in prescriptive measures within the act. They are very supportive of the bill. They are looking forward to the administrative, operational, policy development and regulatory development. All of them are hopeful for that.

Why would the NDP vote against a positive framework that each and every witness supported?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised to hear the hon. member call this a starting point. I believe the starting point was in 2006, if not earlier. We should now be at the finish line. This legislation should already be in place.

I wonder why the starting point is only happening now, in 2013, when these issues were raised in 2006.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question expands on sexual harassment, something the NDP has been talking a lot about. We in the Liberal Party share many of the same concerns in regard to sexual harassment in the workforce. The government needs to do what it can in order to minimize that.

With regard to things such as cultural sensitivities and bullying that takes place in the workplace, does my colleague see these as issues that should have been brought forward in the form of amendments?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his question.

In fact, I wanted to emphasize the fact that we are still discussing sexual harassment and the barriers that keep women from fully accessing a safe and healthy workplace.

*Government Orders*

Obviously, the other issues the hon. member raised also have a negative impact on a workplace. I think that putting more powers in the hands of a single individual will not solve the key issues, the substantive issues. We want lasting solutions to key issues.

• (1350)

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative members have been making many comments and criticizing the NDP for not wanting to grant the commissioner increased powers. They say that the bill will solve all the problems and it directly addresses harassment.

Could my colleague elaborate on how a clear anti-harassment policy could help the commissioner do his work, more than giving him full discretion as to whether to dismiss a member or keep a member on the force?

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question.

Indeed, a clear policy creates a clear framework for everyone. It also creates a state of mind. It is important to share information about these very difficult issues. When nothing is clear, when people feel there is no safe and comfortable method they can use to report abuse, the situation just stays the same.

We are still at the starting point in 2013, and we will still be there in 2023.

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point to a proposed section of the act because I have heard it asked many times in the House today why anyone would vote against Bill C-42. I point to the concern of police that they will no longer be able to file a grievance if they are forced to do something under a security order.

Proposed section 31 of the act has been pointed to by RCMP members and by members of the Lawyers' Rights Watch group as potentially forcing RCMP officers to be involved in torture without the ability to grieve that involvement or to question the sources of information that lead to such activities. I think that is enough of a reason to vote against Bill C-42.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for that clarification.

As she mentioned, it is troubling to see such a clause in the bill. I thank her for bringing it to the attention of the House.

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's opinion.

I am like every other member of the public. I do hope some of them watch the debates on CPAC. After hearing arguments from both sides one quickly realizes that, while some wish to act, others prefer things to stay the same.

Not wanting to change a situation implies that everything is fine. I wonder how many members opposite believe that sexual harassment means cracking jokes between colleagues and that the women who complain have no sense of humour. To my mind, the problem is deeply rooted, which raises many questions.

If they do not wish to change the situation, could it be because they are okay with the way things are?

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, as I have already stated, the RCMP is indeed a very important symbol for Canada. The men and women who work there provide an essential service to the nation. In my opinion, the issues that have arisen in the last few weeks and months are worrisome; it is our duty to carefully analyze this situation in order to rectify it.

Let us not forget that this is the 21st century. The RCMP must stay in touch with the Canadian reality and represent all aspects of society, including women. To that end, it must foster a work environment where everyone treats everyone else with respect and implement mechanisms to ensure that.

• (1355)

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** We have four minutes remaining in the time for government orders.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to enter the debate. Four minutes is not a lot of time. I will pick one area and see if I can get into a second one.

One particular area I would address is an issue that runs as a thread through the whole bill. We are talking about the RCMP in our communities, but we are also talking about the RCMP as a workplace where ordinary Canadians are workers in that workplace. One of the biggest issues facing us is workplace sexual harassment allegations. This is huge. The bill is dealing with both aspects of a police officer's life, that of being an officer in the workplace of policing and also being out in our communities, in the uniform, protecting our citizens on a day-to-day basis.

I want to address one of the things the Conservatives absolutely refuse to do. Even though they always say that they are the ones who will stand the straightest and salute the most to anyone in uniform, the true reality is that one of the things the RCMP would like is the option to decide for themselves whether or not they would like to unionize. I know the reaction that gets from the government, so we will set that aside. However, it is also fair to say there are a lot of ordinary people who would say that we have a quasi-military structure where command and control is a key component, so unionization could not work.



*Statements by Members*

That is why I want to address this. During my time as the Ontario solicitor general, I was the civilian head of the OPP, but the OPP is unionized. That is why I am raising this, because I worked with that union on a day-to-day basis. As in most complicated, complex workplaces, having a union was a help. It ensured that the officers had the ability to be protected in terms of their rights as workers, and that includes sexual harassment allegations. Contrary to what the government says, the labour movement in Canada is one of the most democratic institutions in the entire world. If the officers do not like the representation they have in the union, those officers have the option of changing their leadership.

One of the things that would make a big difference in terms of respecting policing, respecting police officers and, in this case, RCMP officers, is to give them the right to choose. They may decide not to. That is their right, but give them the option so that like every other worker, if they want to come together and bargain collectively under the laws of Canada, they would have that right. We have always supported that and when we form government, we will give the RCMP that option to exercise their rights under the constitution.

The last thing, if I can very quickly, is that the government has refused to have a truly independent “no police investigating police” as we do in Ontario with the SIU, the Special Investigations Unit. I had a lot of involvement with the SIU, and it is far from being perfect. However, as a protection for not just the public but also police officers, it has been a very useful, positive, progressive entrance into policing in Ontario. We would certainly encourage the government—and if it will not, we will do it when we get there—to make sure that kind of independent evaluation and investigation is done. Therefore, when someone is cleared, they are truly cleared and there are no clouds. However, if action needs to be taken, that can be taken.

That is the kind of policing we believe in here in Canada. That is the kind of RCMP we will have under an NDP government.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The time for government orders has expired. The hon. member for Hamilton Centre will have 16 minutes remaining when this matter is again before the House.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### MENTAL HEALTH

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is Bell Let's Talk Day.

At least one in five Canadians will suffer from mental illness in their lifetimes, but the unfortunate reality is that most will not seek treatment because of the continuing stigma around the disease.

Bell Let's Talk Day sends a message to those who struggle with mental illness that Canadians want to listen and want to help. I would like to join national spokesperson Clara Hughes in inviting all Canadians to talk about mental illness in order to fight the lingering stigma that keeps too many people from seeking the help they need.

By tweeting and social media or through long-distance phone calls, I am encouraging all of us in this House to join the conversation and help end the stigma.

On the previous two Bell Let's Talk Days, Canadians answered the call with more than 144 million text messages and long-distance calls. This added more than \$7.2 million to the \$50 million already donated by Bell to its charitable programs on mental health.

I want to thank Bell and its leadership under George Cope, and all the Canadians who participate in helping shed the light on this horrible disease.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### GÉRARD ASSELIN

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to pay tribute to my predecessor, Gérard Asselin, who died a few days ago of complications from surgery.

Mr. Asselin served in Ottawa for nearly 20 years, first representing the people of Charlevoix and then the voters of Manicouagan. Known for being outspoken and for his strong friendships with labourers and workers, he was involved in every struggle fought in our constituency.

Today, on behalf of the people of Manicouagan, I wish to offer my sincere condolences to Mr. Asselin's family and loved ones. Personal opinions and politics aside, it is important to be able to recognize the human qualities in every individual and to work on enhancing solidarity, a fundamental value.

Mr. Asselin upheld these ideals for many years. On behalf of all members of Parliament, I wish to give his hard work the recognition it deserves.

\* \* \*

[English]

### IMJIN RIVER CUP

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday, in front of hundreds of fans, dignitaries and Korean War veterans, members of the Canadian armed forces, MPs, NHL alumni and Canadian ex-pats from Korea gathered on the Rideau Canal to play a hockey game that commemorated the Imjin River cup games played some 60 years ago by Canadian soldiers during the Korean War in the winters of 1952 and 1953.

Those brave Canadian troops who were deployed in Korea thousands of miles away from their families, fighting to free the Korean peninsula, found time to play the game Canadians love, proving the boy can be taken out of Canada, but Canada cannot be taken out of the boy.

Sunday's game was fast-paced, full of thrills and spills, and I am pleased to report there were only winners as the teams finished play in a 12-12 tie.

*Statements by Members*

I want to congratulate all those who took part in this commemorative event, particularly Senator Yonah Martin for organizing the game, Andrew Monteith for resurrecting the Imjin Cup in Korea and especially our Korean War veterans and honoured fallen, who in giving their best to the people of Korea left behind a proud legacy of freedom, democracy and an iconic part of our Canadian identity, ice hockey.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TUNISIA**

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have twice had the opportunity to visit Tunisia. I discovered a wonderful country, rich in history and full of warm, respectful people who are starved for justice and freedom. In 2011, the Arab Spring was born there and, shortly thereafter, Tunisians exercised their right to vote.

Now the situation is deteriorating, to the point where destabilizing forces assassinated Chokri Belaid as he was leaving his house on the morning of Wednesday, February 6. He was the respected secretary general and spokesperson for the Democratic Patriots' Movement and a member of Popular Front, a coalition of opposition parties.

Violent protests broke out that same day. Two days later, hundreds of thousands of people joined the funeral procession as it made its way to the Djellaz cemetery. Our condolences go out to his wife and two daughters.

Violence has no place in democracy, except to defend it. We hope that the people of Tunisia will find the path to freedom, and we hope that path is a peaceful one.

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[English]

**EMPLOYMENT IN THE OKANAGAN**

**Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in my beautiful and vibrant riding of Kelowna—Lake Country, Okanagan College and the UBC Okanagan campus have been working with industry, students and all levels of government to address the challenges facing our labour market, and forging real world connections between education and careers.

This past week alone, both institutions hosted successful career fairs that drew dozens of employers to recruit and hire employees to meet their needs.

Along with the efforts of others like Robert Fine and the Central Okanagan economic development commission, Okanagan College, UBCO and local employers are identifying labour shortages and ensuring that students are learning the skills they need to fill those jobs.

With the ongoing support of our government's economic action plan, the Okanagan's business and education sectors are setting an example, successfully addressing the skills shortages in our region and beyond, creating jobs, supporting economic growth and securing the Okanagan's and Canada's long-term prosperity.

● (1405)

**VIOLENT CRIME**

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last night a teenager was shot dead in Toronto. To his family and friends, I offer my sincere condolences.

Sadly, he is the third youth killed by guns in Toronto this year. To prevent youth violence, we must do more. We can give hope and create more opportunities for youth. I call on the federal government to make the Canada summer jobs program year-round and make the youth gang program permanent instead of project-based.

We can better support our police with a national witness protection program and improved markings on imported firearms so they can trace illegal guns. We can implement Roy McMurry's and Alvin Curling's youth action plan by putting more prosecutors in Ontario's guns and gangs task force and anti-gun smuggling border initiative.

We can reduce violent crime if we take action.

\* \* \*

**COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR FUNDRAISER**

**Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with the House the work of two outstanding youth in Brampton. David and Kevin Costa, both just 12 years old, have raised almost \$1,300 as part of the Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser.

The Coldest Night of the Year is a non-competitive five-kilometre and ten-kilometre winter-walk fundraiser supporting Canadian charities across this country. The walk provides participants with the opportunity to experience some of the challenges faced by our community's homeless by walking for a few hours during a cold Canadian night.

I applaud the work that these two youth have done already to improve the lives of those in need. Their spirit of charity and selflessness is something for which we should all strive.

I call on all members of the House to join me in congratulating David and Kevin.

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**UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA**

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to congratulate the University of Manitoba on the recognition it has received for its Trailblazer campaign.

This creative and innovative campaign has showcased the best that the University of Manitoba has to offer. At an awards ceremony held by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the Trailblazer campaign received an amazing eight Circle of Excellence awards.

*Statements by Members*

The U of M showed itself to be the top-tier university that we have all known it was by going up against some of the best post-secondary institutions in North America. With great competitors like Simon Fraser University, the University of Alberta, Oregon State University, Washington State University and many others, the University of Manitoba won the gold medal for the Define Yourself Define Your Future campaign, in the marketing category, as well as another gold for Airport Spectacular in the poster category.

In addition to the two gold medals, the U of M also won three silver and three bronze, rounding out its total to eight awards; an amazing achievement, considering that winning even one award is something of which to be very proud.

Congratulations to the University of Manitoba.

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**LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish Chinese Canadians and all those who celebrate the lunar new year a happy new year of the snake.

In Chinese tradition, the snake represents wisdom, friendship and determination.

This is the time to come together around these values for a positive change during the year, in the spirit of sisterhood, brotherhood and sharing. May this year of the snake bring good health, peace and good fortune to all.

In my community we say: *Gung hei faat choi; Xu da dja xin nian kuai le; She nian kuai le; Nian nian kuai le; Tian tian kuai le.*

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all Canadians of Chinese origin as well as to all those who celebrate the lunar new year, from my riding of Burnaby—New Westminster to all of Canada.

I am thankful for their immense contribution to our country and continuous efforts to build a better, wiser and stronger Canada.

*Da ji da li.*

\* \* \*

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been clear: their priority is the economy. That is why they elected our Conservative government, which is focusing on job creation and long-term prosperity. Our economic action plan has created more than 900,000 jobs since the end of the recession, which is the best performance in the G7.

It is unfortunate that the NDP plan for the economy is to impose a \$20 billion, job-killing carbon tax on Canadians.

[*English*]

Canadians elected a strong, stable, national Conservative majority government in the last election, and it is our duty to fight the NDP's reckless economic policies.

Since the December break, Conservative MPs and ministers have met with hard-working Canadians in more than 200 meetings to make sure the Canadian economy is creating jobs and long-term prosperity.

On this side of the House, we are listening to Canadians, and that is why we will remain focused on jobs and growth.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CITIZEN ADVOCACY IN VAUDREUIL-SOULANGES**

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Parrainage Civique Vaudreuil-Soulanges officially opened its new location in Vaudreuil-Dorion yesterday. This is a major step for an organization that is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

Parrainage Civique Vaudreuil-Soulanges integrates seniors and people with intellectual disabilities or pervasive developmental disorders into society and helps end their isolation. The organization provides services and organizes activities, outings and day camps for them. The social network created by Parrainage Civique Vaudreuil-Soulanges is vital.

Today, I would like to acknowledge the work of those who validate with respect and creativity the role of people with disabilities in society.

Thanks to members of the board of directors, partners, employees and volunteers, our region is more compassionate every day.

Happy 30th anniversary.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is remaining focused on what matters most to Canadians, the economy. Our economic action plan has created jobs, growth and economic prosperity in the midst of a very troubled global economy. Canada has created 900,000 net new jobs, the best record in the G7, a record of which we are proud.

Despite this side of the House remaining focused on the economy, regrettably the leader of the NDP has a different priority for Canadians. The Leader of the Opposition wants to impose a \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax on the backs of hard-working Canadians. In fact, this very day last year the Leader of the Opposition even said himself, "I have proposed a system of carbon pricing, which will produce billions".

On this side of the House, we will continue to work hard for Canadians and oppose the New Democrats' shameful, \$20 billion, job-killing carbon tax.

*Oral Questions***MENTAL HEALTH**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Bell Canada for allowing all of us in this House and elsewhere to focus on the issue of mental health, not only in this House but right across the country. I congratulate great Canadians like Clara Hughes, like Michael Landsberg and like Stéphane Richer.

[*Translation*]

These Canadians spoke publicly about their depression, their mental health challenges and the importance of encouraging Canadians to bring this very serious illness, which causes such problems for people and their families, out into the open.

[*English*]

Having spent a year, 40 years ago, battling depression, I want to speak out as well and assure members of the House that mental illness is something from which people can recover; it is something that affects every family in this country; it is something that should bring Canadians together on a day like today. Yes indeed, "Let's Talk" about it.

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**NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Premier of the Yukon and Yukon caucus colleagues were in Ottawa to celebrate our great territory and the clear and close partnership the governments of Yukon and of Canada have, marked by record levels of transfer payments, health transfer payments, a historic resource revenue-sharing agreement, increased territorial borrowing limits and a common belief that the north's time has come.

The other common belief is our opposition to the NDP leader's \$21 billion job-killing carbon tax.

**An hon. member:** Oh.

**Mr. Ryan Leef:** That is right; they heard him make this promise as the leader campaigned for the leadership of his party. On this side of the House, we know Canadians cannot afford any carbon tax that would increase the cost of gas, groceries, electricity and everything else in the north. That is why we will spend every day reminding Canadians and reminding Yukoners that the NDP has a dangerous plan that would affect our economic stability.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

**THE SENATE**

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the antics of the Prime Minister's buddies, Mr. Duffy and Mr. Brazeau, are revolting.

It is not enough to simply get rid of these bad apples while still protecting the Liberals' and Conservatives' entitlements. This five-star retirement home for generous donors is hemorrhaging public money.

In 2011-12, 19 senators missed more than one-quarter of the Senate sittings they were expected to attend, and seven of the senators appointed by the Prime Minister racked up six-figure travel

expense accounts. It costs a lot of money to pretend to live somewhere.

The Senate is stacked with political organizers who use taxpayer money for partisan activities. Talk about a deep-seated lack of accountability.

While the Conservatives are prepared to milk community groups for every last obsolete penny, every year the Senate guzzles hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money to simply do the bidding of the Prime Minister's office.

And the latest trick designed to fool people? Pretending to be more legitimate by appointing elected senators for life who do not have to be re-elected. Good job.

Why not put an end to this farce and abolish this hall of shame once and for all?

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like read to members of the House some words from the NDP leader, where he said: "The cap-and-trade system that I propose...will produce billions...."

That commitment by the leader of the NDP was made one year ago today, as he looked the NDP faithful in the eye at his party's Quebec City leadership debate. The NDP leader committed to producing billions in new revenue from his job-killing carbon tax.

The NDP leader may be afraid to repeat those words in the House, but we have not forgotten. That is why, at every opportunity, we will remind Canadians that when the NDP leader revealed who he really was last year, he could not stop bragging about his \$20-billion job-killing carbon tax.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[*English*]

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is good to see the Conservative party hacks in the Senate getting along so well with the old Liberal party hacks in the Senate. Liberals and Conservatives are making damage control a bipartisan affair, just like they have been making corruption a bipartisan affair for years: Liberal Senator Raymond Lavigne, Conservative Senator Doug Finley, Liberal Senator Mac Harb, Conservative Senator Mike Duffy and let us not forget Mr. Patrick Brazeau.

The Prime Minister's new Conservative Senate has become even more corrupt than the Liberal Senate he inherited. Is the Prime Minister going to accept this corruption or is he going to hold his Senate cronies accountable for once?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I totally reject that categorization. In fact, I would note that in this case the Senate has reacted proactively and quickly to deal with the matters at hand.

However, I am trying to figure out exactly what the NDP's position on all of this is. For years, NDP members claimed to be for abolition but have never tabled an abolition proposal of any kind. Now their spokesperson on the issue has said, "We are open to any kind of reasonable reform".

With limiting mandates and having elected senators, these are exactly the kinds of reforms we are proposing. I would encourage the NDP—

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition.

\* \* \*

**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, abolition is constitutional reform that requires working with the provinces. That is something the Conservatives do not know how to do.

If only Conservative corruption were limited to the Senate, but it is not. Let us look at the Conservative robocalls used to manipulate Canada's independent electoral boundary commission. The Conservative party admitted it was using a fake company to hide its identity. Its House leader has said it was deceptive.

Will the Prime Minister finally stand up and tell Canadians the truth? When was the Prime Minister first informed that these deceptive calls were being made by the Conservative party?

**The Speaker:** I informed members before about issues that touch on party responsibilities not being government business.

I see the Prime Minister rising to answer, but I do hope that members will tie in a link to government responsibility with their questions.

The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course, in terms of the preamble, Canadians do not want to return to constitutional debate and an opening up of the Constitution, just like, by the way, somebody should tell the NDP that they actually do not want to argue about the terms of a Quebec referendum either.

What Canadians want to do is to focus on the economy. In terms of electoral boundaries, our position is clear. Obviously we are trying to influence the positions of the commission, as is the right of every member of the House.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's independent electoral boundary commission is the affair of government. It is the affair of every Canadian. It is fundamental to our democracy.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, while they are putting all of their effort into defending corruption and fraud, 1.3 million Canadians are out of work, and 250,000 of them have been for more than six months.

The next federal budget will be tabled shortly. Will the Prime Minister commit to making youth job creation a cornerstone of this budget?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, job creation is our government's priority. That is why Canada has one of the best job creation records in the western world.

[*English*]

However, I am getting even more confused about what the NDP's position is. He just said that the electoral boundaries matter is the concern of every Canadian. Of course it is. That is precisely why members of Parliament on this side and the public in Saskatchewan have been making their views known on this issue.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, specific measures are needed for young people. The unemployment rate for this group of workers is far too high. The long-term unemployment rate is also too high. It rose from 13% to 19%. Mark Carney has even acknowledged that this is a problem.

The long-term unemployment figures show that it is now taking longer and longer to find work. In this context, why are the Conservatives making it even more difficult to access employment insurance?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our record on job creation is the best in the western industrialized world, the best in the G7. Over 900,000 net new jobs have been created since the end of the recession in July 2009. Most of the new jobs are in the private sector. Most are full time.

As I say, this is the best job creation record among the western industrialized democracies.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have still not regained all the jobs lost in the recession, so playing games with the statistics does not change the facts.

Last week's numbers showed a new decline in the number of people working. Some 250,000 were out of work for 27 weeks or more in 2012, twice as many as in 2008.

*Oral Questions*

The Conservatives' solution is to cut unemployment assistance and drive more people onto the provincial welfare rolls. Exactly how is a mean-spirited attack on the unemployed helping our economy?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and her party say they are concerned about youth unemployment. I ask them then why they voted against the hiring credit for small business in the economic action plan 2012; why they voted against the youth employment strategy in the economic action plan 2012; why they voted against improving economic opportunities for aboriginal youth in the economic action plan 2012, and many more of the provisions that were in that budget for long-term growth, jobs and prosperity in Canada?

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to the Prime Minister about the exclusion of people from economic growth and prosperity.

The Prime Minister will know that the Mental Health Commission of Canada made a very powerful recommendation to the government that in order to effect a strategy to get people back to work, to get people out of isolation, to get people into the right kind of housing and the right kind of skills training, there needed to be additional resources from the federal government as well as from the provinces.

To date there has been no response from the government to that very powerful and clear recommendation from the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister, why the silence?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course it was this government that set up the Mental Health Commission of Canada precisely to look at these kinds of issues and to explore solutions across a range of policy areas, not just health care but other areas as well.

We welcome the recommendations of the Mental Health Commission of Canada and look forward to taking more steps forward on these issues of very serious concern to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance both said the same thing: they are not prepared to make the investments needed to resolve the situation, not only for hundreds, but for the thousands and perhaps even millions of Canadians who are economically marginalized from achieving prosperity because no government is willing to make the investments needed, nor is the private sector.

The question remains: will this government ever show some real leadership? Yes, it created the commission, but how does it plan to implement the commission's recommendations?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was this government that set up the Mental Health Commission of Canada in order to increase public awareness regarding these important issues. I am pleased to see the public is responding appropriately.

Of course, some targets still need to be reached in relation to these problems. We are not looking to simply spend money to solve these problems; we want to achieve real results. The government will continue to examine solutions in that regard.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, speaking again of marginalization, I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he would imagine for a moment that 600 women in his constituency went missing, and having gone missing, I would ask the Prime Minister would he not think there would be an extraordinary public reaction to such a fact?

We know that along the highway unfortunately now called the Highway of Tears, there are hundreds of women who have gone missing. We know that there are hundreds of women who have gone missing across the country.

The Prime Minister has refused a royal commission. Why not a parliamentary inquiry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no party, no government in history that has taken more seriously the problem of violence against women than this government.

In terms of the specific issue that the member raises, this is a very strong concern for this government. That is why we have invested additional resources in police enforcement, in investigation and prevention, and we continue to look to ways that we can act.

The murder and abduction of women in this country is completely unacceptable. We will continue to move forward with a vigorous criminal justice agenda to address these problems. I encourage the Liberal Party to support it.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, those who joined forces with the NDP to protect the right to privacy declared victory yesterday when Bill C-30 was declared dead.

It was rather pathetic to see the Minister of Justice join the ranks of the worst criminals who opposed the defunct bill.

In a rare moment, a Conservative minister admitted he was wrong and listened to the criticisms from politicians and those who use the Internet.

Will the Minister of Public Safety admit his mistakes and apologize to those he insulted?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that anything to do with the justice system is always upsetting to members of the Liberal Party and the NDP. I cannot tell the difference between them. When it comes to fighting crime in our country, we are the only ones on the right side of this one.

That being said, we have introduced legislation that responds to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision. I urge all hon. members to make amends, get converted and start supporting our efforts to fight crime in our country.

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that answer suggests the Conservatives still have not learned their lesson. This is a victory for Canadians and all those who spoke out against this flawed bill. The Minister of Public Safety introduced a seriously flawed bill, launched attacks on the opposition for pointing out the bill's failings and refused to take responsibility for his vile comments.

Will the Minister of Public Safety stand now and apologize for the despicable way he treated the critics of the bill and acknowledge that his bill went too far?

• (1430)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the problem the NDP has, is that we are responding directly to the provisions of the Supreme Court of Canada in *R v. Tse* decision. We have until April 13. We want to move ahead, but again this is just one part of this government's agenda to stand up for victims in our country, stand up for law-abiding Canadians and do what is right in the criminal justice system.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Jenkins report, released yesterday, notes the lack of transparency and the absence of guaranteed industrial benefits in certain military procurement contracts.

That was one of the NDP's main criticisms in the F-35 fiasco. To maximize the economic spinoffs, there needs to be an industrial benefits policy in place and a transparent and competitive process. The Conservatives have done the opposite.

Why did they not have a plan to maximize the industrial economic spinoffs from the F-35s?

*[English]*

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member should know that as part of its seven point plan Industry Canada is tabling a public report of the industrial benefits to the Canadian aerospace sector and manufacturing sector. It will be doing that on an annual basis. Therefore, the member can look forward to yet another public document from Industry Canada ensuring that Canadians know what the benefits are to Canadian industry from the F-35 program.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, almost two years ago, defence officials told the then associate minister for military procurement that the Canada first defence strategy was “unaffordable”. They advised a reset. Yet this morning, the government released a report promising an industrial strategy based entirely on that very same unaffordable strategy.

We have one minister off and running with a defence strategy that the other one says he is rewriting. No wonder Canadians do not trust Conservatives on military procurement. Is it just one minister who is out of the loop, or both?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we believe that government is much more powerful as a customer than as a subsidizer and we know the military procurement can play a major role in creating jobs and driving innovation. We asked Mr. Jenkins and his panel to report back to us and inform us on further opportunities to develop a military procurement strategy. I welcomed his report today and we look forward to seeing how we can implement some of his recommendations.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it seems the minister has already decided her annual reports on the F-35 project, but we think Canadians would like to hear from the Minister of National Defence on these matters. He is the minister who is responsible for the F-35 debacle. He is the one who has not been able to get Sikorsky to deliver the Cyclone helicopters. He is the one who refuses to ever acknowledge his mistakes. The Prime Minister has even stepped in to ask another minister to take over and try to clean up these procurement messes.

Why will the Minister of National Defence not stand and at least show a shred of accountability to the House?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, since 2006, our government had reduced the average major military procurement process to 48 months. This is five years faster than under the former Liberal government. We are responsible for the successful execution of the largest procurement in Canadian history with our shipbuilding strategy. In addition, we have successfully procured tactical armoured vehicles for the military, upgrades to light armoured vehicles and, of course, the C-130J Hercules aircraft, among many more successful procurements. We have brought in more transparency and more independent oversight. We are fixing the problems.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Conservative and Liberal leaders in the Senate formed a strange coalition to protect their privileges. They wrote a letter in an effort to prevent senators who abuse public funds from really being punished. The suggested punishment for these fraudsters is to force them to reimburse the money they stole with interest. In short, senators can continue abusing public funds and, if they are caught, they simply have to pay back the money.

How many senators are abusing the housing allowance? That is the real question. Five, 10, 15, 20? No one knows. Is this what is meant by Senate reform?

• (1435)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government asked the Senate to consider these issues, and the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy sent some senators' files to an external auditor, Deloitte, so that it can examine them and report back. This is an example of the efforts being made by the Senate to resolve these issues.

[English]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we see the Liberals and Conservatives coming together to help their unelected friends in the Senate. No wonder they share the same rap sheet.

Did everyone know that Liberal Senator Lavigne lived off the taxpayer for five years after he was convicted of fraud. Then there is the \$7 million man, Patrick Brazeau, set for life, thanks to the Prime Minister. It is not enough if Mike Duffy pays the money back because if someone falsifies forms, it is called fraud. If an average person did this, he or she would be charged, but not with this crew.

Why does the government allow the Senate to live like it is above the law?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is doing no such thing. In fact, the government has asked that the Senate Board of Internal Economy examine these issues, which it is doing. It has referred certain matters to an outside auditor and is applying rules that were not in place at the time of Senator Lavigne. It now has stronger rules and it will continue to review those rules to ensure they are appropriate so taxpayers' interests are protected. I think all Canadians want a government that does take action, as we have, to protect the taxpayers' interests in matters like this.

\* \* \*

**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have taken action. They sent in Patrick Brazeau and set him up for life. That is action all right.

Speaking of which, I feel badly for the Conservative MPs who have to go back to Saskatchewan and explain their party's involvement in robo fraud. The member from Regina did the right thing when he denounced this practice as deceitful, but we have a

Prime Minister who has been bragging about misleading an entire province. There are Jenni Byrne, Matt Meier, RackNine, party operatives. It is like the old robo scandal crew is back on a reunion tour.

Why does the government not set clear electoral laws that will keep party operatives from monkeywrenching with the system?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission is an independent body, but it welcomes input from the public, parliamentarians and, of course, political parties as well. We have done exactly that. We continue to make the point that we do not agree with the way the maps are drawn, as do 75% of the submissions received from Saskatchewan. We also have new information from Statistics Canada that Saskatoon and Regina are the fastest-growing, youngest demographic cities in Canada. Why would we limit their representation?

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives seem to forget that their own deputy House leader made clear these calls were deceptive and unethical, but the Prime Minister is enthusiastically defending this manipulative campaign. Basically, the Prime Minister would have us believe that this is democracy in action, democracy in an upside-down world, maybe. The Conservatives do not seem to understand that these tactics were offensive to the people of Saskatchewan.

What is the government doing to prevent the incursion of such robo hooliganism into other non-partisan commissions?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all of us from Saskatchewan reject the premise of that question, the same as Saskatchewan people keep rejecting the NDP for reasons just like this.

We continue to make respectful submissions to the independent Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission. We are well within our rights to do that and we will continue.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have met with thousands of Canadians all across the country in—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Papineau.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have met with thousands of Canadians all across the country in the past few months. I have personally had people from Lévis—Bellechasse and Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, for example, tell me how frustrated they are when they compare the government's rhetoric on the economy with the realities facing the middle class.

What is more, their Conservative representatives have essentially become mouthpieces for the Prime Minister.



How would the Minister of Industry describe wage increases in Canada? Is he happy with how these increases compare to our economic growth?

• (1440)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy is growing moderately. That certainly puts us in good stead relative to other economies. It has resulted in substantial job creation. It has made the Canadian economy the envy of most of the industrialized world.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with answers like that from across the aisle, no wonder the people in Lévis do not think the government cares about them.

What I have heard as I have visited the constituencies of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Wetaskiwin, Saint Boniface and Halton is frustration. Canadians are frustrated when they compare—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I am having increased difficulty hearing the hon. member's question. The hon. member for Papineau has the floor.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, no wonder Canadians are frustrated when they compare government pronouncements of economic strength with the pressures actually being felt by real Canadians in the middle class. They sent MPs to represent their voices in Ottawa, but they got representatives of the PMO in their communities.

Could the Minister of Finance please tell real Canadians the anticipated impacts on them of even a 1% rise in interest rates on their households?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been quite responsive to the suggestions by government and others that they curtail their borrowing and not borrow more than they can afford at higher interest rates. This is just rational. Canadians are rational, particularly when it comes to residential mortgages. We have seen some moderation in that market, which is good. We have also seen some moderation on the consumer debt side, which is also helpful.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are suffering under record levels of personal debt and according to the Bank of Canada, the fastest growth of that debt was back in 2008, which happened to be the year that saw half of the new mortgages taken out in Canada were 40 year mortgages. Those were the same 40 year, no down payment mortgages that were introduced by that Minister of Finance back in budget 2006.

Will the minister admit that it was his flawed policy decision in budget 2006 to bring U.S.-style mortgages into Canada that has led to this personal debt crisis?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we have moved four times in recent years to tighten the rules with respect to residential mortgages. That, among other factors, has had a significant influence on the residential mortgage and market in Canada. It is beneficial and healthy to see some moderation in that market.

### Oral Questions

The truth of the matter is that the vast majority of Canadians are investing in their homes. Canadians are confident in the economy and are proceeding with purchases they can afford.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is really disturbing to see the minister's flippancy when presented with the opportunity to explain why CIDA gave \$2 million to an anti-gay organization.

On Sunday evening, he wrote on Twitter that funding for Crossroads was suspended. However, yesterday, his office said that the funding was continuing. Funding Crossroads is giving tacit support to an openly anti-gay organization.

My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Is this the kind of message that the government wants to send to Canadians and to the world?

[English]

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member opposite that CIDA programs are delivered without discrimination or bias. That is the case here, and to assert otherwise is absolutely untrue.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this group's views are inappropriate, offensive and contrary to Canadian foreign policy goals. In fact, it would seem that under the government, CIDA does not just consider effectiveness when it funds groups. It funds groups like Crossroads, but at the same time, it cuts off experienced groups that happen to be critical of its policies.

Does the minister truly believe that it is acceptable to fund groups with homophobic policies and give them credibility?

• (1445)

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the review by officials has shown that the organization delivers projects effectively and without discrimination or bias and has done so in this case.

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### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the CRTC is getting an earful on its consultations on the new draft of its wireless code. One of the chief complaints: Canadians are fed up with being locked into three-year contracts.

One commentator said, "Simply put: three year contracts trap consumers and do absolutely nothing to benefit them". Two-year contracts are the international norm, but Canadians are stuck with three years.

*Oral Questions*

The CRTC regulates, but it is the government that makes the law. Why have Conservatives failed consumers and allowed this practice to go on for so long?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, ensuring trust and confidence through the protection of Canadian consumers is essential to the growth of our economy. This is why we took key steps to address consumer concerns that fall under federal jurisdiction. As my colleague mentioned, the CRTC is currently conducting public proceedings on the national wireless service consumer protection code.

On top of this, I want to remind the House that we have cut taxes over 140 times, putting an average of \$3,000 back in the pockets of Canadian families. This is real action.

[Translation]

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is not just three-year contracts that pose a problem. Consumers are also upset about the locking of cellular telephones, exorbitant roaming charges and excessive service charges.

Even the chairman of the CRTC admitted that the market is dysfunctional and that the situation needs to be corrected. Because of the Conservatives' inaction, we are paying two to four times more for telephone services than in Europe or Asia.

When will the Conservatives protect the interests of the 27 million Canadians who own cellular telephones?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the CRTC is currently holding hearings on the development of a national code on wireless services.

The member talks about protecting Canadians, but we reduced taxes 140 times, which amounts to an average of \$3,000 in savings for Canadian families. The NDP opposed the GST cut, the universal child care benefit, the home renovation tax credit, the children's arts tax credit, the children's fitness tax credit, the textbook tax credit, the job creation tax credit.... I will run out of time. These are all initiatives that the NDP voted against. They have to be accountable to Canadians for that. They voted against their will.

\* \* \*

[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to see someone from my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo featured prominently on the national stage. Today Tom Jenkins presented his report, "Canada First: Leveraging Defence Procurement Through Key Industrial Capabilities".

Could the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women please update the House on what this report means for our important defence and security industries in Canada?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on what matters to Canadians, which is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

We believe the government is more powerful as a customer than as a subsidizer. Military procurement plays a major role in the Canadian economy, and it drives innovation. It is estimated that every billion dollars in defence and security spending creates or sustains 18,000 jobs and creates \$710 million in gross domestic product.

To help inform our further development of our defence procurement strategy, I appointed Tom Jenkins as a special advisor. Today I welcomed his report.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, instead of getting their EI benefits in a timely manner, unemployed Canadians are being told their cheque is in the mail. But it gets worse. Now the minister is saying the job is in the mail.

Sending out job alerts just does not cut it. In fact, it is all but useless when there are five unemployed Canadians for every available job.

When will the government get serious about job creation and fix the EI mess that it created?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, the challenge we have is that many employers across this country simply cannot find the people they need with the skills to fill the openings they have. That is why our government, through the economic action plan, has been investing significantly in helping Canadians who are out of work get the skills and training and development they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

We are also focusing on helping young people get those skills that employers need. Unfortunately, every effort, whether it is career focus, skills link, or pathways, the NDP voted against.

● (1450)

[Translation]

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives tell us over and over that their employment insurance reform will have no impact on seasonal workers. That is strange, because yesterday the member for Lévis—Bellechasse candidly admitted that no impact study had been done. No study at all!

The Conservatives are making changes recklessly. They are not interested in understanding the urban and rural industries that depend on seasonal jobs.

Why not suspend the reform and conduct studies on the impact of the changes?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not true at all. Of course an analysis was done. As we always do when we make changes, we had an analysis done.

*Oral Questions*

Employment insurance will be there for workers in seasonal industries during the off-season, if there are no other jobs for them. The system has always been there for them and it will always be there when there is no work.

**Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, farmers in my riding are worried about the impact of employment insurance reform on their seasonal labour force. Although the workers have valuable expertise that leads them to return to the farms each year, the EI reform will mean the farmers have to replace them. The minister does not appear to understand that vegetables cannot be made to grow in the dead of winter.

Does she understand this economic reality? If so, why does she want to make our businesses less competitive and less productive?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we want to do is to create jobs for people and connect them with the available jobs. If seasonal workers can find work that matches their skills during the off-season, we will encourage them to take it. We will even help them find those jobs. They are free to return to their previous work, if they wish, in the working season, but for the rest of the year we want to help them, unlike the NDP.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is still way off the mark.

Since she does not understand what the impact of her reform will be, I will give her a real-life example. That may help her.

In my riding, Les Serres Rosaire Pion et fils is a real institution, employing 125 workers in its greenhouses in the peak season. But the changes to employment insurance will force a number of them to change jobs. The greenhouses will lose a number of skilled workers, which will of course have a negative impact on productivity, profitability and the local economy.

Why does the minister want to hurt our economy by lowering the productivity of our businesses—

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our goal is to improve Canada's productivity. We must do so in order to compete with the world. To do that, we must utilize all the talent and all the skills of all Canadians. The old employment insurance system discouraged the unemployed from seeking work. We want to encourage them. That is why we have introduced a number of ways to help them find jobs and earn more money.

[English]

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians who have lost their jobs and have taken early CPP are facing huge clawbacks to their benefits as a result of the government's changes to employment insurance. They are losing 50¢ on the dollar as a result of the new working while on claim rules. But CPP is pension income, not employment income. This is essentially stealing money from these pensioners.

Will the government help these Canadians who are suffering and fix this problem today?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are trying to make sure that Canadians are encouraged to work and to make sure that they are better off when they are working than when they are not. That is why we are helping them identify jobs in their areas. That is why we are connecting them with employers so that they can be more productive at every stage of their lives.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

**FOOD SAFETY**

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister announced Friday that the government will spend almost \$4,000 a day to study the XL Foods disaster, which will cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. This comes on the heels of reports arising from access to information that there are fewer CFIA veterinarians on the front line now than before.

Does the minister think it is a better use of hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to investigate their mess at XL now, instead of having given CFIA the resources to prevent dozens of illnesses and the largest meat recall in Canadian history before it happened?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, safe food for Canadians continues to be a priority of this government. We continue to make sure that CFIA has the capacity, both from a budget and from a people perspective, to make sure that front line is safe and that they are doing that job on behalf of Canadian consumers.

I am quite baffled by the fact that all through the fall, the member for Guelph kept calling for some sort of review, some sort of analysis of where we need to spend our money, and that is exactly what we are doing. This is an arm's-length review by three eminent Canadians. We look forward to that report.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT  
CANADA**

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development told me yesterday that her department had signed a contract with Equifax to protect the former students who are affected by the missing personal information. The problem is that this was a lie. The protection offered includes no assurance to protect victims against identity theft or any automatic monitoring of their accounts.

She is ultimately responsible for the data that was lost. Why is she refusing to provide the best protection available?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the department has engaged Equifax on a six-year contract. The goal there is to protect the privacy, the credit, of those people who were unfortunately affected by this totally unacceptable loss of data.

The department is trying to contact as many people as possible who could have been affected so that they can take advantage of this program.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot even say with certainty what years were on the disappearing hard drive. Adding insult to injury, some of the private letters informing us of this loss have been sent to the wrong people, and the minister is hanging her hat on a government offer that is actually offering less protection than what the department first recommended.

It is not enough. Canadians deserve straight answers. Since the minister refuses to tell the whole truth about what happened, will she at least accept responsibility and apologize? Will she just say that she is sorry?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the loss of data was totally unacceptable. That is why the Privacy Commissioner was brought in. The RCMP has been brought in, and a very thorough investigation is under way to find out exactly what did happen in this avoidable and unacceptable situation.

Meanwhile, we are doing the best we can to try to protect the credit ratings and privacy of Canadians affected. That we will continue to do.

\* \* \*

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping newcomers succeed and helping to ensure that they contribute their skills fully to help our economy grow and create jobs. Part of this plan includes giving immigrants the tools and knowledge they need to hit the ground running as soon as they arrive in Canada.

Could the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism please update the House on these efforts to help immigrants succeed?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that new Canadians have an unemployment rate twice as high as that of the general population. That is why this government has tripled our investment in settlement services.

We are reforming our immigration system to ensure that people who arrive here have the skills to succeed upon arrival, but we have also invested significantly in pre-arrival orientation.

Through the Canadian immigration integration project, today we have graduated 20,000 newcomers from abroad, people who have a much better chance to get settled, find good jobs and succeed in their new Canadian lives. We are investing in the success of newcomers.

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the environment commissioner has outlined serious concerns about the lack of federal oversight and public disclosure of the chemicals used in fracking. When asked about the issue last week, the Conservatives dodged the issue completely.

Yesterday, the Minister of Natural Resources had a miraculous conversion while promoting the Keystone XL pipeline and admitted that Conservatives could be doing more to protect the environment. Here is their chance. Without passing the buck to the provinces, could the Minister of the Environment provide the House with the list of chemicals used in fracking?

● (1500)

**Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House several times, the issue at hand is primarily a matter of provincial jurisdiction. The environment commissioner also commented on the progress that we have made in numerous areas concerned in his report.

However, this also gives me an opportunity to talk about the Liberal record on the environment, which includes a 30% rise in greenhouse gas emissions. I just wonder if my colleague's colleague, in his travels around the country, reminded Canadians of that fact and also continues to remind Canadians of the fact that he has absolutely no respect for Alberta MPs.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, aboriginal people across the country are starving. The report of the UN special rapporteur on the right to food states that Inuit are facing severe food insecurity. The report recommends a food strategy that defines the responsibilities of every level of government.

Will the government be part of the solution instead of the problem when it comes to safe, affordable nutrition for Inuit living in Canada's north? Will it put forward a Canadian food strategy?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is making huge investments to the nutrition north program for Canada's north. Our government increased the program to \$60 million, which that party did not support.

I met with the UN special rapporteur last May and was very surprised how ill-informed the rapporteur was on the government's investment. At the same time, he failed to meet with the people in the north in terms of the real opportunities and the challenges faced by aboriginal people around food security. We will not be studied from afar and we will not accept the recommendations from a UN rapporteur that fails to meet with our people.

\* \* \*

#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, North Korea continues to thumb its nose at the world. Today, the regime in Pyongyang confirmed it conducted a third nuclear test, in direct contravention of the global will and North Korea's international obligations.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on this matter and Canada's reaction to it?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Don Valley East for his leadership on this issue.

This reckless and provocative test marks a serious, misguided threat to regional peace and security. What makes it even more unconscionable is that many North Korean people are starving to death while their government misallocates resources on a nuclear weapons program. We are disappointed that North Korea's leaders have continued along this irresponsible path of placing nuclear weapons above the well-being and health of their own people. Canada will work with our international partners to pursue all appropriate actions and sanctions against this rogue regime.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while the Jenkins report talks about the importance of innovation to economic prosperity, the Canadian Space Agency is dealing with the impact of the Conservatives' cuts.

In fact, 700 jobs and internationally recognized expertise are in jeopardy in Saint-Hubert, which is in my riding.

The uncertainty surrounding the agency has consequences for the entire aerospace sector. The agency is synonymous with the Canadarm, Julie Payette and Chris Hadfield.

Will the Minister of Industry guarantee that these jobs will be protected?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is a leader in the aerospace sector. For that reason, we asked David Emerson to produce a report to help us better position ourselves in the future of the aerospace industry in Canada and abroad.

It is important to look at the major decisions that have been made, for example the Constellation RADARSAT mission, a major mission that will make our country a leader in cutting-edge satellite technology.

#### Oral Questions

We are also committed to the international space station program until 2020, which has resulted in Chris Hadfield being the commander—

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North has the floor.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, last week court documents revealed that mining companies in B.C. rejected qualified Canadian workers in order to hire lower-paid temporary foreign workers. Why has the government changed the rules so that companies can kill jobs for Canadians? How will the Conservatives guarantee that jobs in the Ring of Fire will go to northern Ontarians instead of to temporary foreign workers?

● (1505)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we firmly believe that Canadians should have first crack at every job in Canada. That is why we were so concerned with the situation there. We were concerned that the process was not followed sufficiently to engage Canadians first and that is why the Minister of Immigration and I are reviewing the entire temporary foreign worker program to make sure that Canadians do get first crack at all the jobs.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### POINTS OF ORDER

##### ORAL QUESTIONS

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development indicated that she had undertaken an analysis before proceeding with EI reforms.

As you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, all of those issues are of huge concern to the thousands of Canadians who do not have access to EI benefits, either in a timely way or not at all. Therefore, I would ask that the minister please table those reports here today.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we on this side noticed that the Minister of Natural Resources is back in his seat, where he should be. He joins an illustrious club, of which I am also a member.

We noticed the minister heckling a little quietly today. I am sure that he will be in much stronger voice in the days ahead.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***SAFER WITNESSES ACT**

The House resumed from February 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-51, An Act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-51.

For years, the federal witness protection program was strongly criticized, in part because eligibility criteria were too strict, which prevented many witnesses from benefiting from it. The program was also poorly coordinated with other federal initiatives.

Even though this system was implemented under the Liberals in 1996, the Conservatives also did not try to address the criticisms by improving it. Since then, the system has not been working well. In 2012, only 30 of the 108 applications reviewed were accepted.

It must be recognized that several attempts were made to reform the system and to correct the flaws of the Witness Protection Program Act. A private member's bill dealing more specifically with family violence was debated in 1999 and supported by the NDP. The Liberal government of the day wanted at all cost to prevent that bill from becoming law. Moreover, fundamental issues relating to program eligibility were not examined, nor issues relating to coordination and funding.

It is often difficult for police forces to find witnesses to testify, because these people are not adequately protected. That was the case with the killings at a block party on Danzig Street, in Toronto, where the police department had a very hard time convincing witnesses to come forward.

That is why, in November 2012, the NDP member for Trinity—Spadina asked for more federal support to ensure that the program can meet its ambitious goals.

In the case of the Air India bombing, even the judge admitted that he was unable to provide the necessary protection to witnesses. One of the witnesses had been assassinated in 1998, thus making his sworn affidavit made to the RCMP in 1995 inadmissible in court. During the 2007 investigation, other witnesses did not want to testify, because they feared for their safety. That was understandable, since they could not get adequate protection.

Bill C-51, which we are discussing here, largely addresses these concerns. It expands eligibility criteria for the witness protection program to include members of street gangs, for example. In addition, federal departments and agencies that have a security or defence mandate may propose witnesses for admission to the program. It also extends the emergency protection period and eliminates problems that arose in coordinating with provincial programs.

Provincial programs are essential to our system, but the present act does not adequately acknowledge that fact. That is why Ontario and Alberta insisted that the witness protection program be restructured

at the national level to provide greater recognition for what was already being done.

Bill C-51 also addresses those concerns. It provides for the designation of a provincial or municipal witness protection program so that certain provisions of the Witness Protection Program Act apply.

Bill C-51 also authorizes the RCMP to coordinate the activities of federal departments to facilitate a change of identity for persons admitted to the program.

I will be frank: I have one fear about this bill. I am concerned about the fact that funding for the witness protection program is not addressed in Bill C-51.

This kind of act is popular. No one is opposed to greater protection for the people who make it possible for us to fight crime every day. However, Bill C-51 does not provide enough details on funding that would be granted for the new measures to be implemented.

Why did the government not consider that before introducing this bill in the House? This is really something that concerns us on this side of the House.

However, having discussed the matter with them, I must acknowledge that Bill C-51 enjoys strong support among the general public and first-line workers.

● (1510)

Many people engaged in the fight against organized crime say this bill is absolutely essential. Expanding the program will help fight street gangs, in particular. As we know, street gangs are particularly violent and quick to use intimidation to prevent their members from going to prison. Those who decide to testify against them are very often in danger.

The same phenomenon occurs in south Asian communities. We will recall that several witnesses in the Air India affair were attacked. Those witnesses were not eligible for the protection program. Why? Simply because matters of national security are not eligible for the program.

A third issue would finally be addressed by this bill, and that is coordination between the federal and provincial governments. The provinces, as hon. members know, have been calling for a review of the witness protection program for a very long time. Their main complaint was that coordination was lacking. They have programs that encroach on the federal program in some instances. Consequently, witnesses are sometimes caught in a bureaucratic mess that completely jeopardizes their safety.

Those are three shortcomings that will be corrected by Bill C-51. Members of street gangs who want to make amends will be able to testify against their former cronies without fear of reprisals. People who are called to testify in cases involving national security will also be better protected, and the provinces will finally know where they stand.

*Government Orders*

Before I move on to my next point, I would like to raise a question that I have. A little earlier, I spoke about the Air India case. Clearly, Bill C-51 greatly improves the witness protection program for such cases. However, the process for accessing the program will still be too obscure, even after the changes made by the bill. The accountability process is still insufficient as well. The government is aware of the problem since it has already admitted that such is the case. I am therefore wondering why it has not taken the opportunity presented by this bill to resolve the problem once and for all.

In summary, I think that the measures included in Bill C-51 are a step in the right direction and will bring about very positive results. However, the bill is still flawed. When an investigation pertains to a crime that involves drugs or falls under federal jurisdiction, the RCMP takes over the case. Yet, the federal police force passes on the cost of witness protection to local police departments, which often do not have the budget to cover it.

I would like to quote the RCMP website, where it states:

There are instances when the costs of witness protection may impede investigations, particularly for smaller law enforcement agencies.

This shows that this prohibitive cost is a hindrance to establishing a truly effective system. As I was saying a few moments ago, this bill sweeps the issue of funding under the rug. That is a major concern for me.

Before I continue, I would like to ask my colleagues from the other parties a few questions. Since 2007, the NDP has been asking for changes to be made to the witness protection program. It took six years for the Conservatives to finally respond to our request. During that time, we repeated our request again and again. Why did it take so long for the government to take action? As I explained, no additional funds are included in this bill. Why is the government changing the rules without providing adequate funding? These are vital questions that require clear and specific answers. Can the government confirm that it will provide adequate funding for the measures set out in its bill? Can the government guarantee that the witness protection program will receive adequate funding, particularly in the long term?

• (1515)

I also have a few thoughts I would like to share with my Liberal Party colleagues. The Liberals are claiming today that the program needs a major overhaul.

That is all well and good and, frankly, I share their point of view. The Liberals were in power for several years before the arrival of the current government. They even had a majority in the House. Why did they not take advantage of the many opportunities they had to carry out this reform? The many criticisms levelled against the program date back to when the Liberals had their majority. They had the power to change things at the time, but unfortunately they chose to do nothing.

There is something else that raises eyebrows. Today, they are proposing amendments to Bill C-51 that they do not consider generous enough, but they do not specify exactly what should be done. Empty rhetoric is fine and dandy, but before taking a stand, there needs to be some substance. I invite them, therefore, to immediately disclose the details of their proposals.

Let me take a moment to go over the ins and outs of this bill. It is my opinion that this legislation is extremely important to the witness protection system. These things must not be taken lightly. This is a question of life or death. The bill will have major ramifications, so we need to take the time to go over it carefully.

Before going any further, I repeat that I am glad that the government has finally decided to address this issue. I am happy to see that the government has heeded the demands that my party and I have been making for years. The simple act of broadening access to the program is already an excellent decision.

As I said, it is nevertheless important that sufficient funds be allocated to the program, otherwise—and this would be regrettable—these wonderful initiatives will not come to fruition. The government's intentions are good, but it needs to put its money where its mouth is.

The NDP has always been committed to building safer communities. One key way of doing this is by improving the witness protection program. Doing this will respond to an urgent demand being made by police officers across the country.

That is why, despite my reservations, I support the adoption at second reading of Bill C-51. I will do so on behalf of all the people, organizations and associations that share these very same concerns. When we work together, we can achieve tangible results. Bill C-51 could prove a very good example of this.

I am thinking in particular of the provinces that have long been calling for the adoption of a bill of this kind. I am also thinking of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that recently called on the government to support it in its fight against organized crime. The RCMP has also argued for an enhanced psychological evaluation of beneficiaries, which this bill will allow.

Police officers whose job it is to fight street gangs are particularly enthusiastic about this bill. There is also Justice O'Connor's report, which in the wake of the Air India attack, issued recommendations along the lines of what the bill proposes.

It is quite evident that all the organizations involved in the fight against organized crime support the adoption of this bill. It comforts me to know that this is a good initiative, despite its faults.

Overall, Bill C-51 is a step in the right direction in the long march in the fight against crime. The bill is a good initiative from this government and, in all honesty, I am quite pleased to support it. I do hope, however, that my colleagues from all parties will take note of my criticisms. This is not an instance where we should be throwing the baby out with the bathwater, as the saying goes. Rather, we should pause for a moment and think about everything that can be done to ensure that the protection program performs optimally.

These brave men and women who appear in the witness box exhibit courage at all times. They make our society a safer, more welcoming place. In so doing, they often take enormous risks. Bill C-51 will provide better protection for them, but we can also do more.

I therefore take this opportunity to appeal to my colleagues. We have already taken a step in the right direction with Bill C-51, but perhaps we should go a little further.

*Government Orders*

As I mentioned, Bill C-51 contains some promising measures that have been approved by police officers across the country, particularly for the fight against street gangs, which is extremely important in my riding, Alfred-Pellan.

• (1520)

Part of the riding is mainly agricultural, but Alfred-Pellan is in fact very close to Montreal Island. So we have highly urbanized centres throughout the agricultural area, and that yields quite an eclectic mix.

All the police officers in Laval try to make our streets and our community as safe as possible. We New Democrats are committed to working with all those players to build safer communities.

The witness protection program is reassuring for the people who live in my neighbourhood or who are caught up in street gangs. There are unfortunately a lot of them on Laval Island. Because of this program, people know that they have a chance to pull through. At the same time, it provides police forces with additional tools to fight street gangs.

I am talking about tools because I see this as a big toolbox that we can offer our police forces and our justice system in order to fight crime. It really is necessary to work with these tools and to use them as much as possible. Bill C-51 is one of those tools.

Unfortunately, I would also like to criticize my colleagues opposite. They are doing something good with Bill C-51, but they have also done some more regrettable things. For example, the Conservatives recently announced that they would stop funding the police recruitment program. A budget of \$400 million was set aside for the police recruitment fund, and they decided not to renew it in 2013.

We in Quebec have benefited from that budget. We received approximately \$92.5 million over five years to establish joint forces and to combat street gangs. It was an additional tool for fighting street gangs in Quebec. In the very first year, there were more property seizures and fewer street gang crimes and murders.

There were tangible results as of the very first year. The \$92.5 million budget granted to Quebec over five years made it possible to build those squads. The municipalities are working together. There is a major team effort among various cities such as Gatineau, Montreal, Laval, the north shore, the south shore and Quebec City. Everyone works together. Sherbrooke is also involved and is benefiting from the joint forces program. Everyone benefits from it. It is a very good thing.

It is sad to see that this tool is to be taken from our toolbox. We had funding for these joint forces in our toolbox. Bill C-51 adds an important tool, plugging gaps in the Witness Protection Program Act, and some extremely important things, but does not provide any funding.

I can see all the good intentions behind this bill, but I hope the federal government will pony up and allocate a significant budget to this bill so that the municipalities and provinces do not have to absorb the cost. The public safety committee is studying economic parameters for police services. Police forces across Canada are

already struggling to manage their funding in the most efficient way possible. We must not give them an additional burden.

This is our opportunity not to do that. I would ask my colleagues opposite to ensure that the funding will be there in the next budget. I honestly hope it will be, because I have the extreme pleasure today of rising with them to support Bill C-51.

• (1525)

[*English*]

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments and the fact that her party will be supporting this legislation.

I am a little confused though, because when I look at the bill I see it as making administrative changes primarily. It gives the provinces what they have asked for, to be able to designate their program as federal, which will actually save them time, energy and certainly monetary resources. As well, it would expand their criteria, which need to be protected as far as information is concerned, and lengthens the time of emergency protection for people under the witness protection program.

The NDP members talked a lot yesterday, and I am assuming they will today, about the costs. They somehow keep thinking there will be a huge ballooning in the number of people entering the witness protection program. Have they done research on this? I am just wondering, because I have not seen anything to that effect.

Can the hon. member tell me where she is getting these numbers? We have not seen any of those numbers, and I dare say that it is not a good idea to just make assumptions when it comes to important legislation.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for her question.

I did in fact mention it briefly at the beginning of my speech. I gave an example from 2012 about the percentage of cases considered and accepted. That goes with the funding here, however.

I do not want anyone to be alarmist and say that there will be ballooning or anything like that. It is important to mention that. All we are asking is that this bill be supported by adequate funding.

The government has probably done fairly extensive research to find out how much it could cost. I know that my colleague has heard various witnesses testifying before the committee. We just have to ensure that we have the resources and the money to pay for changes brought about by Bill C-51, which is seemingly going to work very well. Nevertheless, the resources must be there.

During the committee study now under way, we have seen that police forces are already struggling. We must not give them more to cope with. We must not place an additional financial burden on the provinces and municipalities. The costs must be borne here.



*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all need to understand very clearly that Bill C-51, the witness protection program and its enhancement via the bill, will have an impact in our communities.

The member referred to a tool belt. Yes, our police services across Canada have all sorts of tools they can use, and this is just but one of those tools, in co-operation with crown attorneys and others, they will be able to have access to.

I do believe that it is fair to assume that there will be an increase in demand for the program. Would the member not agree that it is a safe assumption to make and that there needs to be co-operation among the different levels of government on how they will best be able to meet that particular demand for resources, because I hope that we can avoid some duplication that way?

[Translation]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his question.

I am not suggesting that people applying to the witness protection program are going to rush the doors, or anything like that. What we are asking for here is to have the means of paying for what we are asking for, the resources to get what we want.

We must ensure that the cost is not passed on to the provinces or the municipalities; the government is already doing enough of that. We must not burden them once again with something like that, by offering nice things that in the end cannot be put in place, because the means to do so are not there.

I will therefore say to my colleague that all I am expecting is that there will be something for the witness protection program in the next budget, which the Conservative government is to present in the coming weeks. I really am expecting it. Quite honestly, I shall be extremely disappointed if there is nothing for the witness protection program or for the joint forces that combat street gangs across Canada.

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety said. I was quite surprised to hear her ask us for a cost analysis. I thought that was the government's job.

One thing seems to have escaped the parliamentary secretary. She truly has not done her homework if she believes that broadening the definition of a witness eligible for the program and extending by an additional 90 days the period during which emergency protection can be granted, as stated in the bill, will not result in any additional costs.

Does my colleague believe we should invest new funds given that the number of eligible witnesses will increase and that the period during which emergency protection can be granted will be extended by 90 days?

• (1535)

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his important observation.

We try to be good managers. Every member of the House strives to manage public funds as efficiently and effectively as possible. That is the parliamentary secretary and the Minister of Public Safety's overriding duty. I do hope they fulfilled this duty when they drafted Bill C-51. If they neglected to undertake a feasibility study and a financial analysis of the measures included in their bill, I do believe members on this side of the House will be quite disappointed, more so if it turns out they have not yet given any thought to the matter. I hope they have at least begun the process. I do believe I speak for all my colleagues on this issue.

I sincerely hope that new money will be earmarked for this in the next budget. Even if demand stays the same year after year, the cost of the witness protection program is sure to increase.

We need to be good managers. The Conservatives remind us daily that they reign supreme in that regard. I can only hope that they will walk the walk and increase the program's funding in the next budget.

[English]

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague, who also sits on the public safety committee with me, where she does a very good job in asking the right questions from her perspective. However, I would just like to clarify a couple of things before I ask my question. One of them was prompted by the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you and I served on the justice committee at one time, but we may also have served on public safety committee together. I recall that we brought in the changes to the witness protection program because there had been rather negative, publicized incidents with that program, resulting in a need for us to make some technical changes to the program. If I remember correctly, some mention was made of the monetary side of the issue during those hearings but that it was secondary to some of the changes that are being proposed in this legislation before the House. Nonetheless, I am glad to hear that the hon. member and her party are going to support this.

In short, I know the history of this, and it is not as much the doing of the NDP as it is a result of a collaborative approach. Therefore, let us try not to take too much party credit for these things and just do the right thing.

Does the hon. member not agree that the current legislation would vastly improve the previous regulatory regime around the witness protection program, and that we should continue to move in the right direction? We do not always get things perfect, but we move in the right direction. Does she believe that this legislation would move in the right direction in protecting people who come into the program?

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Alfred—Pellan has only 30 seconds to answer the question.

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre:** It is a pity, Mr. Speaker.

I thank my colleague for her question.

*Government Orders*

Members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security do not agree on everything, but the work is truly interesting. People have different points of view and that is excellent, as long as discussions are respectful, as they are between members from various parties who sit on our committee.

As I mentioned in my speech, it is only one tool in the toolbox, but we need it to fight crime. My colleague opposite would probably agree. However, that tool alone is not enough to fight crime effectively. We also need to ensure that our police forces have adequate funding. We need to live up to our responsibilities and be very good managers, once and for all.

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherbrooke. I am looking forward to his remarks. He has been asking very pointed questions so far, so I am very interested in what he has to say.

Mr. Speaker, you will know this very well, because I know that you were involved in some of the activities that were happening in 2007 relative to the witness protection program.

Since 2007, people from the NDP and perhaps even the Liberals have been calling for the government to expand the eligibility for the witness protection programs, to ensure the safety of all Canadians who are in potential danger because they have taken up their duties as responsible citizens. They have stood up and put themselves in jeopardy at times, and we have what I would call a valuable program to help protect them.

However, we have specifically called for better coordination of federal and provincial programs and better overall funding for the program. That is an area members will hear more about further on in my remarks.

That call that went out in 2007 for coordination and an improvement in coordination was echoed in 2009 and again in 2012.

Notwithstanding the fact that the NDP supports the government's attempt with Bill C-51 to improve the witness protection program, we remain concerned that the Conservative government has not committed any new dollars to the system to support an increase in use.

The world has changed very much in the last 10 years—for example, the situation around street gangs and the young people who get caught up in them. Getting them back out of that very concerning behaviour oftentimes only comes about when they are put before the justice system and we have the opportunity to use their evidence in court. However, they are reluctant unless they have the protection of our government.

We are also concerned that the RCMP and local police departments are quite unreasonably being asked to work within their existing budgets. Clearly, that is unrealistic. It should be obvious that it would clearly impede any substantial increase in participation in the program. I believed that part of the purpose was to open the doors wider to the program. However, if it is not funded how can that be accomplished?

We are satisfied with Bill C-51 overall and that it would extend the period of emergency protection and clear up some of the technical problems that have been brought before both the Liberal government before this and the current government. However, we believe that for it to be effective, Bill C-51 should include provisions for an independent agency to operate the program. That was recommended in the report that came out of the Air India inquiry. We are quite surprised that it was not included in Bill C-51. As a result, the RCMP would continue to be responsible for the program, and I will leave this point with the House: that would put the RCMP in a conflict of interest by being the agency both investigating the case and then deciding who would get protection.

Even though I have raised some of Bill C-51's shortcomings and the fact that the Conservatives were late to respond, in fairness to them, they have not been the only ones who have been late. I would go as far as to say that the previous government was even negligent in this.

The New Democrats are pleased that the government has finally listened to our proposals. It has been said that within the committee there was a collaborative effort to try to get to the right place on this. However, I cannot stress enough that, if the Conservative government truly wants to improve the witness protection program, it must also commit the necessary funding. It is required to ensure that those improvements have a chance of working, especially in that new area relative to street gangs. As a society, we cannot put ourselves in the position of telling young people that we want to take them out of the gangs and use their evidence in court but that we would leave them high and dry afterwards, because we know that some of those gangs can be particularly vicious in how they respond to anyone who stands up and tries to do the right thing.

All members of the House on both sides are concerned with making our communities as safe as possible. I believe the witness protection program in particular is one of the more important tools in fighting street gangs. I have talked a bit on that already.

● (1540)

I would remind government members that the federal witness protection program has long been criticized because of its very narrow eligibility criteria. Again, the Speaker and others have raised these concerns previously. There have been continuing complaints of poor coordination with provincial programs and of the low number of witnesses who actually get access to the program.

In 2012, only 30 out of 108 applications considered were actually accepted. I would suggest that very much undermines the program's value. We had 78 witnesses who put themselves at risk but did not get the follow-up protection that was believed to be their right and for which it was worthy of applying. To my mind, that is very concerning.

*Government Orders*

Changes to the witness protection program have been called for by the NDP since its very inception in 1996. There were glaring omissions in it. Majority Liberal governments and subsequently this government to date have done little. However, I must add the proviso that with Bill C-51, the Conservatives have made some fairly reasonable moves, but there have been few bills over that long period of time that actually got introduced into this House. One was way back in 1999, which was Bill C-223, regarding witness protection during domestic violence cases. I would add, because it is quite often said in this place that the NDP does not support the government's crime bills, that back in 1999 we supported that bill to protect people in domestic violence cases.

The overarching issues of eligibility, coordination and funding still have not been significantly addressed. The NDP is on record for repeatedly asking the government to address these three key issues, and the previous speaker spoke to that to some degree. The criteria for eligibility must be expanded even further. The co-operation that has been criticized between the provinces and the federal government has to be addressed. Of course, the underpinning of the whole process, like every other government program, is based on funding, and if that funding does not increase it is not going to be effective.

In 2012, the member for Trinity—Spadina called for more support for the federal witness protection program. That member pointed to the difficulty Toronto police were having in trying to convince witnesses of the summer's mass shooting at a block party in Danzig Street, which we all heard about, to come forward.

I would reiterate that some aspects of the bill we do support, and because of those aspects, we support the bill overall. It is not as comprehensive and does not go as far as we would like, but it is a reasonable effort, and I acknowledge that.

We are pleased that the bill modestly—and I stress the word “modestly”—expands the eligibility, which was at the direct request of the RCMP. I am quite satisfied that when the government gets advice from organizations like the RCMP, it gives credence to it.

Going back one more time to street gangs, it is good that street gangs were included in the bill. It is a new group of people giving assistance to us. We do not think of street gangs as giving assistance, but within them are some young people who have made mistakes. They have recognized those mistakes, have stood up and have tried to make amends in their own way, and we do need to support that.

Federal departments and agencies with a mandate relating to national security, national defence or public safety would now be able to refer witnesses to the program. I am curious about the words “refer witnesses to the program”. I would like to see stronger words such as “recommend them to the program”. Hopefully we are opening the door for sustained use of the program, which will be of value in that particular area of national security.

I mentioned earlier the emergency protection and the clear-up of some technical problems of coordinating with the provinces.

• (1545)

For emergency protection, we are talking about situations where we are saying people must give evidence in support of a case that is going to help the courts deal with very negative situations, situations of violence. Emergency coverage for those people is really essential.

I see my time has run out, so I will wrap up. I have much more to say, but this time I will leave it to the next speaker.

• (1550)

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the RCMP program and the expansions we made within the witness protection program to include referrals from other agencies like the Department of National Defence and CSIS, for example. In way of explanation, the federal witness protection program is run by the RCMP, so it makes operational decisions. Obviously there is no political influence on how it decides who is eligible for the witness protection program. When 180 people ask to be part of the program and only 30 are accepted, it does not have to do with resources. It has to do with operational assessment of the risk factor and whether those individuals actually need full witness protection program coverage.

I also want to let the member know it is the recommendations that came out of the Air India inquiry that suggested we expand the program. I am sure the RCMP is supportive, but the suggestions did not come from the RCMP. We did get suggestions from the provinces. We have followed and respected those recommendations.

I am sure the member has done consultations within his own riding. Has he heard from stakeholders in connection with the Air India inquiry or anyone else who might be involved with witness protection?

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Mr. Speaker, in my community of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek I have a fairly large South Asian population and, to be quite frank, they were very discouraged over the length of time the Air India inquiry took. I think all Canadians were troubled by that.

I would like to go back to the comments the member made about the RCMP. The only thing I would raise relative to the RCMP that is a little concerning is that, when an organization has to work within its own budget and there is going to be a change in what is administered but it does not get an increase in its budget, that opens the door to a problem. We are asking it to take more witnesses in, and I would hate to think that a lack of funds would cause the organization to decline people who needed protection.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are in a crisis situation. I was a correctional officer for eight and a half years. The people in our institutions, in our prisons, were street gang members.

According to a report released three weeks ago, street gangs, biker gangs and the Mafia have decided to work together more and more. Police forces are already stretched and cannot function effectively. In prisons, support services for informers are inadequate.

*Government Orders*

We now have an interesting measure that is going forward. But there is no logic in investing one dollar when we need 10 dollars, when we are in a crisis that police services have been unable to resolve. We need to help them as soon as possible.

Can my colleague comment on that?

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member that it is refreshing to have people in the House who have worked in the correctional facilities, have worked out there one-on-one with those situations we are talking about. It brings a certain *gravitas* to what we are doing here on a day-to-day basis.

Yes, the world has changed. I tried to stress that during my speech. Regarding longstanding organized crime, we tend to think of the Mafia, but it has changed dramatically. In fact, in the city of Montreal we see that the old guard is being assassinated. There is all kinds of turmoil. It indicates that there may well be a coordinated effort of other criminal organizations coming together in a way that is really troubling, and we will need to protect people who come forward as witnesses dealing with those cases simply because of the extreme level of violence it seems to generate.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking in the House today about Bill C-51. I was also pleased to read the Witness Protection Program Act and Bill C-51, which would make substantial changes to the Witness Protection Program Act, or at least to many of its sections.

Before I begin, I would like to remind those who are watching of the proposed changes in this bill. It is important that I do this before I explain my position.

As I mentioned earlier, broadening the definition of "witness" is a fairly important point. The definition has been changed in the relevant part of the bill. Federal security and defence organizations and services have been added to section (a) of the definition of witness. This is a technical point and I ask those watching at home to forgive me if it is difficult to follow, given that they do not have the current act in their hands.

There is another interesting change that has not been mentioned very often. In the current act, a witness's acquaintance can be protected. For example, a witness's child can also be protected. Under the current bill, someone who knows someone who knows the witness can be protected. That is another small but meaningful change. There are many types of people who could be protected. Again, that is an example of how the definition of witness has been broadened. We assume that these changes will mean that more witnesses will be able to access the program.

Another important change that I mentioned earlier when I asked a question has to do with the possible 90-day extension.

Currently, subsection 6(2) reads as follows:

Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Commissioner may, in a case of emergency, and for not more than ninety days, provide protection to a person who has not entered into a protection agreement.

In this bill, a very important phrase has been added at the end of this subsection. If an agreement has not been signed after the first 90

days, there is a possibility of extending the protection for another 90 days. So it is possible for a witness who has not yet signed an agreement with a protection agency to receive extended emergency protection. That could lead to extra costs for witness protection agencies.

Another interesting point is that, following section 8, the bill adds section 8.1, which concerns the termination of protection. This affords more clarity on how the commissioner may terminate the protection of a witness and also how the witness may request termination of protection. This whole aspect is thus clearer.

A change is also made to section 10, which requires the commissioner to provide the reasons why he refuses to admit a witness to the protection program. The commissioner will now be required to inform several persons whom he was not previously required to inform. Decision making with regard to the program is thus more transparent.

The title "Protection of Identity" will now read "Protection of Information". This will harmonize the protection of personal information under our current federal system. It will also harmonize this entire aspect with provincial legislation. Several consequential changes to section 11 will bring the legislation in line with all the known programs in certain Canadian provinces already doing this work.

In short, these are the major changes made to the Witness Protection Program Act. Now I would like to discuss our position on those changes. As my colleagues have already mentioned, we will support Bill C-51 at second reading. The NDP has been asking the government to make these kinds of changes for a long time. We have asked it to expand witness eligibility for protection programs to guarantee the safety of all Canadians who may be in danger.

The NDP has been insistently calling for better coordination of federal and provincial programs and improved overall program funding since 2007.

● (1555)

That leads me to an important point: funding. I referred to this earlier when I put a question to my colleague from Alfred-Pellan.

We may assume that costs will increase once we understand the amendments that have been made, such as expanding the definition of "witness" and possibly extending emergency protection by 90 days.

According to the statistics, it cost \$9 million to protect 30 witnesses in 2012. We are talking about an average cost of approximately \$300,000 per witness. By expanding the definition of "witness" in this way, adding a few witnesses will be enough to generate additional costs. It is important to mention that fact. It is also important to realize that these changes could result in costs. I hope the government has conducted an impact study on the costs that would be generated by this bill, to ensure that the necessary changes are made to the budget by allocating a little more money for this purpose, because we must also consider the broader duties that will fall to the witness protection agencies.

*Government Orders*

Although the NDP supports Bill C-51 because its aim is to improve the witness protection program, it deplors the fact that the Conservative government has so far refused to add additional funding to the system.

On the issue of funding, it is important for the government to realize that costs are likely to increase, as I said earlier. If that is true, then perhaps we need to allow some time for witness protection agencies to adjust to their added workload. If we disregard the capabilities of the RCMP or provincial and municipal agencies, then this bill will not amount to anything.

In the words of my colleague, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, the proof of the bill is in the funding. Bill C-51 will move forward if the government commits the necessary funds. Otherwise, this initiative will fail.

Speaking of crime, each time the subject comes up for discussion, I like to point out to the government that the NDP has a broader view of crime in general. We made that clear during recent parliamentary sittings. The government always accuses us of being on the wrong side, whereas we know very well that our approach is very different. That is why we sometimes oppose government bills. Their approach is based more on punishment than on prevention. Our party's broad position on crime is that crimes should be prevented before they are committed. As part of our broader vision of the fight against crime, it is equally important that resources be put in place to prevent crime.

I like to refer to comments made earlier by members in the House. Before we address the House, it is important to understand our colleagues' position. Therefore, I would like to repeat what my colleague, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, said yesterday:

Most criminals do not sit at home thumbing through the Criminal Code to see which offence to commit based on the length of the sentence.

This is a rather strong statement to the effect that a criminal will not look up the length of the sentence before committing a crime. We are not going to prevent crime by imposing lengthy sentences. What we need are crime prevention programs at the front end.

That is all I will say about the subject of crime in general. Each time the subject arises, I like to remind the government of our position so that one day it might share our vision.

In conclusion, since my time is up, I will say again that the NDP will be supporting this bill. We are hopeful that some worthwhile amendments will be made when the bill is studied in committee and that it will be improved as much as possible.

• (1600)

[English]

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments and for his party's support of the bill.

One of the changes we would be making is in how the provinces operate their witness protection program. Currently, it is very difficult for them to get identity documents for people under provincial witness programs because they have to go through quite a difficult process with the RCMP. We would be changing that so they could now be federally designated, which would have no costs

associated with it. In fact, it would save the provinces money, time and resources.

I wonder if my colleague would be able to comment on that and how he feels it would affect the people he represents, specifically in the province of Quebec.

• (1605)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question.

In my speech, I may have forgotten to mention a change that affects designated programs. It is an important component of Bill C-51, which modifies the Witness Protection Program Act.

The bill allows for better information sharing with designated provincial and municipal programs.

Obviously, this was difficult recently. Because of bureaucracy, information was not always shared as it should have been. In some cases, this kept witness protection agencies from acting effectively. It interfered with procedures.

The bill creates a better alignment with provincial and municipal agencies, so that information can be shared while remaining well protected.

If I remember correctly, all these changes applied to section 11 and the subsequent sections, 11.1 to 11.3. All the processes are being greatly simplified and harmonized, to eliminate the red tape agencies were faced with previously.

**Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a top-notch speech.

If I understand correctly, the NDP is determined to build safer communities. One can achieve this by improving the witness protection program and by giving police forces the added tools they need to deal with street gangs.

I would like my colleague to comment on what I read on the RCMP's website, which says:

There are instances when the costs of witness protection may impede investigations, particularly for smaller law enforcement agencies.

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I totally agree with its premise, namely the NDP's commitment to make our communities safer for all Canadians.

The member also asked about something he found on the RCMP's website. It is undoubtedly true that the cost of witness protection sometimes impedes the work of local and provincial police forces. It is appalling to learn that some organizations charged with protecting our communities are unable to adequately protect witnesses.

Whenever a witness refuses to co-operate with police, investigators or a judge for fear of reprisals, law enforcement may be unable to obtain the necessary information to lay criminal charges.

*Government Orders*

It is very important that every witness feel safe and free to supply information without fear.

[English]

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise to speak to this bill today. I have found the debate and all the preparatory work that we have done in my office in advance of me speaking today very interesting.

Many of the impressions we have about witness protection come from south of the border. We have watched American television and American crime shows for so long that we are very familiar with the concept of witness protection. Most Canadians probably think the system in Canada is as robust, well-developed and tightly coordinated as it appears to be in the United States through those representations we have seen on television.

I was very curious to discover that the program was not that old. I thought I would do a little rundown of the history of the program in Canada, just to give some background to the debate.

At the federal level, the witness protection program only began in 1984 as a series of internal RCMP guidelines and policies. It was designed at a time when the fight against drug trafficking had become a major priority. Its intent was to encourage the co-operation of witnesses who could provide information on organized crime. We can see that the witness protection program is tightly associated with the rise or further expansion of organized crime, specifically in relation to the drug trade.

There were protective measures for those who co-operated with law enforcement in the provinces. Some provinces and municipalities, including British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec already had their own witness protection programs that provided a variety of protection measures, such as relocation for the duration of a trial, for example. However, admission to the federal witness protection program, which is run by the RCMP today, was, and still is, an extreme measure only used in the most severe cases.

The first legislative basis for the witness protection program came with the passing of Bill C-13, Witness Protection Program Act in 1996. The bill sought to strengthen the program by including a clear definition of admission criteria for witnesses and a more public and accountable structure for the management of the program. It provided clearer lines of authority than existed in the program prior to the legislation, which, as I mentioned, was essentially a policy, making the witness protection program the clear responsibility of the RCMP commissioner.

According to 2008 data, there were approximately 1,000 protectees in witness protection program; 700 managed by the RCMP and 300 by other law enforcement agencies. About 30% of these protectees had not themselves acted as witnesses, interestingly, but were in the program because of their relationship to a witness.

Under the Witness Protection Program Act, the commissioner is required to conduct an annual report, outlining statistics about the program, without disclosing details that could compromise its integrity or the identity of protected witnesses.

The 2011-12 annual report showed that of 108 individuals considered for admission to the witness protection program during

that period, 30 were accepted, which surprises me. I thought the rate of acceptance would be higher. Twenty-six of the thirty came from RCMP investigations, while four were admitted on behalf of other Canadian law enforcement agencies. The total cost of the program, including RCMP and public servant compensation, totalled \$9.1 million.

Under the current Witness Protection Program Act, the RCMP is responsible for making all decisions related to admission and all potential protectees must be recommended by either a law enforcement agency, namely the RCMP, or a provincial or municipal force.

• (1610)

Individuals are admitted to the program based on a number of considerations outlined in the legislation such as: the nature of the risk to the security of the witness; the likelihood of the witness being able to adjust to the program; the cost of maintaining the witness in the program; and whether alternative methods of protecting the witness are available. Once it has been determined that the witness protection program is the best option, a protection agreement is signed between the RCMP and the protectee, outlining the obligations of both parties. Admission to the program involves a total identity change and relocation. Therefore, when individuals are admitted to the program, it is assumed that they will remain lifelong protectees.

However, protection can be terminated by the RCMP if the conditions of the protection agreement are not met, such as, for example, if the protectee commits a crime, associates with gang members or uses drugs. Protectees can also choose to terminate their protection voluntarily. In either case, their families continue to be protected. It cannot be stressed enough that admission to the witness protection program is the last resort.

There have been some controversies in recent years surrounding the program. In 2008 the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security conducted a review of the federal witness protection program. A few years later, an entire chapter of the Air India inquiry conducted by Commissioner John Major focused on the need for adapting the witness protection program to terrorism cases. Essentially, this bill would update a system that began before the advent of terrorism or before terrorism became an issue in our country and on our continent. This is why it is important that we update the program to take account of these new realities.

*Government Orders*

Under Bill C-51, recommendations for admission to the program could also be made by federal departments, agencies or services. Bill C-51 would make it possible for federal agencies or services other than the RCMP that might be involved in national security, national defence or public safety to make recommendations for admitting individuals to the program. However, under Bill C-51, the power to determine whether a witness should be admitted to the program and the type of protection to be provided would remain with the RCMP commissioner. This very important change would address the urgent need for the protection of witnesses involved in the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences.

The need for organizations such as CSIS to be able to offer protection to witnesses was made abundantly clear during the investigation into the 1985 Air India bombing, as outlined in Commissioner Major's 2010 report. The report highlighted the issues surrounding the reluctance of witnesses in the Air India inquiry to co-operate with CSIS investigators who, under the Witness Protection Program Act, could not offer them adequate protection. This bill obviously comes from a recommendation from that inquiry, which is significant in the history of our country and has spurred many changes to public security legislation.

The other interesting aspect of this bill is that it would provide for better coordination with police forces other than the RCMP. This seems to be a recurring theme in the area of public safety, namely the idea that it is becoming more and more important in this complex world in which we live and in this complex reality, that police forces across the spectrum work closely with each other. That has not always been the case, but there is a recognition today that more and more this is part of the need to create a seamless web of national and public security in Canada.

•(1615)

Clause 11 of Bill C-51 states that the Governor-in-Council may, by regulation, add to the schedule of the bill a provincial or municipal program that facilitates the protection of witnesses. Once it is listed in the schedule, this program will become a designated program. By becoming a designated program, it means the federal government can better coordinate the activities of federal departments and agencies whose co-operation is required to provide the protectee, for example, with the proper papers, a new identity and so on. This is a very important part of updating our witness protection regime in Canada and making it much more efficient and effective.

Bill C-51, interestingly, would also extend the period of time during which the commissioner might grant emergency protection to a witness who had not been admitted to the witness protection program. Therefore, there are cases where it is obviously important to provide some kind of interim protection to a witness and by virtue of the bill, the commissioner will be able to offer longer interim protection. Under the current provisions of the Witness Protection Program Act, emergency protection may be granted for no more than 90 days, but Bill C-51 would allow for an extension of that time period by another 90 days, bringing the total time of interim coverage to 180 days.

•(1620)

This is a good bill but there are some issues in it that have not been properly addressed and I would like to outline a couple of those.

Both the Air India inquiry and the 2008 House of Commons committee report on the subject of witness protection recommended that decisions relating to the admission of witnesses to the program and the resolution of disputes arising between protectees and the RCMP be handled by an independent body. In other words, the objective was to provide a third-party view to resolve any disputes between these two parties. In the Air India inquiry, this was envisioned to be in the form of a new position, a national security witness protection coordinator, whose mandate would include assessing the risks to potential protectees, who would work with relevant partners to provide the best form of protection based on the situation and to resolve disputes between the protectee and the program, as I mentioned earlier.

The 2008 committee report recommended that this body be an independent office within the Department of Justice, consisting of a multidisciplinary team that could include police officers, crown attorneys and criminologists. In other words, as in many areas of public policy or many areas of life today, we are moving toward a more holistic approach to issues, which allows us to deal with the many sides of a particular situation using many different kinds of specialists. This office within the Department of Justice, as I mentioned, would have a multidisciplinary team.

Another of the recommendations in the 2008 House of Commons committee report was that potential candidates for admission to the witness protection plan be offered the aid of legal counsel during the negotiation of the admission and the signing of the protection contract. This recommendation arose from testimony about the powerlessness of many prospective protectees when it comes to negotiating their protection agreement. Protection agreements have a huge impact on the lives of protectees or their families and, at present, are negotiated between the RCMP, which has years of experience in such negotiations, and protectees who are unfamiliar with the process and may not understand the implications and scope of the document they are signing. The House of Commons committee therefore felt that the presence of a lawyer would help ensure that negotiations are more fair and equitable.

These are two reasonable recommendations that fit within the widely accepted view that people need support when they are dealing with such complicated issues. One can just imagine the stress that someone contemplating going into the witness protection program would feel. He or she may not be thinking clearly about the issue, may not be familiar with that side of police work because of their always being on the other side of the police-criminal divide. It would seem to me that having the person negotiate without support would leave him or her somewhat helpless, and that is not the Canadian way. We believe in counter-balancing situations so that things are not entirely one-sided. In that perspective, this recommendation makes a fair amount of sense.

*Government Orders*

Like the NDP we will be supporting the bill. It is really a housekeeping matter in some ways and it would help build another defence against the threat of terrorism. The witness protection program in its current form has provided an effective tool to fight organized crime but it has not been updated to take into consideration cases involving terrorist threats. There is other legislation before the House today, Bill S-7, that is also meant to update our defences against terrorism. This bill connects very well and very logically with that other initiative and with the general vigilance that we are exhibiting in our society to make sure that our communities are safe and secure.

• (1625)

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the Liberal critic for public safety has indicated that his party will be supporting this very important piece of legislation. I would once again remind the House that we have been working on this since a previous Parliament, so it is good that we finally get something done. That means quite a bit.

I know the member talked about where some of the issues have emanated from, that being the Air India inquiry. Here I will refer to some of the comments that I do not think I heard the hon. member mention in his speech, one by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of British Columbia, who stated:

In the fight against crime, protecting witnesses effectively is essential. We look forward to reviewing the amendments and working constructively with our Federal counterparts to ensure that any changes minimize the risk to witnesses.

I think this piece of legislation does that.

As well, Tom Stamatakis, President of the Canadian Police Association, on behalf of the over 50,000 law enforcement personnel the association represents across Canada, encouraged us to pass the bill quickly and said that he looks upon it as a positive step, as does William Blair, Chief of Police in Toronto.

Does the member have any comments on some of the positive things he has heard regarding this piece of legislation? I did hear him mention that there were some housekeeping perspectives to this, so I wonder if he could elaborate.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, in fact the hon. member quoted some very authoritative voices in the policing world, which is very important because our police officers and police agencies need to work together. If police agencies across the country are suggesting or saying quite explicitly that this is needed, I do not see any reason why we should not give a lot of credence to their statements. Obviously, this bill is needed because Police Chief Stamatakis has spoken in support of the bill and so on.

Within the context of our study at the public safety committee on the cost of policing, again I go back to what the witnesses said at committee, that more and more police forces need to work together. This is one good avenue for encouraging collaboration among our law enforcement officers and agencies.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague on the costs of implementing this bill.

As regards witness protection, with the new technologies that facilitate communications and access to information all over the world, increasingly better coverage is needed to protect witnesses, because information can travel very quickly.

Is it fair to say that, even if this bill had not been implemented, witness protection costs would still have increased, because better coverage is required? Is it logical to think that increasing eligibility will most certainly push up costs?

• (1630)

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, as technology evolves and society becomes more complex, whether we are talking about the security industry, if we can call it that way, or the health care system, costs are skyrocketing. Therefore, I do not see why witness protection services would be immune from this trend.

I assume that more resources will have to be allocated to this initiative to ensure that people are adequately protected. Otherwise, a lack of funding would undermine the system's effectiveness and make society less safe.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know this issue has been canvassed, but I do find it disturbing that even on the current RCMP website, it says there are instances when the cost of witness protection may impede investigations, particularly for smaller law enforcement agencies. Provincial witness protection programs do not apply if the crime is federal in nature, involving drugs for example. The RCMP takes over those cases and charges the local police departments with the full cost. That is disturbing.

In the last year ending March 2012, only 30 people out of a total of 108 considered for the witness protection program actually got to benefit from it.

These seem to be significant problems. Is the member convinced that this legislation solves those problems?

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** That is a very interesting point, Mr. Speaker. Resources can always be a constraint on the proper functioning of any kind of system. I was surprised as well that out of 108 requests by individuals to be considered for admission to the program, only 30 were accepted, according to the 2011-2012 annual report. I look forward to discussing that issue at committee, because if the reason people are not getting the protection they need is the cost and if that is impeding law enforcement, then it would be incumbent upon the government, which obviously claims to care so much about police forces and pretends to be so supportive of our police forces, to consider ensuring that adequate resources are available so that the program can be as effective as it can be.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, organized crime is a serious issue in many communities, large and small, across the country. Many jurisdictions look at the potential of the witness protection program to help or assist in addressing some of the issues that organized crime brings to our communities and streets. The program will have a direct impact on that.

Could my colleague comment on how this particular program could benefit police in fighting organized crime?



*Government Orders*

•(1635)

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, as the program currently exists, it is tailored to the fight against organized crime.

As I mentioned in my speech, one of the objectives of the bill is to bring the fight against terrorism into the purview of the bill. The way it helps to fight organized crime is by making it easier for the local police forces who are fighting organized crime and who may have a person they would like to see protected to do the paperwork they need to do at the federal level. That is because the bill has a coordinating mechanism that would make it easier for all the federal departments whose co-operation is required to come together and get the paperwork done quickly so that the person can obtain their new identity.

By making the system more efficient, it helps fight organized crime all the way down the line in communities large and small across our great land.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** 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 member for Vancouver Kingsway, Foreign Investment; the member for LaSalle—Émard, Foreign Investment.

Resuming debate. The member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Today, I am very pleased to be debating a bill to amend the Witness Protection Program Act. It will be somewhat of a change to debate a public safety bill that, unlike what the government has brought in since the beginning of this Parliament, will not increase sentences. It is good to introduce other types of legislation.

Today, we are debating a bill that will give our public safety officers other tools to fight crime. We have to protect people, but we also have to protect repentant former criminals who want to leave crime behind and who, because of their knowledge of the criminal world, give our peace officers information needed to conduct investigations and, ultimately, prosecute criminals.

Make no mistake: if we do not enhance the witness protection program, we will unfortunately reduce our chances of enlisting important witnesses, which unfortunately has happened in the past.

Some people wonder why they should testify if their life is in danger and they are not offered any protection. That is a good question. That is why, in November 2012, my colleague from Trinity—Spadina rose in this House to demand more funding for the federal witness protection program.

For a few years now, the NDP has been calling on the government to expand the eligibility criteria for witnesses in protection programs to guarantee safety for all Canadians who bear witness and who are potentially in danger. We are also calling for better coordination between the federal and provincial programs, but most importantly for increased overall funding for the witness protection program.

In May 2010, the RCMP gave the Minister of Public Safety a report calling for the witness protection program to be enhanced. The government unfortunately waited quite a while before taking action. It is unfortunate that the government did not consider the budgetary implications of expanding the witness protection program.

I think it was the RCMP that best explained that sometimes the costs of witness protection may impede investigations, most specifically in the case of small law enforcement agencies. The government should acknowledge these budgetary implications.

In the case of drug-related crimes, for example, the RCMP takes over the case and charges the local police force for the whole thing. The government needs to understand that offloading these problems onto the provinces only impedes their ability to deliver programs such as the witness protection program.

This is not the way to go about protecting our communities or strengthening ties among federal agencies and provincial and municipal police forces.

True to form, the government decided to take action as soon as the issue started blowing up, instead of acting pre-emptively, before any problems came up.

The federal witness protection program has been the subject of criticism for several years as a result of its strict eligibility criteria, poor coordination with federal programs and the small number of witnesses who are accepted to the program.

I would remind members that in 2012, only 30 out of 108 applications that were examined were accepted. So we have to wonder: did the 78 applications that were rejected have a negative impact on the related legal cases? That would be an interesting question to look at. If these witnesses had been protected, would we have had more convictions?

Since the Witness Protection Program Act was passed in 1996, the Liberal and Conservative governments have done very little to address criticisms of the system. The basic issues of admissibility, coordination and funding have never been addressed.

As a number of my colleagues said earlier, we will support this bill. However, we are extremely disappointed that the government has decided not to provide new funding for the program.

•(1640)

Bill C-51 proposes a better process for supporting provincial witness protection programs. The bill would also make the program available to other organizations with national security roles, such as CSIS and the defence department.

*Government Orders*

We should remember that, during the Air India investigation, attempts were made against the lives of some witnesses. The law did not permit groups of witnesses for national security cases to be admitted to the program. One witness, Tara Singh Hayer, was assassinated in 1998, and the sworn statement he had given the RCMP a few years earlier was ruled inadmissible. Two other witnesses subsequently refused to appear at the Air India inquiry in 2007 because, unfortunately, they feared for their safety.

At the time, Justice Major had already admitted that he was unable to provide the protection needed by these witnesses. This must never happen again. We must be able to guarantee the safety of our witnesses. Otherwise, our sources of information will dry up, and not enough witnesses will have the courage to testify in court. In such cases, it often takes courage to testify at a criminal trial relating to national security. Therefore, we have to provide them with adequate protection.

This bill will expand eligibility criteria for the protection program to include members of street gangs, which are increasingly prevalent in our large cities. Including them in the witness protection program will give our police another tool to eliminate this scourge.

Federal departments and agencies responsible for national security, national defence or public safety will also be able to refer witnesses to the program, which could help avoid problems such as the ones encountered during the Air India inquiry.

Another important point was raised by the RCMP during the Air India inquiry, and Justice O'Connor made a related recommendation in his report. The bill does not include any provisions that would allow an independent body to oversee the program as per the recommendations made in the Air India report.

A transparent program eligibility process that requires more accountability is another important aspect to highlight and implement. Even the governments recognize that this is a serious problem, although they have not tackled it yet.

An independent body would help prevent any conflict of interest within the RCMP, while supporting a transparent process. There could be a conflict of interest within the RCMP given that it would continue to assume responsibility for the program, which could place it in a conflict of interest situation in the future, since it would be both the investigating body and the one to decide who benefits from protection.

In late 2009 and early 2010, the federal government consulted the provinces and territories regarding the witness protection program. Some of the provinces expressed their concerns at that time. Many provinces have their own witness protection programs. However, for budgetary reasons, they can provide only short-term protection.

As I mentioned, this is a huge expense for the provinces. As we so often hear these days, we have to do more with less. Furthermore, for legal reasons, the provinces need the RCMP in order to obtain new identification documents for the people being protected. Thus, there is a lack of coordination and we really hope to be able to resolve this situation when this bill is examined at committee.

So, one important aspect that this bill will improve is coordination with provincial witness protection programs.

In closing, we are pleased that the government has finally taken a serious look at this problem and that it is responding not only to the RCMP's calls, but also the NDP's calls regarding this matter. We have been calling for these changes since 2007. This bill is not perfect, but it is very good and we will support it so it can be sent to committee for a thorough examination.

• (1645)

[*English*]

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I hear members from across the way. First, I want to thank them for supporting the bill. It is something we have been working on. As we previously mentioned not too long ago to another member, this matter was before this House in a previous Parliament. For the edification of my friend, there is something called an election that slowed things down in that regard. This just follows up on that.

With regard to his party taking credit for all the good things in the bill but not the bad, I recall very clearly sitting on committee. It was as a result of some problems identified with the program through the RCMP that we all, as parliamentarians, agreed that we had to do something about it.

If I were the member I would be a little more hesitant before heaping praise on themselves. Sometimes we just do the right thing. Sometimes we just roll up our sleeves and work together in the right direction.

He talked about whether there is sufficient funding. I have been around this place for seven short years. Quite frankly, no matter what the government does, it is never enough. If the government spends too much, the criticism is that it is irresponsible and is throwing money at everything. If the government does not spend enough, according to the opposition, it is too stingy.

Let us dampen this and let us be fair with one another. This is a good piece of legislation. It addresses the inadequacies found in a previous government. We heard from witnesses, and not only Canadian witnesses but also witnesses from the United States. We looked at the American witness protection program and at others.

I wonder whether the member read the debate that occurred at committee concerning this bill and read the positive observations made by witnesses from other jurisdictions, not Canada, that we were moving in the right direction. Maybe he could comment on his observations after having read the testimony of those witnesses.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for the work he has been doing.

I would like him to know, however, that I did not come up with the amendments that were brought forward in the House to improve witness protection.

*Government Orders*

With regards to the costs he mentioned, I would add that last year, only 30 witnesses were eligible under the current criteria. One can surmise that, in the short term, a greater number of witnesses will be eligible and that tens of thousands of dollars will have to be spent on their protection.

One can also predict that, in the medium term, the program's uptake will increase as people will come to understand they have a greater chance of being eligible for witness protection.

Given that the cost of the program is sure to increase, it would be appropriate to give more resources to the RCMP and other stakeholders so that they can adapt to the new standards and requirements called for in the bill.

• (1650)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that most Canadians probably think the witness protection program has been in place for many decades, when, in fact, it is relatively new. It was not put in place until former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien saw the value of bringing in the Witness Protection Program Act. We have now seen legislation to make some changes to the program. I think all political parties can safely say that we see the value of the program.

My question for the member is similar to the one I asked my colleague. Could the member comment on the benefits of the witness protection program in addressing the street gang activity found in many of our communities across Canada? I think Canadians want us to do what we can to make our streets that much safer. In fact, the legislation, which enhances what was done back in 1996, would potentially go a long way if it were allowed to continue to grow and evolve to include more things. Would he not concur?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question and his remarks. This bill will certainly make our communities safer.

Basically, the bill will expand the eligibility criteria and enhance co-operation between provinces. For that to happen, there must be adequate funding.

Organized crime changes constantly. In my community, near Montreal, street gangs do not always work alone anymore. We see increased collaboration between members of organized crime. This makes it harder and harder for police forces to penetrate criminal organizations. Ensuring that witnesses from criminal gangs can now testify under the protection of the law will help police officers bring criminals to justice. This can only make things better.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to share my views and add Scarborough's voice on the bill. However, more important, I am pleased to see that the government is finally taking action on strengthening a program that is so vital to the safety of our communities.

The NDP, front-line community workers and Canadians have been calling upon the government to improve our witness protection

program to ensure the safety of all Canadians. Since 2007, the NDP has repeatedly pushed for the expansion of the eligibility criteria, better coordination of federal and provincial programs and better overall and adequate funding of the program. While it is concerning that a government that consistently purports to stand up for the safety of our communities has refused to commit any new funding for this program, the changes included in Bill C-51 have been long awaited and are greatly needed.

Bill C-51 proposes a better process to support provincial witness protection programs and expands the program to other agencies with national security responsibilities. In the bill, the eligibility criteria would expand to requests from the RCMP to include street gang members. In addition, federal departments and agencies with a mandate related to national security, national defence or public safety would also be able to refer witnesses to the program. The bill would extend the period for emergency protection and clear up some of the technical problems that were occurring in the coordination with provincial programs.

Provinces such as Ontario have been pushing for a national revamp of the witness protection program, including more recognition of their existing programs. The bill would provide for the designation of a provincial or municipal witness protection program so that certain provisions of the act can actually apply. It would also authorize the Commissioner of the RCMP to coordinate, at the request of an official of the designated provincial or municipal program, the activities of federal departments, agencies and services in order to facilitate a change of identity for a person admitted into the designated program. Overall, this is a positive step.

I represent a riding where community safety is top of mind and, sadly, a recurring concern for many in the community. Scarborough—Rouge River is a diverse, dynamic, successful area to live. However, areas in Scarborough have been tragically affected by street gang violence. The tragedy that happened on Danzig Street in Scarborough this past summer is something that is not far from my mind or the minds of many Scarborough residents. The death of two young people and 23 wounded while enjoying a neighbourhood barbecue is something that should never have happened or be repeated. We have seen ongoing efforts by courageous and committed Danzig residents, Scarborough residents and organizations, as well as city officials, to help the community recover and avoid any future tragedies such as this.

*Government Orders*

The NDP is also committed to building safer communities and one way is through an improved witness protection program that keeps our streets safe by giving police additional tools to fight street gangs by allowing for more members of the community to feel safe in coming forward as witnesses. I am proud that for years the NDP has been pushing the government to action to strengthen this program by expanding the eligibility criteria and providing adequate funding to support such a vital piece of our justice system, as well as better coordination of the federal and provincial programs.

New Democrats have also been pushing for crime prevention strategies and support for programs that seek to engage and empower our youth. It is amazing to see a Toronto resident donate his own money for resident development projects such as after-school projects and programs. In turn, however, we should have federal funding and leadership to support our youth, and prevention programs that discourage youth from getting involved in crime.

While late to respond to these growing issues, New Democrats are pleased to see the government listening to our requests to expand the witness protection program. In the year ending in March 2012, the federal witness protection program admitted only 30 people out of a total of 108 considered, with a cost of just over \$9 million. The expansion of the program is not only important to New Democrats, but the RCMP, the provinces and people on the ground working to combat street gangs all agree. An extremely important addition to this is allowing those seeking to leave gangs access to the program. These improvements would help to improve co-operation with local police and the RCMP in the fight against gang violence and to make our communities safer.

• (1655)

We know there are challenges with our current witness protection program, some of which are addressed in the bill. Since the Witness Protection Program Act passed in 1996, both the Liberal and Conservative governments have done little to respond to the criticisms of the system. For example, the inability to protect witnesses was an obstacle to the prosecution in the Air India bombing case. As we know, witness Tara Singh Hayer was assassinated in 1998, making his affidavit inadmissible as evidence in the court. Two other witnesses refused to appear before the Air India inquiry in 2007, citing fear for their safety and feigning memory loss.

Moreover it is sad and certainly frustrating from the point of view of the Toronto police that they experience challenges and resistance from witnesses to come forward when investigating crimes, such as the shooting on Danzig Street and the shootings that have taken the lives of many members of my community. The government needs to provide local departments with the support they need and the support that is necessary to make sure that witnesses come forward. While we would all like to believe that the government is committed to improving this important program, without the necessary funding to carry out the changes, we fear that the improvements that are needed for our communities may not actually happen.

We are concerned that the Conservatives seem to be assuming that the RCMP and the local police departments would work within their existing budgets, which would hinder the improvement of the program. There is already a high cost to the local police departments.

While there are provincial programs, if the crime is federal in nature or involves drugs, the RCMP takes the case and charges the local police department the full cost, which many local or small police departments just cannot afford. The RCMP's own website states, "There are instances when the costs of witness protection may impede investigations, particularly for smaller law enforcement agencies".

If the Conservatives truly want to improve the witness protection program, they must commit the funding to ensure this happens. The NDP will continue to push the federal government to work with the RCMP and the provinces to dedicate funding to the witness protection program and ensure that local departments can continue the important work that they do.

It is also disappointing that the bill does not include more of the recommendations that were included in the Major report from the Air India inquiry, including provisions for an independent agency to operate the program or to have oversight of the program. It was recommended that an independent agency operate the program. This would allow for a more transparent and accountable process for admissions into the program. This is something that the government also identified as a serious problem, but as we see in Bill C-51 it has done nothing to address it. Transparency seems to be a persistent issue for the current government, but it is still curious why it will not commit to making the process more transparent.

Once again, the changes in Bill C-51 are an important step forward for the community and for the safety of all Canadians. Front-line workers in my community and across the country have long awaited these improvements. Moreover, we see the government listening to the NDP who have always been committed to building safer communities through an improved witness protection program.

Conversations with the local police department in Toronto and with other front-line workers who I talk to on a regular basis have very clearly indicated to me, as well as to my staff, that if the witness protection program were improved, we would see many more people in our communities willing to be witnesses. If our witnesses are taken care of, then they will not be victimized. We want to make sure that those members of our community who are bravely coming forward to be witnesses are not being victimized and that their families are not being victimized.

I hope to see more bills such as this in the future that demonstrate that the government is starting to listen to New Democrats and Canadians, and that we can actually work co-operatively and support the system we have in our Parliament.

*Government Orders*

• (1700)

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was going to get up and say, “Holy smoke, I have not heard that before”. After 30 years of policing, I still have contacts with many members, especially being a resident of what is considered southeastern Ontario. I have never in my time in this place heard of a member of a police force tell me that improvements to the Witness Protection Program Act would have solved a particular case, or more witnesses would have come out, or that someone who qualified to be protected under the witness protection program was not. I am not saying that does not occur. I am not saying that the hon. member has not heard that. I am just saying that in working with the Canadian Police Association and as a member of the Conservative police caucus, of which there are more than 10 of us, I have never heard that. From various regions in Canada right across the country and various police forces, I have never heard that.

I ask the hon. member, if that is occurring with the Toronto Police Service, would she please give that information to us and we will be sure to bring that to the attention of the Minister of Public Safety.

• (1705)

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments on his own experience and for his interest in Toronto's specific needs.

I have been a member of the House for just under two years. From day one, a very sincere concern of my community has been the safety of the community. Speaking with members of the community, with front-line workers, as well as with police officers on the ground and administrators within the Toronto police, time and time again, I heard the concern that if there were a better witness protection program, if people in the community had better protection measures to be witnesses, we would be able to get more people involved.

I thank my hon. colleague for the service he has provided to the southeast region of Ontario. Maybe the needs of southeastern Ontario are different from Toronto's. I have not been a police officer in either one of those regions, so I cannot speak to that. What I can speak of is what community members are saying to me and what police officers and front line-workers are saying directly to me, and that is that we would have more people.

I have spoken with people who have witnessed crimes but are too scared to speak of them because they are scared that the gang member is going to attack their own mother next or that their own sister will be attacked next. A direct quote I can say from many, many people is, “I'm not going to be the snitch, because then it's my family that's next”.

Therefore, if people knew they had better protective measures, they would be coming out to be witnesses in cases.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I took an interest in the exchange that took place about the amount of resources and about enticing people into this program for the sake of their own safety.

One of the issues that has not been discussed is the issue of human trafficking. At least I have not heard it yet. There are examples in the United States and other jurisdictions around the world, where victims of human trafficking were made more aware of programs

that exist in witness protection programs to allow them to escape the system they are in. Let us face it; human trafficking, especially in a large international organization, is incredibly oppressive. There really has to be that strong incentive and that system has to be strong enough not only to allow these people to escape the organization they are in, but they also have to have confidence for it to result in a prosecution of that international ring.

I think I understand what the member is getting at, but does this program specifically help in the area of human trafficking? Perhaps this could entice some victims to become involved.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the proposed changes is that, because human trafficking with an international ring would be a federal issue, it would be something the RCMP would investigate. If someone is seeking protection, my understanding is that the RCMP investigates because it is a federal jurisdiction.

The changes with Bill C-51 would actually improve the eligibility criteria to allow more people who seek protection to see that protection made available to them.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Manicouagan.

Bill C-51 concerns the witness protection program. It is a vital element in the fight against organized crime and, increasingly, crime involving street gangs. It offers significant benefits for the public. The co-operation of key witnesses means valuable support for law enforcement agencies and helps to enhance the safety of Canadian communities.

Bill C-51, An Act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, makes long-awaited changes, and we are glad it was introduced. The NDP has in fact been calling for these new legislative measures for a very long time. My colleague from Trinity—Spadina also called for more support for the federal witness protection program in 2012. She pointed to the difficulty experienced by the Toronto Police Service in persuading witnesses to the killing that took place at a neighbourhood party on Danzig Street to come forward.

The NDP is committed to building safer communities, and one way of doing this is to improve the witness protection program, bringing peace to our neighbourhoods and giving the police additional tools to enable them to combat street gangs.

The NDP has repeatedly asked the government to broaden witness eligibility for protection programs in order to guarantee the safety of all Canadians at risk. In 2011-12, the federal witness protection program accepted only 30 out of 108 candidates, at a cost of just over \$9 million.

Bill C-51 would thus broaden the eligibility criteria for the witness protection program to include street gang members, as well as witnesses recommended by CSIS and the Department of National Defence.

*Government Orders*

Federal departments and agencies whose mandate involves national security, national defence or public safety will also be able to refer witnesses to the program. Those working to combat street gangs believe that providing access to the program for gang members who wish to leave will represent an important addition to the tools they need.

Although the Conservatives have taken their time in acting, we are pleased that the government has listened to our requests to expand the witness protection program. Since 2007, the NDP has been strongly urging better coordination of the federal and provincial programs.

Provinces like Ontario and Alberta have pressed for the restructuring of the witness protection program at the national level, in particular by requesting better recognition of the programs in operation. A number of provinces run their own witness protection programs, which in many cases provide short-term assistance only.

Moreover, obtaining new federal identity documents for program participants requires co-operation from the RCMP. Bill C-51 provides for the designation of a provincial or municipal witness protection program, as a result of which some provisions of the legislation will apply to such a program. At the request of the designated official of the applicable provincial or municipal program, it also authorizes the RCMP commissioner to coordinate the activities of federal departments, agencies and services in order to facilitate a change of identity for a designated program protectee.

Lastly, the bill proposes extending the period of emergency protection available to a witness from 90 to 180 days, which is substantial.

For some time, the federal witness protection program has been criticized for its overly strict eligibility criteria, its poor coordination with federal programs and the low number of witnesses admitted to the program. This bill attempts to address these shortcomings, and although the NDP supports the bill, we believe that the government failed to include a number of measures that would have led to genuine reform of the witness protection program.

Here are a couple of examples. To begin with, we are dismayed that the Conservative government refused to inject new money into the system. If the Conservatives really want to improve the witness protection program, they need to allocate funds so that these measures can be implemented. Moreover, insufficient funding could compromise the positive results that would stem from enhancing the process of supporting provincial programs. The Conservative government does not acknowledge the significant costs incurred by local police forces.

There are provincial witness protection programs, but if the crime is a federal offence, or if it is drug-related, the RCMP is responsible for the file even though the local police forces have to foot the bill, which many cannot afford to do.

● (1710)

For example, in my riding, Beauharnois—Salaberry, which is on the U.S. border, in one particular place there is a lot of drug and weapons trafficking. In fact, there was a report in the Quebec media on the problem in 2011.

The Minister of Public Safety was even asked to go to Dundee, a municipality in my riding, where people, especially farmers, receive a lot of threats. They get offered money and do not really have any choice but to accept. They are afraid to report what is going on and they talk about it with their municipal council.

In winter, the traffickers move about over the lake. In the summer, they go into the fields and destroy crops. It is very difficult to do anything about it because the RCMP do not have enough money.

Furthermore, a border crossing in Franklin was closed in 2010. So there are fewer officers on patrol, which only makes surveillance more difficult. The RCMP said as much on its website:

There are instances when the costs of witness protection may impede investigations, particularly for smaller law enforcement agencies.

Yet, the Minister of Public Safety stated that the RCMP and local police services must make do with their current budgets. How does the Conservative government intend to improve the witness protection program, and make people safer, when the RCMP has already made it known that it does not receive adequate funding?

In order to improve the safety of communities, local police forces must receive the support they need to recruit witnesses regarding matters involving street gangs or drug and weapons trafficking.

The NDP is also dismayed by the fact that the government did not adopt a number of important recommendations from the investigative report on the Air India affair. In his report, Justice O'Connor stressed the need to create an arm's-length organization responsible for the witness protection program in order to make it more transparent. He also recommended that an independent advisory panel be created to play the role of watchdog and increase accountability.

Since this bill makes no changes in this regard, the RCMP will continue to assume responsibility for the program, which exposes it to a potential conflict of interest given that it is responsible for both conducting investigations and deciding who will receive protection.

The Air India Commission is not the only body to have highlighted the need for an overhaul of the witness protection program. In 2008, a committee of the House of Commons also recommended that the program be transferred to an independent organization.

Why is the Conservative government refusing to commit to making the program more transparent? The RCMP has also called for the establishment of an independent advisory panel in order to provide greater transparency.

Although the Conservatives took their time introducing this bill, we in the NDP are glad that the government is listening to our call to expand the witness protection program. However, it has not gone unnoticed that Bill C-51 does very little in terms of the changes that are required.

Some of the government's decisions, including the decision to not provide additional funding to the RCMP and local police forces, jeopardize the improvements that Bill C-51 would make to the program.

*Government Orders*

I urge the Conservative government to provide police forces with the resources they need in order to properly run this program, which is so important for the safety of our communities. I also call on the government to do everything in its power to increase the transparency of the program.

On our side of the House, we will continue to push the government to address the legitimate concerns of a number of stakeholders, including the RCMP and local communities.

• (1715)

[*English*]

**Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, this bill would primarily make administrative changes that would actually save the provinces money, time and resources, because it would be federally designated and they would be able to get information and identity changes much more quickly for the people under their witness protection program. It does not actually expand the program. There is one criterion that would change, that being that individuals who are involved, whether it be in public safety, national defence or CSIS, could be referred to the witness protection program.

I have asked all day if the New Democrats could cite any kind of reference, study or documentation saying that the witness protection program costs would go up. We have done a lot of work on this bill. We have talked with RCMP and with public servants. There has been no cost associated with this. Is this something the hon. member has looked at herself, or is this just something that someone suggested she say?

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question.

I would like to take the opportunity to ask her that same question, given that it is the Conservatives who are in power and who introduce bills.

Did they conduct their own studies and assess the costs that would be incurred? Did they assess the cost of extending emergency witness protection from 90 days to 180 days?

Did they then provide additional funding so that the police can do their job?

Did they read on the RCMP website that the organization already has trouble carrying out investigations because it lacks the funds to get people to testify?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, crime prevention is an important issue for the constituents of Winnipeg North. The bill would move us forward on this issue in the sense that it would allow for an enhanced witness protection program, or the potential growth of the program. I agree that additional resources might be necessary in order to meet the future demands of the program.

We want to see a program that ultimately will assist our police agencies and our crowns in getting the type of convictions that are

necessary, while also protecting those individuals who take a chance by coming forward and testifying with possible ramifications. It is important to my constituents that we prevent crimes from happening in the first place.

Could the member provide comment on what she believes the real impact of the program would have on organized street crime in many communities across Canada?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Mr. Speaker, this bill is a step in the right direction. As we have all said today, it is a step in the right direction for witnesses as well as for the safety of our municipalities.

However, it is somewhat disappointing that the Liberals, who are in agreement today, did not do anything when they were in power and had the chance to take action.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, because of the member's response, I want to make note that it was the Liberal Party that introduced the program back in 1996. Our party introduced the idea and the concept to the New Democrats. Maybe the member might want to reflect on her last answer.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Mr. Speaker, I would say that even after something has been created, it can always be improved upon.

Since this program was created years ago, changes have been needed to increase the safety of our municipalities.

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the motivation behind my speech in the House regarding the changes to the Witness Protection Program Act has to do with the need to address issues related to the involvement of a disadvantaged youth population in criminal and marginal activities in response to discrimination based on ethnic and cultural origins.

As I have already indicated in a previous intervention, all too often, young people become involved in criminal groups or gangs in response to imposed marginalization and because they have accepted the role that has been assigned to a certain segment of the population or to certain individuals. My arguments are based on my own personal experience as a criminal lawyer and on my experience dealing with young people who have a record with Quebec's director of youth protection.

This premise opens the door to a summary examination of the context of anomie that leads to group mentality and the predominance of an artificial authority figure exerting undue influence on a certain stratum of youth, thereby perpetuating the downward spiral that exists in many societies dealing with the scourge of street gangs.

I will now clarify the concept of anomie. I will simply define the terms used in the field. The term "anomie" is used to describe societies or groups within a society that are unstable as a result of a lack of commonly accepted standards, whether implicit or explicit, or, worse, as a result of the presence of rules that promote isolation or even predation rather than co-operation.

*Government Orders*

My arguments and comments will be based on my professional experience, as they have been in the past. The group mentality phenomenon among young people, as seen in street gangs—if they can be referred to as such—on Indian reserves in northern Quebec, is related to the social upheaval in and dysfunction of the broader community.

The problem is that there are too few professional role models and very few parental role models. When we look at the reasons why a young person joins a gang or a criminal movement, a lack of supervision and the lack of a positive parental role model are often at the root of the problem in most, but not all, cases.

In short, to fill this void, young people often turn to negative role models. Some somewhat older role models in the community who were also caught up in the group mentality and who were also members of street gangs when they were young, have become the mentors—if I can use that expression—and leaders of these groups, which perpetuates the cycle of crime on Indian reserves. These negative role models make sure that their needs and addictions are taken care of by basically placing younger members of the gang at their beck and call.

I submit this respectfully, and I will talk more about this in the future.

• (1725)

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1810)

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

(Division No. 614)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy  
Adler  
Albas  
Alexander

Adams  
Aglukkaq  
Albrecht  
Allen (Welland)

Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anders  
Andrews  
Armstrong  
Ashton  
Atamanenko  
Ayala  
Bateman  
Bellavance  
Benoit  
Bergen  
Bevington  
Blanchette  
Blaney  
Boivin  
Boughen  
Brahmi  
Brison  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Butt  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Caron  
Casey  
Charlton  
Chisholm  
Chong  
Chow  
Clarke  
Clement  
Côté  
Crockatt  
Cuzner  
Davidson  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Del Mastro  
Dewar  
Dionne Labelle  
Doré Lefebvre  
Dubé  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
Dykstra  
Eyking  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Fletcher  
Fortin  
Galipeau  
Garrison  
Genest-Jourdain  
Gill  
Godin  
Goodale  
Gosal  
Gravelle  
Groguhé  
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hawn  
Hillyer  
Holder  
Hughes  
Jacob  
Jean  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kellway  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lapointe  
Latendresse  
Laverdière  
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
Leaf  
Lemieux  
Leung  
Lizon  
Lukivski  
MacAulay  
MacKenzie  
Marston  
Masse  
May  
Allison  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Angus  
Ashfield  
Aspin  
Aubin  
Baird  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Benskin  
Bernier  
Bezan  
Blanchette-Lamothe  
Block  
Borg  
Boutin-Sweet  
Braid  
Brosseau  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Byrne  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Carrie  
Cash  
Chicoine  
Chisu  
Choquette  
Christopherson  
Cleary  
Comartin  
Cotler  
Cullen  
Daniel  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Dion  
Donnelly  
Dreeshen  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Dusseau  
Easter  
Fantino  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Flaherty  
Foote  
Freeman  
Gallant  
Genest  
Giguère  
Glover  
Goldring  
Goodyear  
Gourde  
Grewal  
Harper  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hassainia  
Hayes  
Hoback  
Hsu  
Hyer  
James  
Julian  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lamoureux  
Larose  
Lauzon  
Lebel  
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
Leitch  
Leslie  
Liu  
Lobb  
Lunney  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Mai  
Martin  
Mathysen  
Mayes



*Government Orders*

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made Thursday, February 7, 2013, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

• (1815)  
[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 615*)

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brison	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	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	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rae
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel

McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Michaud	Miller
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Pacetti	Papillon
Paradis	Patry
Péclet	Penashue
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Poilievre
Preston	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Raitt	Rajotte
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Turmel
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 288

## NAYS

Nil

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The House resumed from February 7 consideration of the motion.

*Private Members' Business*

Valerioté — 131

Ablonczy  
Adler  
Albas  
Alexander  
Allison  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Benoit  
Bernier  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chisu  
Clarke  
Crockatt  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dreeshen  
Fantino  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Flaherty  
Galipeau  
Gill  
Goldring  
Gosal  
Grewal  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hayes  
Hoback  
James  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Leaf  
Lemieux  
Lizon  
Lukiwski  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Mayes  
McLeod  
Menzies  
Miller  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Norlock  
O'Connor  
O'Neill Gordon  
O'Toole  
Penashue  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Reid  
Richards  
Ritz  
Schellenberger  
Shea  
Shory  
Sopuck  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Tilson  
Toews  
Trottier  
Tweed  
Valcourt  
Van Loan  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wilks  
Woodworth

## NAYS

## Members

Adams  
Aglukkaq  
Albrecht  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anders  
Armstrong  
Aspin  
Bateman  
Bergen  
Bezan  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Dykstra  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goodyear  
Gourde  
Harper  
Hawn  
Hillyer  
Holder  
Jean  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Leitch  
Leung  
Lobb  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
McColeman  
Menegakis  
Merrifield  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Nicholson  
Obhrai  
Oliver  
Opitz  
Paradis  
Poilievre  
Raitt  
Rathgeber  
Rempel  
Rickford  
Saxton  
Seeback  
Shipley  
Smith  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Toet  
Trost  
Truppe  
Uppal  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Warawa  
Watson  
Williamson  
Yelich

Young (Oakville)  
Zimmer — 157

Young (Vancouver South)

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

I understand that the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé has a point of order.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## POINTS OF ORDER

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during oral question period, I made a poor choice of words. I apologize and withdraw my comments.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**CBC AND PUBLIC SERVICE DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY ACT**

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC)** moved that Bill C-461, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise and speak to second reading of Bill C-461, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act for public disclosure. The bill's short title is the CBC and public service disclosure and transparency act.

The bill has two purposes. The first is to correct a recognized deficiency in the current section 68.1 of the Access to Information Act, which currently reads:

This Act does not apply to any information that is under the control of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that relates to its journalistic, creative or programming activities, other than information that relates to its general administration.

Not surprisingly, the CBC took the position that it had an absolute exclusion with respect to its journalistic, creative and programming activities, even so far as the Information Commissioner and her investigative powers were concerned.

The Information Commissioner disagreed, stating that the access act allows her to examine any documents under request to determine if the exception applies.

However, as the CBC denied her certain documents, the Federal Court was called upon to make a determination. Both the Federal Court and the Federal Court of Appeal sided with the Information Commissioner. The appellate court referred to section 68.1 as, "not a model of clarity", because it created an exclusion and then an exception to that exclusion, which, in its words, creates "a recipe for controversy".

*Private Members' Business*

Meanwhile, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access, Privacy and Ethics held a study on section 68.1 and recommended that it be amended to avoid any such future controversies. Therefore, Bill C-461 attempts to provide clarity to the issue of the CBC's access and disclosure obligations by replacing the aforementioned blanket exclusion with a discretionary exemption. It further adds an injury or prejudice test, which must be satisfied in order for the exemption to apply, and reaffirms the Information Commissioner's absolute right to examine the documents in order to adjudicate disputes.

Accordingly, the bill proposes that section 68.1 of the access act be replaced with the following, 18.2, which states:

The head of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation may refuse to disclose any record requested under this Act if the disclosure would reasonably be expected to prejudice the Corporation's journalistic, creative or programming independence.

The word "independence" was deliberately chosen and replaces the current word "activities", first because it is narrower, but more to the point, because it is the independence of the public broadcaster that must be protected and therefore exempted from access requests, not all documents merely relating to its activities.

Some will no doubt argue that the bill is an attack on the CBC. That is not so. I am a fan of much of what the CBC does. It is Tuesday night, and I rarely miss *The Rick Mercer Report* or *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. I never miss *Hockey Night in Canada*, at least not when the Oilers are playing. *Power & Politics* and radio's *The House* are often on my TV and radio respectively.

This legislation is not about the CBC so much as it is about transparency and accountability. Section 68.1 of the Access to Information Act was flawed. The Federal Court of Appeal said so. It was flawed, misunderstood and litigated. This legislation attempts to remedy these defects.

Some may suggest that the bill fails to properly recognize the unique position a public broadcaster is in. That is not so. I clearly appreciate and respect that a public broadcaster, especially as a journalistic entity, must enjoy a degree of independence from government.

However, and this is important, the Information Commissioner is not part of government. The Information Commissioner is an officer of Parliament. Similar to our collective role in this chamber, the Information Commissioner plays an important role in holding the government to account.

Moreover, the prejudice test, which is established under proposed section 18.2, recognizes this unique relationship between a public broadcaster, Parliament and government by providing a discretionary exemption when it is established that disclosure will result in prejudice to the CBC's independence. In any situation where disclosure would result in prejudice to the CBC, disclosure would be inappropriate. I submit that the prejudice test is a built-in protection not enjoyed by most government institutions, and this extra protection reflects an understanding of CBC's unique position as a public broadcaster.

• (1820)

Some may, and I expect will, argue that journalistic source protection is so sacrosanct that an absolute exclusion must be

maintained. Not so. I agree that confidential journalistic sources must be protected, but I dispute that an exclusion is either appropriate or practicable.

First, the Information Commissioner has unlimited power under section 36(1) of the Access to Information Act, to compel production of "such documents and things as the [Information] Commissioner deems requisite to the full investigation and consideration of the complaint". I am simply skeptical that an exclusion can be drafted that can coexist with the Information Commissioner's unfettered powers to compel documentation production under section 36.

Moreover, journalistic source privilege is not absolute. The Supreme Court of Canada has said so as recently as 2010 in *R. v. National Post*. It is not a class privilege; it is fact specific and therefore must be examined on a case by case basis. Who is to determine if the four-pronged test developed by esteemed Professor Wigmore is satisfied, if the CBC is granted an absolute exclusion? The obvious answer is "nobody".

Is CBC to be made both judge and party in access to information requests? Certainly not. Disputes must be arbitrated by an independent watchdog and the federal court has said, "disclosing records to the Commissioner does not amount to revealing them".

This bill would contain parallel amendments to the Privacy Act to import the prejudice tests when individuals request documents about themselves pursuant to Canada's privacy statute.

However, the CBC and public service disclosure and transparency act would make a more substantive alteration to the Privacy Act. It would move the words "range of" before the word "salary" in the definition of exempt personal information for the highest wage earners in the federal public service. Currently, under Canada's privacy laws, only the range of salary can be disclosed pursuant to access requests, which I submit is adequate for most income levels. However, at the highest income levels, the increments become increasingly large as to become meaningless. For example, I have been advised that the current CEO of the CBC earns in the range of \$363,800 to \$428,000. According to my math, that range of \$64,200 is larger than many taxpayers' complete salaries and arguably therefore is not meaningful disclosure.

Accordingly, if Bill C-461 is adopted, the specific salaries and responsibilities of upper management, which this bill would define as "DM 1 and higher", would be subject to access to information requests. This is important. This change would apply to the entire federal public service. CBC would in no way be singled out. Moreover, reimbursed expenses to all federal employees would also become subject to access requests.

*Private Members' Business*

I have consulted widely during the drafting phase of this proposed legislation. I believe, and I believe Canadians believe, that they are entitled to meaningful access to how the Government of Canada spends dollars and how the government operates generally. However, Canadians, including federal employees, are also entitled to a reasonable expectation of privacy. Balancing these competing objectives is indeed a challenge and precarious.

However, it is submitted that an injury base test achieves that balance at least as well as that balance can be achieved regarding CBC's disclosure obligations, as it requires a public interest analysis. The question becomes this. Is the public interest in disclosure greater than any consequential harm? Limiting specific salary disclosures to upper management recognizes the privacy rights of the rank and file public servants.

Taxpayers rightfully are entitled to know how their tax dollars are being spent. In that regard, many provinces have established the so-called sunshine lists, which are publicly disclosed lists shining the sun on salaries, perks and benefits paid to government executives, directors and managers. Members may know that Ontario led the way with respect to such financial disclosure. The Ontario government introduced legislation in 1996 mandating the publication of names and salaries of all of its employees and officers who earn more than \$100,000 per year.

• (1825)

The purpose of the Ontario law is to provide a more open and accountable system of government. Disclosure allows taxpayers to compare the performance of an organization to the compensation given to its senior people running it. It allows taxpayers to know how their tax dollars are spent.

British Columbia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia have all copied aspects of the Ontario legislation, with reporting requirements varying and going as low as employees earning \$50,000 in the case of Manitoba.

My bill does not call for a website, but by mandating or at least allowing disclosure pursuant to access requests, the public will serve as a critical check on government expenditures and an effective deterrent to any government official tempted to treat taxpayers disrespectfully.

This approach, I would submit, is consistent with the purpose of the access legislation generally, as enumerated in the act, that there is a right of access generally to records under the control of a government institution, and that necessary exceptions should be limited and should be specific, and that decisions on the disclosure of the government information should be reviewed independently of government.

As an officer of Parliament, the Information Commissioner is independent of government and therefore in the best position to resolve the inevitable disputes regarding access to government information.

Canada has had access to information legislation in force since 1983. Canada was once a leader in providing access to government information and documents, but sadly, according to academics and according to the Information Commissioner, we are becoming

laggards. Internationally, Canada is currently ranked 55th out of 93 countries in terms of our access and our openness.

Moreover, the Centre for Law and Democracy says the federal government is falling behind the provinces and ranking behind those provinces in terms of openness and transparency.

As we have seen, Ontario is arguably leading the way with the most comprehensive sunshine list. British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia are all following suit and have implemented some variation of salary disclosure.

Sadly, and this should be of concern to this chamber, the federal jurisdiction is falling behind. Since its inception 30 years ago, there has been only marginal expansion of Canada's access law. In December 2003, the then-prime minister announced a new policy on the mandating of publication of travel and hospitality expenses for selected government officials. Then in March 2004, the then-government announced a new policy on the mandated publication, on a website, of contracts over \$10,000. In my view, sadly, very little has happened since then.

Accordingly, the Information Commissioner—and I heard her on CBC Radio; I was listening to her on Sunday morning—observes a lack of commitment to openness and transparency at the federal level. Bill C-461, the CBC and public service disclosure and transparency act, is an initiative by Parliament to remedy this trend. The spirit of the act is based upon the principle of disclosure. Non-disclosure must be the exception. Bill C-461 clearly promotes this principle.

The CBC and public service disclosure and transparency act promotes open and transparent government and its role in holding government to account. Exclusion to government information prevents Canadians from holding their government to account. I believe, and I hope all members believe, that holding government to account is fundamental to democracy.

Although freedom to know is not a charter-protected right, freedom to know is inextricably linked to freedom of thought and expression and freedom of the press. Knowledge is power, and holding the government to account demands that knowledge and information be shared. Holding to account leads to the establishment of trust, trust that there is proper stewardship of public resources.

Opaqueness leads to mistrust. Accordingly, any attempt to weaken this bill and its attempt to increase access to information and transparency will be so regarded. As U.S. Supreme Court Judge Louis Brandeis said, sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Canadians deserve to have light shone on government information. Accordingly, I encourage all hon. members to support Bill C-461, the CBC and public service disclosure and transparency act, without amendment.

• (1830)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am amazed by the kind of words we are hearing. We heard “transparency”, “sunlight” and “best disinfectant”. How lovely.

*Private Members' Business*

The Conservatives can hide under the veil of transparency all they want, but this bill is clearly obsolete and comes at a time when the crisis is over. The CBC received an A rating not too long ago. This same member said in 2011 that he did not see why Canada needed a public broadcaster.

It is all well and good to praise Rick Mercer, but why is this coming at a time when the CBC just received an A rating from the commissioner?

•(1835)

[English]

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, but he should read the Information Commissioner's report card a little more carefully. The A was given for timeliness and that only. She did not give the CBC an A for the breadth of its transparency or what it had disclosed. Admittedly, the CBC is now quicker in its response time, but that is a much different category of disclosure than the breadth of disclosure.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the principle of transparency and appreciate where the member is coming from in his private member's bill to shine some light on this, but I do have some very specific questions.

The member talks about clarification. What the Federal Court of Appeal said was that the Information Commissioner embodies the decision to be made on whether CBC exemptions can be had. However, by introducing this injury or prejudice test, if the Information Commissioner feels it should be exempt, there are ways of going around this. A wealthy corporation could still take the CBC to court. Therefore, the CBC could end up in court beyond what the Information Commissioner said.

Am I reading this correctly? Perhaps the hon. member could shed some light on this. What he has done here is to allow many external factors to come into play, such that CBC could be brought to court time and time again to defend these three pillars when the commissioner may have said it should be exempt.

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the Information Commissioner appeared before the ethics committee and advocated on behalf of a prejudice test, almost word for word as the legislation before the House indeed contemplates. However, the member is quite right in that there is no way to absolutely guarantee that a piece of legislation will be judgment-proof or litigation-proof.

Thankfully, we do have the courts that can review decisions of government if they feel those decisions are wrong. However, if this is the member's concern, I would suggest that if the prejudice test is properly applied by the Information Commissioner, the chances of having a decision overturned are very remote and, in fact, probably non-existent, although nothing prevents someone from taking that to the Federal Court.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics and am quite surprised by the line of questioning from across the way, because the committee reached a non-partisan, consensus recommendation. There was only one major recommendation in the report, which called on the government to amend section 68.1 because of the lack of clarity on journalistic clarity and so on, as

indicated by virtually everyone who testified before committee. The recommendation is to study models in other countries and how those countries have got around this. I would ask my colleague what research led to his proposed changes.

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Mr. Speaker, the member will know, as he sat on that committee, that when the Information Commissioner appeared at committee she referred to international models, specifically how the United Kingdom deals with disclosure pursuant to the British Broadcasting Corporation. That is how she came up with the concept of the prejudice test, which I think will work quite well.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but think of the French-speaking community in my colleague's riding, which relies heavily on Radio-Canada. I wonder whether they were consulted.

I rise in the House today to condemn what can only be seen, despite a devious facade, as an attack against public broadcasting and programming. It is an attack against the work CBC journalists do, against free, politically independent journalism.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to resist the lure of the bill's misleading title. It is a sham. This bill is not about transparency. Its real goal is a long-standing, political goal: to undermine the CBC and public broadcasting in our country. Yet that tradition is at the very heart of our culture.

In fact, the bill really is about the government's Reform roots and their unrelenting attacks on the CBC. It is about a pathological anger against public radio and TV that has obsessed and tormented some people for 25 or 30 years. It is about an unhealthy obsession with the CBC, although that affliction is very rare among the people I meet on the street.

Just admit it. The truth is that no one in the House dislikes or even detests the CBC as much as the members opposite. I am tempted to tell them to get over it. Their problem is that they are going it alone with this personal mini crusade. They do not have the support of the 78% of Canadians who, according to an Angus Reid poll, believe that the CBC fulfills its mandate, or of the 59% of us who would like the CBC's funding to be at least maintained or perhaps increased.

Our colleague from Edmonton—St. Albert is up against an overwhelming majority of Canadians who oppose the destruction of the CBC. Therefore, I will say to that MP, who has an axe to grind, that he is quite alone.

I believe that this bill does absolutely nothing for transparency. This bill is coming out of left field today. The CBC is known as a model of transparency and access to information.

With regard to transparency, it received an A in 2012. I am not the one saying so. The Information Commissioner ranked the CBC among the best public organizations for transparency. According to her report, it sets an excellent example.

*Private Members' Business*

At this time, anyone can ask for internal CBC information about expenditures in various areas.

If the CBC refuses the request, which happens in 4.2% of the cases, the person can refer the matter to the Information Commissioner, who determines if the information request pertains to sensitive matters such as the work of journalists, who must protect their sources.

That is the current system. It is a system of exemptions based on the international standard for information requests that gives the Information Commissioner the right to examine information that the CBC wants to protect. It is a system that works, that was voted on in the House in 2006, that we supported at the time, that was enhanced by the federal court and that was approved by all stakeholders. The Information Commissioner is satisfied, the CBC is satisfied, everyone is satisfied, except for those who are just entering the debate. We suspect that the Conservatives are actually not very interested in the real issue of transparency. That is another excuse, another opportunity to weaken the CBC's presence.

We have reason to worry about the work of journalists and the protection of their sources. Currently, the CBC is protected, excluded from disclosing information about its journalistic, programming or creative activities. This same system is in place for public broadcasters in other parts of the world such as Ireland, Australia and the BBC in Great Britain.

This protection is based on an international standard and allows the CBC to carry out its public mandate by being a competitive player in the media environment, in a way that is transparent to taxpayers. Above all, it is a way of ensuring that journalists' work will not be compromised or the confidentiality of their sources questioned.

Bill C-461 proposes that we dismantle this system that was created by Parliament and clarified by the courts. It proposes that the exclusion should become an exception so that the CBC would have to prove that disclosure could reasonably be expected to prejudice the corporation's journalistic, creative or programming independence.

One has to wonder who will benefit from this bill. Certainly not the public, given that virtually all access to information requests made to the CBC come from its competitors.

This is a bill that is tailor-made to benefit the CBC's competition. And that competition is cozy with the Conservative Party, so cozy that a person can move easily from the Prime Minister's Office to the vice-presidency of the private network that is the most maliciously and exceedingly critical of the CBC. And that is not just by chance.

This bill sets out to expose the CBC to its competition in order to weaken it and eventually eliminate it.

• (1840)

In terms of protecting sources—and this is even worse—the CBC will have to argue why journalistic research, including confidential sources that allow employees to do investigative work, should not be made public. Generally speaking, that is a given.

Once again, it has to be “reasonably” proven, and I want to emphasize “reasonably”, that the journalistic process will be affected. The Supreme Court spoke about the public interest in preserving the confidentiality of the journalist's source and “the high societal interest in investigative journalism”.

Do not forget that Reporters Without Borders recently dropped Canada from 10th to 20th place in its annual press freedom index. That is not something this government can be proud of. Reporters Without Borders noted the continuing threats to the confidentiality of journalists' sources as the reason for the downgrade.

Another aspect of the bill before us is the amendment of the Access to Information Act so that the salaries of some government employees can be subject to access to information requests. There is something fishy going on here too. To be quite honest, it is actually more of a whale of a problem. The vocabulary used in the bill seems to be tailored so that our colleague's insatiable curiosity, about some CBC celebrities, including Peter Mansbridge and Rick Mercer, which he mentioned earlier, can be satisfied.

In the past, the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert even took the time here in the House to ask about their salaries in particular. The hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber saw first-hand that, when we ask exactly the same question about the salaries of the little army of goblins working for the Prime Minister's Office in the Langevin Block, we do not get an answer. What a surprise. Oddly enough, that is how it usually works.

Since the Conservatives want to talk about transparency, let us talk about it. While the CBC received an A for its transparency, last year, the Information Commissioner gave the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Transport Canada an F.

Does the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert have a position on this issue? Does he want to share his concerns with us or would he prefer to focus only on the CBC? Does that suit him?

The Information Commissioner must now go before the Federal Court to call to order the Department of National Defence, which has been asking for extensions for responding to access to information requests for over three years.

The Conservatives are being totally outdone by the CBC when it comes to public transparency rankings; yet, they are finding a way to attack it.

That would give Sigmund Freud something to analyze. It is odd.

The day before yesterday, on CBC, the Information Commissioner said that the current Conservative government is not one of the most transparent—this understatement was indicative of her duty of deference—and that the response rate for access to information requests had reached record lows.

She said that Canadians should be outraged. This is where we have a problem. In 2006, the Conservative Party took office under the banner of accountability. Now there is a tale to remember. Their focus on accountability was, hon. members will remember, in direct response to the sponsorship scandals. It is strange to think about the word “accountability” today.

*Private Members' Business*

We just celebrated the seventh anniversary of this government. Today, after seven years, we can honestly say that this government is the least transparent and has caused the most scandals in Canadian history.

The member for Edmonton—St. Albert belongs to a government that preaches transparency, that expects it from everyone but itself. From its seat in Ottawa, the government spends billions of dollars on a whim and then demands accountability from aboriginal communities, labour associations, anyone but itself.

Today it has set its sights on the CBC, which it surely finds inconvenient. Transparency is a piece of cake when it is demanded of others. Transparency is increasingly being used as a way to launch stealth attacks against the right's targets of choice; this needs to stop.

We demand transparency. The NDP demands transparency right here, right now. After seven years, it is about time the government itself showed some transparency.

All of this brings us to the realization that the bill we have before us has more to do with the disgust that some feel for public radio and television than with a sincere ethical concern. This is but another salvo in what the Canadian Media Guild has dubbed “a dirty war against the CBC”.

I recently began personally measuring people's attachment to their public broadcaster. On January 23, at the Lion d'Or, in Montreal, individuals and creators from all walks of life gathered to attest to the cultural importance of the CBC.

After some consideration, I have come to realize that the things that members across the way have been saying about the CBC represent a marginal opinion and quite simply contradict the mainstream impression of our public broadcaster; what is more, it seems their arguments mostly do not hold water.

The majority of Canadians who, like us, are in favour of an independent public broadcaster free of political leanings have no doubts as to what is going on tonight. This majority wants our public broadcaster to stay independent and transparent and keep reflecting our national creativity.

●(1845)

[English]

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the bill today, calling for more accountability and transparency at the CBC. We will try to keep it to the facts and try to look at the bill on the surface of what it is trying to accomplish.

I do not see it as the bogeyman the NDP points it out to be, but we have to make sure there are protections in there for the CBC, and I will get to that in a moment.

First, we should give credit where credit is due. I give credit to the CBC on the information it has provided. The Information Commissioner has recently given it an A for performance, an upgrade from an F.

Granted, that is on the timing of requests, because quite often we see the government dragging its heels on a lot of information requests. Canada Post Corporation is another example, and the

Department of National Defence. The government needs to do better on getting the information out there.

The bill is a result of the legal battle around section 68.1. We did study it at our committee, and changes are needed to bring a little more clarity to section 68.1 so that we do not run into this in the future.

Granted, there may be changes made to section 68.1. That does not preclude it from being challenged in a court of law and information being challenged in the courts, but we have to make sure that some fundamental principles behind that remain.

That is the role of the Information Commissioner. We must ensure that the Information Commissioner has the power to investigate this. Both parties must submit the information before her. We have to make sure she has the power she needs to look at the information and decide on what can be released. I would like to ask the Information Commissioner, when she comes before committee with the bill, about the prejudice test and how exactly that prejudice test would work and what could be some of the pitfalls around that.

We support CBC. We like the programming and the journalistic investigations it does, but we have to make sure as well that it is protected. The journalism, programming and creative activities must be protected for all.

More important, journalistic sources have to be protected. That was referred to a little earlier in the debate. We have to ensure that these sources are protected, because it is fundamental, when it comes to journalism, that these sources be protected.

The second part of the bill, which is an interesting part, is about the salary ranges and salaries in government departments.

If the CBC wanted to protect the salary of a personality or someone in the department, it would have to go to the Information Commissioner and try to have that information protected, because it bases on its programming integrity, its commercial value. With regard to looking at the salaries at the CBC, the Information Commissioner would rule in favour of the CBC and protect those salaries from disclosure for commercial value. We have to make sure that is looked at when we look at the bill at committee.

The other part of the bill is releasing salaries of all people higher than DMI, which is very interesting, because the government, and in particular the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office, has not been forthcoming with salaries of people in the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office. The bill does open up those offices, as well, for disclosure of the salary of anybody earning more than a deputy minister's salary.

A deputy minister's salary, just so the public out there would know, is probably somewhere in the range of \$160,000 to \$180,000, so these are fairly highly paid public servants. It is important that these public servants' salaries be made public. That is one thing the bill would do.

As I said earlier, the government has fallen behind in disclosing such information, and we must hold it to account so it does a better job of it. Once we shine light and open up public disclosure in an access to information request, it does keep things honest.

*Private Members' Business*

●(1850)

One thing that I have learned in politics is that as much as there might be secrets, it is hard to keep a secret. We have to ensure this information is available. If an individual requests it, we have to ensure he or she can get access to this information. The government must strive to do a better job of providing that information and to be more open and accountable. It helps the opposition and everyone to hold people to account.

I look forward to this bill going to committee, where more questions can be asked to get clarification and to ensure that the CBC is protected in certain circumstances and to open up transparency in other circumstances.

●(1855)

**Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have this opportunity to speak for a few minutes to Bill C-461, the CBC and public service disclosure and transparency act.

I would first like to thank the member for Edmonton—St. Albert for his efforts to bring a higher level of openness and accountability to the CBC. Bill C-461 also proposes to bring more openness in relation to the expenditure of public funds. These involve the disclosure of reimbursed expenses to government employees and of the exact salaries of the highest-earning officers or employees of government institutions.

Before dealing with the changes that Bill C-461 proposes in relation to reimbursed expenses and the exact salaries of the highest-earning officers or employees of government institutions, let me first describe in some detail the changes it proposes to make that will affect the CBC.

Currently, the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act do not apply to records of the CBC that contain information that relates to its journalistic, creative or programming activities. This means Canadian citizens do not have a right of access to this information.

If Bill C-461 passes as is, the CBC would be fully subject to the Access to Information Act. By this I mean that all CBC's information could be requested under the Access to Information Act. However, the CBC would be able to protect information that, if disclosed, could cause harm to its journalistic, creative and programming independence. Bill C-461's proposal regarding the CBC is based on the Information Commissioner's recommendation made before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. My colleagues may remember that back in 2011 that committee conducted a study of how the CBC handled its access to information requests and issued a report in March 2012.

I would now like to focus on one area that I believe the House should consider when reviewing this legislation.

One of the pillars of journalism is the ability to protect confidential journalistic sources. Individuals can therefore feel comfortable enough to approach journalists and give them information without fear that their identities will be disclosed and, correspondingly, news agencies are able to provide assurance of anonymity. For an individual who is a confidential journalistic source, any notion that information that could reveal their identity

would be released or reviewed could put the CBC at a distinct disadvantage in relation to its private sector competitors. Accordingly the House may wish to consider the way in which Bill C-461 treats information that would reveal the identity of confidential journalistic sources of the CBC.

Back in 2011, the Federal Court of Appeal dealt with a dispute between the CBC and the Information Commissioner on how the CBC was handling its requests under the Access to Information Act. When considering the provision that currently excludes records of the CBC, the Federal Court of Appeal concluded that for journalistic sources the exclusion was absolute and that the Information Commissioner therefore did not have the power to examine such information. Both the Information Commissioner and the CBC expressed satisfaction with the outcome of that decision. Accordingly the House may wish to consider the court's findings on this matter as it continues its review of Bill C-461.

Let me turn now to the part of Bill C-461 that deals with increasing openness and accountability in relation to certain government expenditures. Hard-working Canadians pay their fair share of taxes. I think all parliamentarians in the chamber would agree that they deserve to know that their money is spent by the government prudently and that there be transparency in its expenditure.

Bill C-461 proposes to amend the Privacy Act to shine the light on how certain government spending is conducted. Bill C-461 proposes to do this in two areas.

The Privacy Act governs the disclosure of personal information by government institutions. At the same time, there are certain types of personal information that can be disclosed to an access requester under the Access to Information Act or the Privacy Act.

●(1900)

Also, a government institution can disclose these types of personal information whenever it chooses to do so. Information that relates to the position or function of an officer or employee of a government institution falls into that category of information and can therefore be disclosed. Currently, examples of job-related information listed in the Privacy Act that can be disclosed are the position occupied by the employee, opinions given by the employee in the course of employment and the salary range of the position. Bill C-461 proposes to make two additions to the list of personal information that can be disclosed under the Privacy Act or Access to Information Act.



*Private Members' Business*

The first would be the exact salary of officers or employees of government institutions who earn the highest salaries paid by government. It is important to note that the change proposed by Bill C-461 will not affect the majority of public servants. Most people employed by the government are not in the top ranks of the public service. For these employees it will remain true that only their salary range and their job classification can be disclosed. It is only those who are in the highest ranks who would be affected by the change proposed in Bill C-461. The House may wish to consider which level of government employees should be covered by the bill.

Second, Bill C-461 proposes to amend the Privacy Act to specifically list expenses incurred by employees in the course of their work for which they are reimbursed, as types of personal information that can be disclosed under the Access to Information Act or Privacy Act.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank the member for Edmonton—St. Albert for bringing forward the legislation and allowing Parliament the opportunity to discuss this issue. Again, I would encourage members to consider the various issues I have raised and I look forward to the continued debate on the bill.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to debate this matter in the House today. At the same time, I am very disappointed that we are having the same debate once again.

In 2011, we debated the same subject, transparency for the public. The NDP supports the concept of disclosure, of making things public. However, many of my colleagues and I feel that the members are trying to bring in by the back door what they were unable to bring in through the front door. This discussion only seeks to discredit the CBC.

This all started when someone asked why we need a public broadcaster. Now we have a bill that opens the door to very sensitive information. I am not referring to the salaries; I am referring to the second part, which concerns information that is made public and that the CBC's competitors can use against it.

[English]

It is very easy to look at an expense report to see who is meeting with whom and, through that, decide or figure out what kind of programming is going on. My mother has always said, "When you're looking at an issue, consider the source". The private members' bill comes from a group of people where, and I will quote from the *Hill Times*, one Conservative MP has acknowledged that his party's members and the government will be "breathing a sigh of relief" when Kevin Page's term ends in March.

To answer the member's question, it has to do with the fact that we have a group of people, we have the government and backbenchers, demanding transparency from all sorts of organizations, while they refuse to be transparent. To the same subject, in 2011, I put forward a question on the order paper, asking for the disclosure of the salaries of the PMO and was met with a resounding thud of silence. Therefore, considering where this comes from, it is not hard to doubt, for lack of a better way of putting it, the motivations of the private member's bill. The type of transparency that the member is

looking for, as I said, is the type of transparency that can damage the work that CBC does, both in journalism and its programming.

This same member, as my colleague pointed out, asked why we needed a public broadcaster. I have heard it said time and again: Why do we need a public broadcaster if there are corporate organizations that can do it just as well or better? To that point, I will say that is a possibility. It is a possibility that they would be able to do it better because they have access to more resources to hire the best directors, to hire the best producers.

However, based on my 25 years of experience working in this industry, the fact is that corporate broadcasters do not want to do it. They do not want to create shows that speak to Canadians, created by Canadians, for Canadians. Who else is going to create shows that from coast to coast to coast engage Canadians, in a Canadian voice, for Canadians? Nobody, because there is no money in it.

For example, in 2007, the broadcasters crowed about how much money they spent on American programming. It was over \$750 million. In that same period of time, they spent just over \$50 million on Canadian programming. That includes the magazine shows, the sports shows and so forth, but no creative programming.

● (1905)

For the last 75 years, the CBC has created programming that Canadians have enjoyed from coast to coast to coast, because they have seen themselves in those shows. They have seen and heard themselves nationally, and internationally with Radio Canada International.

From my perspective, this private member's bill is redundant, because there are already laws that require disclosure. CBC, to its credit, went to great lengths to open up and become better at disclosing information. In less than a year, it went from an F to an A. The hon. member says that going from an F to an A was only for time. Time was part of that, but so was disclosure. It disclosed all it was obliged to disclose and fought those issues it felt were damaging to its ability to do the work.

I must underline that the vast majority of the access to information requests, which were some 1,400 during this period, came from one source: a competitor. It saddens me that the government continues to do the work of a competitor in this environment when it claims it wants a level playing field. If it is to be a level playing field, then let it be a level playing field.

It is clear that there are certain members of the government and/or the backbenches who have a continued dislike for the CBC and are looking for ways to de-fund the CBC. From my perspective, it makes me suspect the motivation for the bill. I say "suspect". Maybe the member has good intentions. However, if the bill is supposed to shine a light on all government activities, why is it directed at the CBC?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

● (1910)

[Translation]

In this context, why does this bill target the CBC?

[English]

If the bill has been, as my colleague said, created to shine a light, to make government spending transparent, then why is the bill not called a bill to demand more transparency from government and government institutions as opposed to targeting the CBC?

For that reason, I am suspicious of the motivations.

[Translation]

The CBC is an organization that is very important to Canadians.

[English]

For a small cabal of Conservatives who want to see the CBC destroyed, I think this is a very weak attempt to go through the back door to accomplish what they could not accomplish through the front door.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to some of this debate. It is always interesting to me how sometimes we in this place can take some pretty straightforward, basic information and turn it into something that really does not reflect that straightforward, basic information at all. Talk about patent nonsense, fearmongering and misleading information from the member who just stood up. It is beyond the realm. For the record, I think it is time for full disclosure.

I listen to CBC Radio and I watch CBC television. The hon. member may find that hard to believe. CBC does a pretty good job, but that certainly does not put it beyond the reach of transparency. What is wrong with openness and reasonable and responsible transparency not on personal, highly secretive information, not on giving some other company a corporate advantage, but reasonable and responsible transparency? I think that is really what the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert is talking about. If we cannot have that discussion in this place, then are we saying that we do not want transparency anywhere, that nobody, members of Parliament, members of the Senate, members of the RCMP, should ever have oversight in place? Are we saying that no one should ever be checked upon? We are talking about a multi-billion dollar crown corporation. Do we not want to have some openness and some transparency? Do we not want to let the full light of day shine upon certain aspects of how this corporation works? I really question where the hon. member is coming from.

Members on both sides of the chamber know that the Information Commissioner, for instance, is the independent entity that balances the legitimate interests of government in the protection of records and the public's right to know. It is a balancing situation. We just do not kick the doors in and say there is all the information. We take it piecemeal and we look at it, because there is proprietary information, there is information, quite frankly, that should remain private, but there is a lot of information that the public has a right to know.

We are going back to 1983 with the Access to Information Act. This act is three decades old. This is not something that just came through the mill. It is a guiding principle that government information should be available to the public and that any necessary exemptions to the right of access should be limited and specific.

How can the member say that this is some kind of a witch hunt against the CBC? What the opposition is saying about this legislation is incredibly misleading. The bill deals with the CBC, a multi-billion dollar crown corporation that Canadian taxpayers pay for and how access to information requests should be managed.

I will provide the House with a little content, a bit of history, about the corporation before I really discuss the fine details of Bill C-461.

CBC/Radio-Canada began well before the days of television. A lot of members in the NDP would remember those days when Canadian radios were severely lacking Canadian content and coast to coast coverage was not heard of let alone planned for. The CBC, as we know it today, really came into being in 1936 when the Canadian Broadcasting Act created the CBC as a crown corporation. The 1950s brought CBC into the world of television.

The CBC gains a significant amount of its revenue from advertising sales. However, it still receives nearly \$1 billion a year from the government and the taxpayers of Canada and that is what separates it from broadcasters whose funding is solely from private sources.

● (1915)

I know that I will have to finish my remarks another time, but to turn now to the relationship between the CBC and the access to information regime, my colleagues will remember that in 2006 our government succeeded in delivering its first major piece of legislation. It was the Federal Accountability Act, which accomplished a number of important things. In short, what we are talking about here is simply reasonable, responsible accountability.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

### FOREIGN INVESTMENT

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand one more time to talk about the issue of the Canada–China investment treaty, or FIPA, and to again force the Conservatives to be accountable to Canadians about this deal.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

FIPA is a deal that will be in force for 31 years once it is ratified by the government, which is any time now. I am going to break it down for the members opposite because they mislead all the time. It has a 15-year term. At the end of 15 years, either party can serve notice if it wants to cancel the agreement in the 16th year. If a party does so, all investments made under the first 15 years will continue to be bound by the terms of the FIPA for a further 15 years. That amounts to a 31-year deal at minimum.

This deal took 18 years to negotiate. What is in this deal? Here are some of the concerns that we have.

It contains a provision for secret tribunals where investors from either country can sue the other country for alleged violations of this deal. If that is the case, the country being sued can choose to hold those hearings in private, with the documents not being released to the public. That is the first time in Canadian history that any Canadian government has ever signed an international treaty allowing the other party to have tribunals held in private. If the investors are successful in suing Canada or vice versa, these are taxpayers' dollars at risk. It is a fundamental principle of the rule of law that all legal proceedings should be held in public. I cannot believe that in 2013 we even have to mention that concept. However, to the Conservative government apparently it is a novel concept.

Another provision of this agreement that is of concern is the clause allowing both countries to keep all existing non-conforming measures in place, while they agree not to bring in any further non-conforming measures in the future. What is a non-conforming measure? It is a law or rule or practice that discriminates against foreign investors. Why is this of concern? It is because China has many non-conforming measures as a command economy. Canada has very few non-conforming measures because we have been on a 25-year path of trade liberalization. Thus the government has signed a deal that lets China keep in perpetuity hundreds, perhaps thousands, of non-conforming measures that will discriminate against Canadian investors, while we have very few in reverse. What are these non-conforming measures? China is renowned for having rules that require Canadian or any investors to do local sourcing. They force partnerships with local Chinese firms. They force companies to pay fees, licences and all sorts of money under the table. These are the kinds of non-conforming measures that will affect Canadian investors, and Canada has virtually none. This is an unbalanced deal.

We are going to talk about debate. The government members have said that the opposition could have debated the motion, because the government tabled this in the House for 31 days. Here is the truth. An official opposition day motion permits us to have one day of debate and then a vote. The New Democrats tabled a motion at the trade committee where we could have put this agreement before the committee for multiple days of close examination and called stakeholders, like Canadian businesses and investors, provinces, trade experts and lawyers, so that we could get the input of the Canadian public. What did the Conservatives do? They shot it down. They said no. Therefore, when the Conservatives say they were willing to debate this deal, Canadians should not be fooled. That is absolutely untrue.

My question for the government is this. If this FIPA is such a good deal for Canadians, why will the Conservatives not agree to bring

this agreement before the House for multiple days of study, send it to the trade committee where we can hear from the Canadian public, and let us see if this is actually a deal worth supporting?

• (1920)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have to admire the hon. member opposite for his persistence. He asked a question in the House on the FIPA with China, then he gets to ask a question in the late show. The question in the late show should try to correct the mistakes he made in the last question in the late show.

Let us go back to the 16 years. He was wrong on it in the last late show and he is wrong on it tonight.

Here is how it happens. There is a 15-year term. Absolutely, I totally agree. These investments can be extended for another 16 years to make 31 years, correct again, but only on those investments that have already occurred in that 15-year period. The FIPA is not extended for another 31 years. That is a clarification. Clarity does not hurt a thing. We are happy to have clarity.

Let us look at Canada's exporting, let us look at what runs this economy, and let us understand the importance of trading with the growing economies of the world, including China. The hon. member ignores a number of facts here. He ignores the fact that China, today, is the second-largest economy in the world. He ignores the fact that China holds probably the largest reserves of foreign currency in the world. We do not know that for certain, but it is right up there in the top two or three holders of foreign currency in the world.

Somehow or another, we should not trade with this economy that by 2030 will be the largest economy on earth. Have we lost our minds in this country? Do we not understand that the Pacific Rim countries are the economy of the future? Canada needs to participate in that economy. We need to be part of it, along with the European Union, along with the trading partners that we already have. We have to have fair and balanced trade, and with the FIPA, we need to protect Canadian investment that already exists in China. It is not about trading just tomorrow. It is about protecting investment that is already in place, and those companies and the work they are going to continue to do in China. This is a very important and significant relationship.

We are moving forward. We are moving forward with a very ambitious pro-trade plan. We understand the huge market in Asia, not just in China but in Indonesia, Vietnam, Korea and India. There are tremendous opportunities for Canadians.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Let us look at our Canadian foreign investment promotion and protection agreement with China. It will provide stronger protection for Canadians investing in China. It establishes a clear set of rules under which investments are made and under which investment disputes are resolved. Canadian businesses looking to set up in China cannot be treated less favourably than any other foreign company looking to do the same.

The foreign investment promotion and protection agreement, or FIPA, also ensures that all investment disputes are resolved under international arbitration, ensuring that adjudications are independent and fair. Canadian investors in China will no longer have to rely on the Chinese legal system to have their disputes resolved. It is important to note that ours is the first bilateral investment agreement that China has signed that expressly includes language on the transparency of dispute settlement proceedings.

Fundamentally, this treaty is about protecting the interests of Canadians investing in one of the world's most dynamic and high-growth markets.

• (1925)

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, finally we have someone on the government side who acknowledges that this deal will govern investment for 31 years. It proves that even the government members are starting to read the agreement.

What we do not hear from the government is it responding to the actual substantive points we have raised. Conservatives do not stand up in the House and defend why they would sign a dispute resolution mechanism that allows a country to go and resolve legal issues in private. There is not a word. The Conservatives do not stand up and defend why they signed a lopsided deal that gives Chinese investors in this country far more protection and rights than Canadian investors have in China.

The New Democrats support protecting Canadian investors in China. We have never said otherwise. However, misrepresentation is the government's stock in trade, because it cannot deal with the facts. The facts are that we can sign an investment agreement with China, but it should conform to Canadians' expectations of the rule of law and protect Canadian investors.

I will ask again, why will the government not bring this deal before Parliament so that we can examine this deal to see if it is actually a well-structured deal? It sure does not look like it from this point of view.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, I am still mulling over in my head how the NDP can protect and agree to protect Canadian investors in China but be against the FIPA. I have given that some consideration, and that box simply does not square.

Here is the deal in a nutshell. Before coming to government in 2006, we did not table treaties in the House of Commons. There was no opportunity for debate.

The hon. member said that he did not want to debate it there. He wanted to debate it somewhere else. The opportunity was here in the House of Commons to put the FIPA on the table and discuss it ad nauseam in the time the opposition has allotted every week. For 31 sitting days, the answer was a resounding no from the NDP, who did not want to look at it.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I am following up on a question I asked last October. Things were heating up last fall, especially with the Investment Canada Act.

The biggest transaction ever made under this act took place. The Nexen-CNOOC deal was worth a total of \$15.1 billion. I raised a number of questions in the House on this and other transactions, such as the Petronas deal.

I requested this adjournment debate because I was struck by the lack of depth and seriousness in the government's response on October 26, 2012.

I would remind the House that the Investment Canada Act was introduced quite a few years ago, and the NDP has called for overhauls on a number of occasions.

In the case of the transactions we were talking about last fall, the process lacked transparency, predictability and consultation of Canadians. That raised a lot of questions.

I asked others for their thoughts so the government could not claim this was my own opinion. Other people raised the fact that the process is not transparent, and they have been concerned about seeing our industrial leaders disappear over the past few years.

• (1930)

[*English*]

We are talking about companies like Dofasco, Stelco, Inco, Falconbridge, Alcan and other Canadian companies; the sale of the assets of the bankrupt Nortel to various non-Canadian buyers; and most recently, a bid for another.

This has led many to express heightened concern that the Investment Canada Act lacks the necessary tools to protect Canada from a hollowing out of its corporate boardrooms amid fears that we will become a branch-plant economy without control of our own resources and economic destiny.

[*Translation*]

This is from an article in the *Canadian Competition Law Review*. I have other accounts to share, including this from the School of Public Policy:

[*English*]

Investment Review In Canada — We can do better. More transparency and public disclosure will make foreign investors confident the system is fair...

[*Translation*]

When will the government review the rules governing the Investment Canada Act, either here in Parliament or in the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, to ensure that there is a net benefit to Canadians?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the question is a reasonable one, but of course the hon. member already knows that the Investment Canada Act is in place to make sure dealings with other countries, and investments in particular, do have a net benefit for Canadians. That is why we have an Investment Canada Act.

This is an Investment Canada Act question, but there is an undercurrent in the member's statement about trade protectionism and, quite frankly, some of the bad old days of NDP policy in which it is simply anti-trade on everything. Let us try to move beyond that type of rhetoric for a moment and look at specifics.

We said we were planning to form a government and we were going to look at exporting quality Canadian goods, services and expertise to the new fast-growing markets around the world. It is a key part of our government's plans for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canadians. I think the hon. member understands that. Our government is delivering on this commitment. We are engaged in the most ambitious pro-trade plan in Canada's history. In order to do that, we have to balance that with the Investment Canada Act so the two can work together for the betterment of all Canadians.

Today in Canada our exporters, and therefore our workers, have more access to markets than they ever had in the history of the country. We are committed to ensuring that the access is guaranteed and continued. Again, we talked about our foreign investment promotion protection agreement with China, the world's second largest economy. This agreement alone will provide stronger protection for Canadians investing in China. It will create jobs and economic growth here in Canada.

This agreement establishes a clear set of rules under which investments are made and under which investment disputes will be resolved, the same way that the Investment Canada Act provides rules for investment in Canada. The treaty is about protecting the interests of Canadians that ultimately will give Canadian investors in China the same types of rules, parameters and privileges that the Chinese investors already have, and have long had, in Canada.

Let me emphasize that this is a bilateral investment agreement that we sign with China. It establishes clear rules for investment. So let us move the NDP members away, because I think they truly are trying to move away from their anti-trade positions of the past, and the Investment Canada Act criticism is just a cover for some of those anti-trade criticisms. It is the party that has opposed our government's efforts to open up new markets for Canadian exporters. New Democrats have opposed trade on countless occasions. They have tried to shut down trade ever since the days of the auto pact, which they now say they support but we know they are on the record as not supporting. They opposed NAFTA, the world's greatest free trade success story. Millions of jobs have been created in Canada because of it. That is not all. They voted against trade agreements with Peru,

Colombia, Israel and even Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, which are not exactly dictatorships.

The NDP views on trade are not limited to history.

I realize I am running out of time, but we have further trade negotiations coming with Korea, Japan and the European Union. We have more investment coming through the Canada Investment Act, so—

● (1935)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, one minute.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about negotiations. These are not negotiations. The government is rolling out the red carpet and letting itself get walked all over.

When we talk about negotiations, whether free trade negotiations or negotiations with investors interested in our natural resources or our businesses, this means putting certain conditions on the table in order to defend the interests of Canadians. That is the problem I have with this.

Of course, we fully understand that Canada needs foreign investments in order to be able to make economic progress. However, why is this government not putting conditions on the table to ensure, for instance, that head offices remain here for a certain length of time, that environmental laws will be respected and that value added jobs stay in Canada?

That is what it means to negotiate. It is important to do so transparently and honestly.

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, I will sum up and maybe make a few small corrections at the beginning. Of course, Canada's environmental regulatory regime is always protected in every agreement we sign, and it often is enhanced. The Investment Canada Act is there to protect Canadian resources and Canadians, quite frankly. It does not allow for environmental degradation. It does not allow any foreign entity, from any country, to somehow go around the rules as they exist in our country. To say otherwise is simply incorrect.

The Conservatives formed government in 2006. We signed free trade agreements with nine countries around the world. We are very much looking out for Canadian interests and Canadian industry. At the end of the day, that means looking out for Canadian jobs and Canadian workers.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:39 p.m.)



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